



European Asylum Support Office

EASO Country of Origin Information Report

Afghanistan Security Situation



January 2016

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EASO Country of Origin Information Report

Afghanistan Security Situation Update

January 2016

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Disclaimer

This report was written according to the EASO COI Report Methodology (2012). ⁽¹⁾ The report is based on carefully selected sources of information. All sources used are referenced. To the extent possible, and unless otherwise stated, all information presented, except for undisputed or obvious facts, has been cross-checked.

The information contained in this report has been researched, evaluated and analysed with utmost care. However, this document does not claim to be exhaustive. If a particular event, person or organisation is not mentioned in the report, this does not mean that the event has not taken place or that the person or organisation does not exist.

Furthermore, this report is not conclusive as to the determination or merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.

“Refugee”, “risk” and similar terminology are used as generic terminology and not as legally defined in the EU Asylum Acquis and the Geneva Convention.

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The target audience are asylum caseworkers, COI researchers, policymakers, and decisionmaking authorities.

The drafting of this report was finalised in December 2015. Any event taking place after this date is not included in this report. More information on the reference period for this report can be found in the methodology section of the introduction.

⁽¹⁾ The EASO methodology is largely based on the Common EU Guidelines for processing Country of Origin Information (COI), 2008, and can be downloaded from the EASO website: <http://www.easo.eu>.

Glossary and Abbreviations

AAN	Afghanistan Analysts Network
ACSO	Afghanistan Central Statistics Office
AFP	Agence France-Presse
AGCHO	Afghan Geodesy and Cartography Head Office
AGEs	Anti-Government Elements. These are armed opposition fighters, or insurgents, who are fighting against the Afghan government and its international allies. Examples of such groups of fighters are the Taliban, Haqqani network and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. ⁽²⁾
AIHRC	Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission
AIMS	Afghanistan Information Management System
Amir-ul-Momineen	Leader of the Faithfull, the highest Islamic ruler who can claim legitimacy from the community of Muslims ⁽³⁾
ANAP	Afghan National Auxiliary Police
ANSF ⁽⁴⁾	Afghan National Security Forces: The Afghan government's official armed forces, composed of: ANA (Afghan National Army): The internationally trained Afghan army (2002); AAF (Afghan Airforce); ANP (Afghan National Police): Afghanistan's police force, with the following subdivisions: AACP (Afghan Anti-Crime Police)ALP (Afghan Local Police) is a security initiative under the auspices of the Ministry of Interior, funded by the US; ⁽⁵⁾ ANBP (Afghan National Border Police); ANCOP (Afghan National Civil Order Police); AUP (Afghan Uniformed Police); CNPA (Counter-Narcotics Police of Afghanistan); NDS (National Directorate of Security): The intelligence service of the Afghan government.
APPF	Afghanistan Public Protection Force
APPRO	Afghanistan Public Policy Research Organisation
Arbaki	A locally organised security structure: a tribal or community army.
AXO	Abandoned explosive ordnances. This refers to explosive ordnance that has not been used during an armed conflict, that has been left behind or dumped by a party to an armed conflict, and which is no longer under the latter's control. Abandoned explosive ordnance may or may not have been primed, fused, armed or otherwise prepared for use (Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons Protocol V). ⁽⁶⁾

⁽²⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict, July 2014, p.75.

⁽³⁾ Dawn, Analysis: Battle for 'Ameer-ul-Momineen', updated on: 6 December 2014.

⁽⁴⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict, July 2014, p. 75.

⁽⁵⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict, July 2014, p. 46.

⁽⁶⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict, July 2014, p. 76.

Azm	Taliban spring offensive
Bacha Bazi	In Dari, this means <i>boys' play</i> or <i>game with boys</i> , it is also referred to as <i>dancing boys</i> . It is a practice of wealthy or powerful men who use prepubescent and adolescent boys for entertainment and sexual activities.
Buzkashi	is an ancient game that is still played in Afghanistan. Horsemen play a sort of polo with a goat's carcass: (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_UB3eA8B4qI).
CAO	Central Asia Online
CDF	Community Defence Forces
CMFC	Civil-Military Fusion Centre
CIP	Critical Infrastructure Program: predecessor of the Afghan Local Police (ALP)
Civilian	UNAMA refers to international law for a definition of 'civilians': persons who are not combatants or otherwise taking part in the conflict (not members of military/ paramilitary forces or fighters of organised armed groups of a party to a conflict or those who are not part of a mass uprising). ⁽⁷⁾
COMISAF	The Commander of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan.
Complex attack	A deliberate and coordinated attack that includes a suicide device (i.e. BBIED, VBIED), more than one attacker and more than one type of device (i.e. BBIED + mortars). All three elements must be used for an attack to be considered complex. ⁽⁸⁾
CPAU	Cooperation for Peace and Unity
ERW	Explosive Remnants of War: These are unexploded ordnances (UXOs) and abandoned explosive ordnances (AXOs) . ⁽⁹⁾
Escalation of Force	Incidents, or "force protection" incidents, involve the use of lethal or non-lethal force by military personnel when civilians ignore, do not understand, or do not see warnings from military personnel in approaching or overtaking military convoys, or in circumstances where civilians do not follow instructions at military checkpoints. ⁽¹⁰⁾
Ground engagements	include kinetic ground operations, stand-off attacks, crossfire and armed clashes between parties to the conflict. Ground engagements include attacks or operations in which small arms, heavy weapons and/or area weapons systems, i.e. mortars and rockets are fired. ⁽¹¹⁾
Haqqani network	An armed insurgent movement under the leadership of Jalaluddin Haqqani and his son Sirajuddin. The headquarters and base are in North Waziristan (Pakistan) and South-East Afghanistan, in areas of the Pashtun tribe of the Zadran.

⁽⁷⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict, July 2014, pp. 74 and 76.

⁽⁸⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict, July 2014, p. 19.

⁽⁹⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict, July 2014, p. 66.

⁽¹⁰⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict, July 2014, p. 45.

⁽¹¹⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict, July 2014, p. 77.

HIA	Hezb-e Islami Afghanistan: An armed insurgent movement under the leadership of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, with strongholds in the East, North-East, South-East and Centre of Afghanistan.
HRW	Human Rights Watch
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IEC	Independent Election Commission
IED	<p>Improvised Explosive Device. This is usually a self-made bomb. It is used in asymmetric warfare. Variants are: ⁽¹²⁾</p> <p>BBIED (Body Borne Improvised Explosive Device), or suicide bomb, is usually a self-made explosive device worn on the body of the attacker. It is commonly held in a vest, but also, for example, concealed in a turban;</p> <p>MIED (Magnetic Improvised Explosive Device) is an IED with a magnet, allowing it to be attached quickly and easily to objects such as a vehicle;</p> <p>PPIED (Pressure-Plate IED) is an IED that is detonated when the victim steps on a pressure-plate;</p> <p>RCIED (Radio or Remote-Controlled Improvised Explosive Device) is an IED that can be detonated by remote control. Users can aim at a specific target passing the location of the IED and detonate from a distance;</p> <p>VBIED (Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Device), or car bomb, is usually a self-made explosive device placed in a car that is driven towards a target or parked at the target location;</p> <p>VOIED (Victim-operated IED) detonates when a person or vehicle triggers the initiator or switch, such as a pressure plate or pressure-release mechanism, trip wire or another device, resulting in an explosion.</p>
IMF	International military forces
IMU	Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan: An armed insurgent movement with many fighters who fled government repression in Uzbekistan.
Indirect fire	Indirect fire weapons, such as mortars, rockets and grenades are high explosive weapons systems which fire projectiles to a location without a direct line of visibility to the target. Mortars cannot be guided to hit a specific target and have a wide-area of impact; when used in civilian-populated areas the risk of civilian casualties is very high (UNAMA definition).
IS	Islamic State, also called ISIS, ISIL or Daesh.
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force: An international military coalition based on the NATO alliance. Until 31 December 2015, it supported the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in its efforts to secure and stabilise the country (http://www.isaf.nato.int/). It was replaced by Resolute Support.
ISI	Pakistan's Inter-Service Intelligence
ISW	Institute for the Study of War
IWPR	Institute for War & Peace Reporting

⁽¹²⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict, July 2014, p. 77.

Jihad	This is a term derived from an Arabic root meaning “to struggle” or “to strive”. It has different meanings but in this report refers to “armed struggle of Islamic insurgents against the Afghan government and their (inter-)national allies”.
Jihadi	The insurgency against the communist regime and Soviet occupation was called a <i>jihad</i> and fighters or commanders from the period (1979-1989) are still today often referred to as jihadi(commanders).
KIA	Kabul International Airport
LDI	Local Defense Initiative
LeI	Lashkar-e Islami: A militant sectarian group formed in 2004 under Mufti Shakir in Khyber Agency in Pakistan. ⁽¹³⁾
LeJ	Lashkar-e Jhangvi: A violent, anti-Shiite militant group in Pakistan, formed in 1995. It has carried out a number of attacks on minority groups in Pakistan with the aim of establishing Pakistan as an orthodox Deobandi state. ⁽¹⁴⁾
LeT	Lashkar-e Taiba: A Sunni militant group, which follows the Ahle-Hadith interpretation of Islam. LeT was formed in 1990 and initially trained in the Kunar province of Afghanistan. It is now based near Lahore in Pakistan. LeT’s declared goals include conducting jihad in the way of Allah, preaching the true religion and training of a new generation along true Islamic lines. It aligns its ideological goals with the interests of the Pakistani state. It seeks to liberate Kashmir and merge it with Pakistan using violent means. It aims to change the regional and geopolitical dynamic of Afghanistan, Pakistan and India by attacking civilian targets. ⁽¹⁵⁾
Mawlawi	is a honorific title given to a scholar who completed Islamic studies in a madrassa.
MoD	Ministry of Defence
MoHE	Ministry of Higher Education
Moi	Ministry of the Interior
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
Mujahideen	Islamic holy warriors. The term dates back to the 1980s, when Islamic fighting groups opposed the communist regime and the military forces of the former Soviet Union in Afghanistan.
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OSI	Open Society Institute
PC	Provincial Council
PPS	Presidential Protection Service
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Teams
PSD	Protection Status Determination
Resolute Support	As of 1 January 2015, this new non-combat mission with a focus on training, advising and assisting ANSF, is the successor of ISAF.

⁽¹³⁾ Stanford University, ‘Lashkar-e-Islam’, Mapping Militant Organizations, updated on: 28 August 2012.

⁽¹⁴⁾ Stanford University, ‘Lashkar-e-Jhangvi’, Mapping Militant Organizations, updated on: 3 August 2012.

⁽¹⁵⁾ Stanford University, ‘Lashkar-e-Taiba’, Mapping Militant Organizations, updated on: 3 August 2012.

RFE/RL	Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty
RPG	Rocket Propelled Grenade
RRERS	Regional Rural Economic Regeneration Strategies
SAF	Small Arms Fire
Shura	Community council
Taliban	An armed Islamic insurgent movement in Afghanistan under the leadership of Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansoor and the Leadership Shura in the Pakistani city of Quetta. The movement originated in the Mujahideen era (1980s and 90s), took control of Kabul in 1996 and, by 2001, controlled most of the country.
Tora Bora Military Front	was formed in 2007 by the son of the legendary mujahideen commander Younus Khalis. The group conducted attacks against Afghan and foreign forces in Nangarhar and has its stronghold in the district of Khogyani, and in the areas of Pachir Agam and Shinwar. ⁽¹⁶⁾
TTP	Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan: This is the largest militant group in Pakistan. The organisation was founded on 13 December 2007 in a meeting of tribal elders and 40 senior militants throughout Pakistan. Baitullah Mehsud was appointed the commander of TTP. TTP had pledged allegiance to Mullah Omar, the leader of Taliban in Afghanistan. The main goal behind TTP's establishment was to unite the various factions of the Pakistan Taliban in order to organise synchronised attacks on NATO/ISAF forces in Afghanistan. The group also carries out "defensive jihad" against Pakistani military forces conducting operations in FATA. ⁽¹⁷⁾
UAV	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (drone)
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNGASC	United Nations General Assembly Security Council
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
USACAC	United States Army Combined Arms Center
Ushr	is an Islamic tax (normally 10%) on certain products, for example agricultural products.
USIP	United States Institute of Peace
WFP	World Food Programme
Zakat	is a religious tax on assets and liquidity (2.5%). The practice of almsgiving or zakat is one of the five pillars of Islam.

⁽¹⁶⁾ EASO, Country of Origin Information Report, Afghanistan, Taliban Strategies – Recruitment, July 2012, p. 24.

⁽¹⁷⁾ Stanford University, 'Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan', Mapping Militant Organizations, updated on: 7 August 2012.

Introduction

This report is an update of the EASO COI report “Afghanistan Security Situation” published in January 2015. ⁽¹⁸⁾

This report was drafted by Country of Origin Information (COI) specialists from the COI units and asylum offices listed as co-authors under the Acknowledgements section, together with the European Asylum Support Office (EASO).

The report aims to provide information on the security situation in Afghanistan, which is relevant for international protection status determination (PSD; refugee status and subsidiary protection). The terms of reference can be found in Annex 2.

Methodology

Defining the terms of reference ⁽¹⁹⁾

In 2014, through its work with Member States (MS), EASO identified the need among MS for detailed security updates supporting decision- and policy-makers in the assessment of the need for refugee protection and subsidiary protection, especially taking into account article 15(c) of the Qualification Directive (QD). This, together with article 2(f) QD, defines a number of key elements such as: a “real risk of serious harm”; an “internal or international armed conflict”; “indiscriminate violence”; the term “civilian”; and a “serious and individual threat to life or person”.

Based on various sources consulted by EASO ⁽²⁰⁾, these key elements can be broken down into topics and/or indicators. Examples include: parties to the conflict; intensity level of the violence; nature of the violence; regional spreading of the violence; targets of the violence; risk of collateral damage; use of arms and tactics; possibility to reach areas – security of transport (roads and airports); and indirect effects of the violence/conflict.

Based upon a study of all the mentioned sources, a list of elements and indicators was drafted, which served as a basis for the terms of reference (see [Annex 2](#)). In order to make a well-informed assessment of the fear of persecution or risk of serious harm, information is needed on these security-related elements and indicators on a regional, provincial or even district level in the country of origin.

Members of the EASO COI Specialist Network on Afghanistan and UNHCR gave input on the terms of reference that were finalised by the co-authors in September 2014 taking all the inputs into account. In March 2015, EASO held a practical cooperation meeting on Afghanistan in Brussels, in which the participating EU+ ⁽²¹⁾ countries gave feedback on the first version of this report.

Collecting information

The present report presents information collected between April and 9 October 2015. After this, some additional research was done in the review phase on selected topics only. A limited number of specialised paper-based and electronic sources were consulted within the timeframe and the scope of the research. Regarding media reports on security incidents mentioned for illustration under the regional description of the security situation, the reference period was from 1 November 2014 to 31 August 2015. Taking into account the importance and significance of the events in September and October 2015 in north Afghanistan (fall of Kunduz, assault on Maimana, airstrike on MSF hospital), EASO decided to also include these events in the report.

⁽¹⁸⁾ EASO COI reports are available via EASO’s website: (<http://easo.europa.eu/asylum-documentation/easo-publication-and-documentation/>).

⁽¹⁹⁾ See [annex 2](#).

⁽²⁰⁾ The elements, topics and indicators were identified by various sources that have a different position in the legal hierarchy and provide different levels of detail: The Qualification Directive (Recitals and articles); Case law from the Court of Justice of the EU in Luxembourg; National State Practice (National legislation; National case law; National policy and first instance decision practice); Case law from the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg; Opinions of experts, academics and specialised organisations; See the following EASO publications: EASO, Article 15(c) Qualification Directive (2011/95/EU) A judicial analysis, December 2014 (<https://easo.europa.eu/wp-content/uploads/Article-15c-Qualification-Directive-201195EU-A-judicial-analysis.pdf>); The Implementation of Article 15(c) QD in EU Member States, July 2015 (https://easo.europa.eu/wp-content/uploads/EASO_The-Implementation-of-Art-15c-QD-in-EU-Member-States.pdf).

⁽²¹⁾ EU+ countries are the EU Member States plus the associated countries Norway and Switzerland.

Furthermore, a number of contact persons were interviewed. For security reasons, not all contacts were named; the choice had to be made between not interviewing them at all and referring to them as “anonymous sources”. Considering the value of the information provided, the latter approach was preferred.

In particular, one source was used as a standard for quantitative data on security incidents. A Western security official⁽²²⁾, who cannot be named, provided data on security incidents on a level of detail, per district, not available via any public source. EASO produced provincial maps and tables based on these data, which can be found in the provincial parts. The source has been assessed as highly reliable and as using a detailed and appropriate methodology for the collection of data on security incidents in conflict zones. The number and type of security incidents is an important indicator in the terms of reference of this report (see [Annex 2](#)) and is potentially very useful for the assessment of the situation in the different provinces and districts of Afghanistan. The information provided by the source is in line with trends or information provided by other (public) sources. For these reasons, the choice was made to use this anonymous source. However, the statistics provided by the source should not be used as conclusive for the assessment of the protection needs, but can be taken as indicative of security trends when read together with other indicators and information in this report.

The data are presented in graphs and maps in every part on the respective provinces of Afghanistan. The categories of violent incidents include several types of incidents, for example:

- Violent incidents targeting individuals: kidnapping, targeted killing, intimidation, harassment...
- Explosions: IED detonations, suicide bombings...
- Non-conflict related violent incidents: criminal activities, drug trade...
- Security enforcement: arrests, weapons cached...

Furthermore, where deemed relevant, information has been sourced from the Taliban’s English website.⁽²³⁾ While Taliban reports on casualties inflicted on the enemy or military equipment seized are probably exaggerated, they have proven to be fairly accurate concerning territorial gains in the past⁽²⁴⁾ and provide also valuable information concerning their own command structure. It should be noted that Western or Afghan media reports on casualties inflicted on insurgents and regained control over district centres are often not accurate or exaggerated.⁽²⁵⁾

Quality control

In order to ensure that the co-authors respected the EASO COI Report Methodology, a review was carried out by COI specialists from the countries and organisations listed as reviewers in the Acknowledgements section. All comments made by the reviewers were taken into consideration and most of them were implemented in the final draft of this report.

Structure and use of this report

This report provides information on elements and indicators that may help in assessing the need for protection. It is not meant to be read as a whole. In the first part a general description is given on the security situation in Afghanistan and regional differences are highlighted. These are then explained in greater detail in the second part, holding a regional description of geographic subdivisions (Kabul city and 34 provinces).

Both parts, the general and regional description, provide information from various sources on the relevant elements and indicators. Information on an indicator as such should never be taken as conclusive but as indicative for protection assessment and is to be read together with all other indicators and information on the region (or province, district).

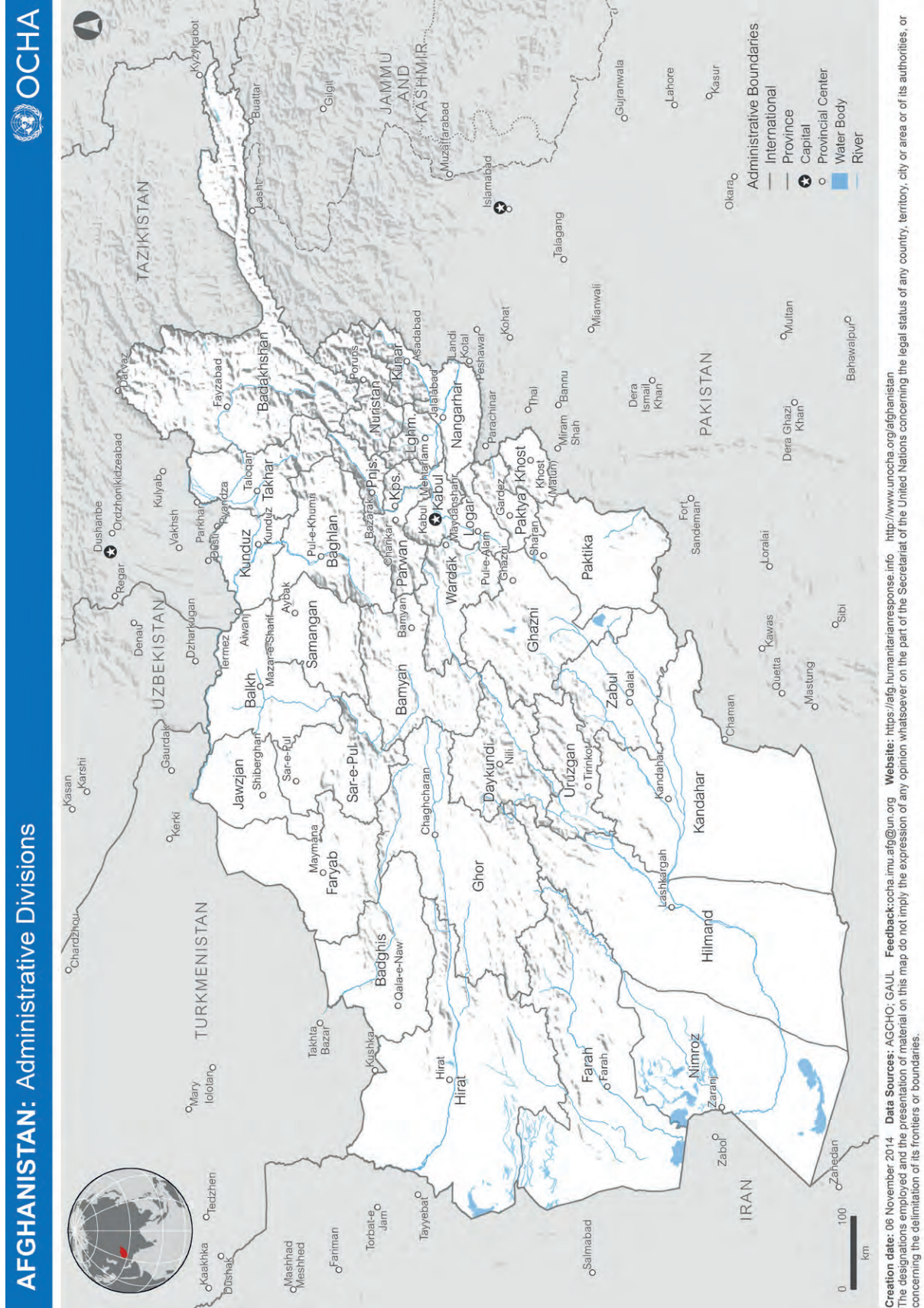
⁽²²⁾ Throughout the report referred to as : Western security official; Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - September 2015.

⁽²³⁾ <http://shahamat-english.com/>

⁽²⁴⁾ See also: Roggio, B., Taliban claims it seized 3 districts in Takhar province, Threatmatrix, a blog of the Long War Journal [weblog], 29 September 2015; Bernatis, V., ‘The Taliban and Twitter: Tactical Reporting and Strategic Messaging’, 2014.

⁽²⁵⁾ Ruttig, T., The Second Fall of Musa Qala: How the Taleban are expanding territorial control, 3 September 2015.

Map of Afghanistan



1. General description of the security situation in Afghanistan

The security situation will be described in this report using the following administrative divisions:

- Centre: Kabul; Kapisa; Panjshir; Parwan; Wardak; Logar;
- Central Highlands: Bamyan; Daykundi;
- South: Nimroz; Helmand; Kandahar; Uruzgan; Zabul;
- South-East: Ghazni; Paktika; Paktya; Khost;
- East: Nangarhar; Laghman; Kunar; Nuristan;
- North-East: Baghlan; Kunduz; Takhar; Badakhshan;
- North: Faryab; Jawzjan; Sar-e Pul; Balkh; Samangan;
- West: Herat; Badghis; Ghor; Farah.

The general security situation in Afghanistan is mainly determined by the following four factors: The main factor is the conflict between the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), supported by the International Military Forces (IMF), and Anti-Government Elements (AGEs), or insurgents. This conflict is often described as an “insurgency”. The other factors are: criminality, warlordism and tribal tensions. These factors are often inter-linked and hard to distinguish. ⁽²⁶⁾ Several sources consider the situation in Afghanistan to be a non-international armed conflict. ⁽²⁷⁾

The UN stated in September 2015 that: ⁽²⁸⁾

The sustained conflict, which grew in both intensity and geographic scope, continued to result in significant casualties and displacement among Afghan civilians, as the Afghan National Security Forces sought to counter the efforts of insurgent groups to undermine the Government.

1.1 Overview of recent conflicts in Afghanistan

The so-called *Saur* Revolution on 27 April 1978 brought the Afghan communists to power. ⁽²⁹⁾ In 1979, the government of the former Soviet Union (SU) invaded Afghanistan to support the communist Afghan government. The invasion was followed by a decade of armed conflict between the Afghan government, supported by Soviet troops, and armed opposition groups, often referred to as the *mujahideen*. These groups were divided into several different factions, but they all participated in a nation-wide armed uprising that lasted until the government finally collapsed in 1992, following the Soviet troops’ withdrawal in 1989. ⁽³⁰⁾

After this collapse, a period generally referred to as “the Civil War” saw different mujahideen groups who had formed new alliances and fronts fight for control of Afghanistan. War between the competing mujahideen factions and militias was characterised by severe human rights breaches. ⁽³¹⁾ This led to the emergence in 1994 of a group called the Taliban, who brought stability in areas under their control, which won them support from the population. ⁽³²⁾ They gradually gained more control and conquered Kabul in 1996. By 2001, the Taliban controlled most of the Afghan territory. But by the end of the year, as a consequence of the 11 September attacks in the US, they were ousted by a

⁽²⁶⁾ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 7 March 2014, p. 13; Ruttig, T., Warlords, Religious Leaders, Insurgents: Three external publications, 7 October 2014; Dorronsoro, G., ‘Afghanistan: The impossible transition’, June 2011, pp. 10, 12 and 15; Giustozzi, A., Koran, Kalashnikov and laptop. The Neo – Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan, 2007, pp. 55-62.

⁽²⁷⁾ Gross, R., ‘Chief Legal Advisor for the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and legal advisor for US forces in Afghanistan in 2009 and 2010’, 15 November 2013, p. 85; Geiß, R. and Siegrist, M., ‘Has the armed conflict in Afghanistan affected the rules on the conduct of hostilities?’, March 2011, pp. 13-16; UNAMA, Afghanistan Midyear Report 2015, Protection of civilians in armed conflict, August 2015, p. 81; UNHCR, Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Asylum Seekers from Afghanistan, 6 August 2013, p. 10.

⁽²⁸⁾ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 1 September 2015, p. 1.

⁽²⁹⁾ Barfield, T., A Cultural and Political History, 2010, pp. 195-225.

⁽³⁰⁾ Barfield, T., A Cultural and Political History, 2010, pp. 227-233, 238-239; BBC, Afghanistan profile – Timeline, updated on: 27 October 2015; Ipsos/ICRC, Our world. Views from the field. Summary report: Afghanistan, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Georgia, Haiti, Lebanon, Liberia and the Philippines. Opinion Survey, June 2009, p. 10; Oxfam International, The Cost of War, Afghan Experiences of Conflict, 1978-2009, November 2009, pp. 7-9.

⁽³¹⁾ Barfield, T., A Cultural and Political History, 2010, p. 253.

⁽³²⁾ Zaeef, A. S., My Life with the Taliban, 2010, p. 10; ICG, The Insurgency in Afghanistan’ Heartland, 17 June 2011, pp. 3-4; Giustozzi, A. and Ibrahimi, N., Thirty Years of Conflict: Drivers of anti-Government Mobilisation in Afghanistan, 1978-2011, January 2012, p. 22.

US-led military operation. The US gave its support to the mujahideen front opposing the Taliban, at that time known as *Northern Alliance* or *Northern coalition*.⁽³³⁾

On 22 December 2001, based on the so-called Bonn Agreement, an Afghan interim government was formed, led by Hamid Karzai, a Pashtun, who also won the first presidential elections in October 2004.⁽³⁴⁾ By then, the Taliban had reorganised and engaged in an insurgency against the Karzai government which was supported by an international coalition of armed forces. The insurgents initially infiltrated pockets in South and East Afghanistan. They extended their reach gradually to more areas and started to control territory.⁽³⁵⁾ Other insurgent groups operated with, or alongside, the Taliban, including: Hezb-e Islami Afghanistan (HIA) led by Hekmatyar, the Haqqani network, and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU).⁽³⁶⁾ This insurgency was characterised by mainly asymmetric warfare: insurgents used roadside and suicide bombs and complex⁽³⁷⁾ attacks, intimidation of civilians and targeted killings to destabilise the country. This was countered by searches, clearance operations and bombings by the ANSF and the IMF.⁽³⁸⁾ The security situation rapidly deteriorated from 2006, leading to more direct and open armed confrontations.⁽³⁹⁾

Between 2001 and 2010, insurgents gradually infiltrated and gained ground in the different provinces of Afghanistan.⁽⁴⁰⁾ From 2010 onwards, the Taliban-led insurgency spread into all regions of Afghanistan. In 2013 and 2014, there was a gradual transition of security responsibility from international military forces (IMF) to Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and a political transition with the elections in 2014. Insurgents contested both transitions and this led to increased conflict-related violence.⁽⁴¹⁾

The disputed 2014 presidential election resulted in a political compromise between Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah who accepted a power-share by way of taking the newly created function of Chief Executive. The last months of 2014 and the beginning of 2015 were characterised by the establishment of a government of national unity, under the Presidency of Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah; the completion of the ISAF combat mission; and the transition into the NATO-led Resolute Support mission (see [section on transition](#)). This new government stepped up efforts to initiate a security and reconciliation dialogue, however with limited success. The Taliban, the main opposition faction, stated in January 2015 on its website that it 'wanted peace' on the preconditions of ending foreign military presence, establishment of an Islamic government and the implementation of the Sharia.⁽⁴²⁾ In March 2015, President Ghani agreed with Obama to slow down the US troop withdrawal and maintain 10,000 US troops in order to be able to better train the Afghan military.⁽⁴³⁾ In October 2015, President Obama announced to maintain a force of 9,800 throughout most of 2016 for training the Afghan Security Forces and for supporting them in the fight against remnants of al Qaeda terrorists; and to maintain 5,500 US troops post 2016 in bases in Bagram, Jalalabad and Kandahar.⁽⁴⁴⁾ Finally, the Ghani government made plans to increase the roster of the Afghan Local Police initiative (see [section on ANSF](#)) from 10,000 to 45,000 and is seeking money to continue the program after the scheduled September 2018 expiration of U.S. funding.⁽⁴⁵⁾

⁽³³⁾ Barfield, T., *A Cultural and Political History*, 2010, pp. 248-254 and 258-262; BBC, *Afghanistan profile – Timeline*, updated on: 27 October 2015; Ipsos/ICRC, *Our world. Views from the field. Summary report: Afghanistan, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Georgia, Haiti, Lebanon, Liberia and the Philippines. Opinion Survey*, June 2009, p. 10; Oxfam International, *The Cost of War, Afghan Experiences of Conflict, 1978-2009*, November 2009, pp. 9-12.

⁽³⁴⁾ Oxfam International, *The Cost of War, Afghan Experiences of Conflict, 1978-2009*, November 2009, p. 13.

⁽³⁵⁾ CS Monitor, *Taliban appears to be regrouped and well-funded*, 8 May 2003; Giustozzi, A. and Ibrahim, N., *Thirty Years of Conflict: Drivers of anti-Government Mobilisation in Afghanistan, 1978-2011*, January 2012, p. 44; Roggio, B., *Taliban contest or control large areas of Afghanistan*, 2 December 2009; International NY Times, *Taliban Making Military Gains in Afghanistan*, 26 July 2014.

⁽³⁶⁾ ICG, *The Insurgency in Afghanistan' Heartland*, 17 June 2011, pp. 14-15; UN Security Council, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security*, 18 June 2014, p. 6.

⁽³⁷⁾ See [glossary](#).

⁽³⁸⁾ Giustozzi, A. and Ibrahim, N., *Thirty Years of Conflict: Drivers of anti-Government Mobilisation in Afghanistan, 1978-2011*, January 2012; UNAMA, *Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict*, July 2014.

⁽³⁹⁾ Ipsos/ICRC, *Our world. Views from the field. Summary report: Afghanistan, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Georgia, Haiti, Lebanon, Liberia and the Philippines. Opinion Survey*, June 2009, p. 10; EASO, *Country of Origin Information Report, Afghanistan, Taliban Strategies – Recruitment*, July 2012, pp. 16-17, 24; Geiß, R. and Siegrist, M., 'Has the armed conflict in Afghanistan affected the rules on the conduct of hostilities?', March 2011, pp. 17-21; UN Security Council, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security*, 7 March 2014; UN Security Council, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security*, 18 June 2014.

⁽⁴⁰⁾ Giustozzi, A. and Ibrahim, N., *Thirty Years of Conflict: Drivers of anti-Government Mobilisation in Afghanistan, 1978-2011*, January 2012, p. 44.

⁽⁴¹⁾ UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Afghanistan*, 15 May 2015, p. 2.

⁽⁴²⁾ UN Security Council, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security*, 27 February 2015, pp. 1-3; USIP, *Urgent Imperative: Get Afghanistan's Government Working*, 10 December 2015.

⁽⁴³⁾ BBC, *Ashraf Ghani visit: US to slow Afghan troops withdrawal*, 24 March 2015.

⁽⁴⁴⁾ WSJ, *Obama: Troops to Remain in Afghanistan Past 2016 [video]*, 15 October 2015.

⁽⁴⁵⁾ ICG, *The Future of the Afghan Local Police*, 4 June 2015.

From March 2015, President Ghani nominated several Ministers and on 21 May 2015, he nominated Mohammed Masoom Stanekzai as Minister of Defence. ⁽⁴⁶⁾ He was serving as acting Defence Minister, as Parliament did not approve his nomination on 4 July 2015. ⁽⁴⁷⁾ By the end of 2015, the Afghan government still had no Minister of Defense confirmed, due to divisions between Ghani's and Abdullah's factions. The fall of Kunduz city to the Taliban in September 2015 was seen by some analysts as illustrative for the dysfunction in the government and lack of military leadership. ⁽⁴⁸⁾

1.2 Actors in the conflict

1.2.1 Pro-Government Forces (PGF) ⁽⁴⁹⁾

The Pro-Government Forces (PGF) consist of: the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF); Pro-Government Militias (PGM); and the International Military Forces (IMF).

Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF)

The ANSF consist of: the Afghan National Army (ANA); the Afghan National Police (ANP); and the National Directorate of Security (NDS). ⁽⁵⁰⁾ According to the US Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, ANSF forces including civilian staff reached the number of 331,944 in the second quarter of 2015. ⁽⁵¹⁾

Afghan National Army (ANA)

The ANA reports to the Ministry of Defense (MoD) and is part of the armed forces of Afghanistan. According to the UN, the ANA numbered about 180,000 personnel in mid-2014. ⁽⁵²⁾ As of May 2015, the US reported 176,762 ANA staff. ⁽⁵³⁾ The ANA is seen as one of the strongest institutions in Afghanistan, although there are many challenges, including reinforcing or resupplying units in remote areas. ⁽⁵⁴⁾ Other difficulties include its high casualty and desertion rates, the need for better equipment and the lack of a strong air force. The Afghan Air Force (AAF) is still developing: It comprises 7,000 staff, some transport airplanes and helicopters and a few attack helicopters. ⁽⁵⁵⁾ In 2015, it was reported that attrition rates in the ANA were decreasing. ⁽⁵⁶⁾

Afghan National Police (ANP)

The ANP is the police force under the Ministry of Interior (MoI). According to the UN, the ANP had 147,077 personnel in mid-2014. It has several specialised divisions: Afghan Uniformed Police (AUP – more than 110,000 personnel); the Afghan National Border Police (ANBP); the Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP); the Counter-Narcotics Police of Afghanistan (CNPA). ⁽⁵⁷⁾ As of May 2015, the US reported 155,182 ANP staff. ⁽⁵⁸⁾

In August 2010, the Afghan Local Police (ALP) was created as a security initiative led by the MoI and funded by the US government. The ALP functions under the supervision of the district AUP. ALP members are selected by village

⁽⁴⁶⁾ SCR, June 2015 Monthly Forecast, Afghanistan, 1 June 2015.

⁽⁴⁷⁾ SCR, September 2015 Monthly Forecast, Afghanistan, 31 August 2015.

⁽⁴⁸⁾ USIP, Urgent Imperative: Get Afghanistan's Government Working, 10 December 2015; Jalali, A. and Smith, S., Afghanistan's bubble of optimism bursts, 18 November 2015.

⁽⁴⁹⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan Midyear Report 2015, Protection of civilians in armed conflict, August 2015, p. 91.

⁽⁵⁰⁾ UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Afghanistan, 15 May 2015, p. 3.

⁽⁵¹⁾ SIGAR, Quarterly Report to the US Congress, 30 July 2015, p. 98.

⁽⁵²⁾ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 1 September 2015; UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 9 September 2014; SIGAR, Quarterly Report to the US Congress, 30 October 2014, pp. 92 and 99.

⁽⁵³⁾ SIGAR, Quarterly Report to the US Congress, 30 July 2015, p. 99.

⁽⁵⁴⁾ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 1 September 2015, p. 5.

⁽⁵⁵⁾ SIGAR, Quarterly Report to the US Congress, 30 October 2014, pp. 99-100, 102-104; Giustozzi, A. and Quentin, P., The Afghan National Army: Sustainability Challenges beyond Financial Aspects, February 2014; Osman, B., Can the Taleban outwrestle the government? An assessment of the insurgency's military capability, 25 March 2014; NY Times, War Deaths Top 13,000 in Afghan Security Forces, 3 March 2014.

⁽⁵⁶⁾ SIGAR, Quarterly Report to the US Congress, 30 July 2015, p. 99; UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 1 September 2015.

⁽⁵⁷⁾ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 9 September 2014, p. 7; UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 9 September 2014; ISAF, Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), 26 October 2010; SIGAR, Quarterly Report to the US Congress, 30 October 2014, pp. 99-100; 106.

⁽⁵⁸⁾ SIGAR, Quarterly Report to the US Congress, 30 July 2015, p. 99.

elders or local power brokers to protect their communities against Taliban attack, guard facilities and conduct local counterinsurgency missions. ⁽⁵⁹⁾

As of 18 January 2015, the ALP had 27,950 personnel in 157 districts in 29 provinces (not present in Bamyan, Khost, Nimroz, Panjshir or Samangan). ⁽⁶⁰⁾ As of May 2015, the strength of the force was reportedly 28,356 personnel, 25,179 of whom were fully trained. This was a decrease compared to the previous month. ⁽⁶¹⁾

Despite allegations of serious misbehaviour and human rights violations by the ALP in the early years of its existence ⁽⁶²⁾, a majority of communities reported to the UN in 2014 an improved security situation due to this initiative, albeit allegations of ALP abuses continued to be reported, including extrajudicial killings, sexual abuse, theft, land appropriation, extortion and illegal taxation. ⁽⁶³⁾ In 2015, sources again report more concerns about the abuses by the ALP. The international Crisis group concluded: ⁽⁶⁴⁾

However, the ALP program has not improved security in many places and even exacerbated the conflict in a number of districts. A minority of villagers describe it as an indispensable source of protection, without which their districts would become battlegrounds or insurgent havens, but it is more common to hear complaints that ALP prey upon the people they are supposed to guard.

Pro-Government Militias (PGM)

A specific local security structure has existed in Afghan society for hundreds of years: the *arbaki*, community or tribal armies. ⁽⁶⁵⁾ Different paramilitary initiatives have been developed and formalised to support the Afghan government and assist the formal armed forces of Afghanistan. At various points in time, local militias and armed groups were thus given an official role in the security apparatus of the government. Examples include: Afghan National Auxiliary Police (ANAP); Community Defence Forces (CDF); and the Local Defense Initiative (LDI). These have all ceased to exist but the Afghan Local Police (ALP – see [section on ANP](#)) now operates within this security structure. ⁽⁶⁶⁾

From the beginning of the insurgency, the government and international military forces (IMF) have also relied on militias that are not part of any formal government entity, for example for searches, night raids or executions. This happened for instance during the Andar uprising ⁽⁶⁷⁾ against the Taliban. Another example was at Kunduz, where human rights violations by such militias were repeatedly reported. These violations also took place in other provinces and they included deliberate killing, kidnappings, extortion, theft and assaults. UNAMA expressed its concerns about the increased use of armed militias by the government in the first half of 2015, especially in the North and North-East regions. ⁽⁶⁸⁾

International Military Forces (IMF)

UNAMA explains the scope of the term “International Military Forces” as follows: ⁽⁶⁹⁾

‘International Military Forces’ include all foreign troops forming part of NATO-led Operation Resolute Support (formerly International Security Assistance Force, ISAF) and other US Forces Afghanistan (including Operation

⁽⁵⁹⁾ SIGAR, Quarterly Report to the US Congress, 30 October 2014, p. 98.

⁽⁶⁰⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan. Annual Report 2014. Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, February 2015, p.79.

⁽⁶¹⁾ SIGAR, Quarterly Report to the US Congress, 30 July 2015, p. 106.

⁽⁶²⁾ HRW, Just Don’t Call It a Militia, September 2011, pp. 58-75; Saum-Manning, L., VSO/ALP: Comparing Past and Current Challenges to Afghan Local Defense, December 2012.

⁽⁶³⁾ IWPR, Afghans Want More Funding for Local Police, But More Scrutiny Too, 3 September 2015; ICG, The Future of the Afghan Local Police, 4 June 2015, p. 8; UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 18 June 2014; UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 9 September 2014, p. 8; UNAMA, Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict, July 2014, p. 46; UNAMA, Afghanistan. Annual Report 2014. Protection of civilians in armed conflict, February 2015, p. 80.

⁽⁶⁴⁾ ICG, The Future of the Afghan Local Police, 4 June 2015, page I; NY Times, Afghan Plan to Expand Militia Raises Abuse Concerns, 16 October 2015; UNAMA, Afghanistan Midyear Report 2015, Protection of civilians in armed conflict, August 2015, pp. 69-72.

⁽⁶⁵⁾ Seraj, A., Opinion: The Arbaki can secure Afghanistan better than the US, updated on: 5 November 2014; HRW, Just Don’t Call It a Militia, September 2011, pp. 13-14.

⁽⁶⁶⁾ HRW, Just Don’t Call It a Militia, September 2011.

⁽⁶⁷⁾ Habib, E., The Morphing of the Andar Uprising: transition to Afghan Local Police, 2 April 2013.

⁽⁶⁸⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan Midyear Report 2015, Protection of civilians in armed conflict, August 2015, p. 73; HRW, Today we shall all die, 3 March 2015; Irinnews, Abuses rise along with pro-Afghan government militias, 7 September 2015; Al Jazeera America, Exclusive: A US-backed militia runs amok in Afghanistan, 23 July 2014; VOA, In Afghan North, US-Backed Militias Spur Local Backlash, 23 November 2011; Hewad, G., Legal, illegal: Militia recruitment and (failed) disarmament in Kunduz, 10 November 2012; Bleuer, C. and Ali, O., Security in Kunduz Worsening Further: The case of Khanabad, 28 October 2014; Irinnews, AFGHANISTAN: Fears over child recruitment, abuse by pro-government militias, 20 January 2011.

⁽⁶⁹⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan Midyear Report 2015, Protection of civilians in armed conflict, August 2015, p. 90.

Freedom's Sentinel, which replaced Operation Enduring Freedom on 1 January 2015) who are under the Commander of Resolute Support (COM-RS), who is also Commander of the US Forces in Afghanistan. The term also encompasses Special Operations Forces and other foreign intelligence and security forces.

Until 31 December 2014, IMF operated under two military missions: Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).⁽⁷⁰⁾

Operation Enduring Freedom began on 7 October 2001, with air strikes on Taliban and al Qaeda targets, executed by the US and its allies.⁽⁷¹⁾ ISAF was deployed under a peace enforcement mandate pursuant to Chapter VII of the UN Charter and the authority of the UN Security Council. It operated between August 2003 and 31 December 2014 under NATO command.⁽⁷²⁾ Its mission was to support the Afghan government and reduce the capability and will of the insurgency.⁽⁷³⁾ As of 6 October 2014, ISAF's total strength was 34,512 troops, from 48 contributing nations.⁽⁷⁴⁾

Transition and Operation Resolute Support

From 2010, the process of gradual transition of security responsibilities from IMF to ANSF was implemented to be completed by the end of 2014.⁽⁷⁵⁾ From 2012, countries started withdrawing troops from combat missions in Afghanistan and ending military operations in Afghanistan.⁽⁷⁶⁾ On 18 June 2013, the ANSF formally took over combat operations.⁽⁷⁷⁾ On 31 December 2014, ISAF's mandate expired and on 1 January 2015, this led to the transition from NATO's ISAF combat mission to a new non-combat mission (Resolute Support) with a focus on training, advising and assisting ANSF.⁽⁷⁸⁾ The United States and Afghanistan announced in a joint statement that the former would maintain 9,800 troops until the end of 2015⁽⁷⁹⁾ (down from a peak of about 100,000⁽⁸⁰⁾).

1.2.2 Anti-Government Elements (AGEs)

UNAMA defines "Anti-Government Elements" (also referred to as insurgents) as:⁽⁸¹⁾

all individuals and armed groups involved in armed conflict with or armed opposition against the Government of Afghanistan and/or international military forces. They include those who identify as 'Taliban' as well as individuals and non-State organised armed groups taking a direct part in hostilities and assuming a variety of labels including the Haqqani Network, Hezb-e-Islami, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Islamic Jihad Union, Lashkari Tayyiba, Jaysh Muhammed, groups identifying themselves as 'Daesh' and other militia and armed groups pursuing political, ideological or economic objectives including armed criminal groups directly engaged in hostile acts on behalf a party to the conflict.

In recent years, the range of insurgent groups and splinter groups has widened. Besides the main insurgent forces (Taliban, Haqqani network, HIA, IMU), several smaller groups have reappeared that are often even more radical than the Taliban. Examples of such splinter groups are: Feday-e Mahaz (suicide brigade); Mullah Dadullah Front; Jihadi Shura of Mujahidin for Unity and Understanding;⁽⁸²⁾ Tora Bora Front; Jamat Sunat al-Dawa Salafia and the Latif Mansur Network.⁽⁸³⁾

⁽⁷⁰⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict, July 2014, p. 78; CNN, Operation Enduring Freedom Fast Facts, updated on: 27 October 2014.

⁽⁷¹⁾ CNN, Operation Enduring Freedom Fast Facts, updated on: 27 October 2014.

⁽⁷²⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict, July 2014, p. 78.

⁽⁷³⁾ ISAF, About ISAF – Mission, n.d.

⁽⁷⁴⁾ ISAF, International Security Assistance Force (ISAF): Key Facts and Figures, 6 October 2014.

⁽⁷⁵⁾ NATO, Inteqal: Transition to Afghan lead, updated on: 13 October 2014.

⁽⁷⁶⁾ CNN, France pulls last troops from combat roles in Afghanistan, 20 December 2012; Government of Canada, Canadian Armed Forces completes military mission in Afghanistan, 12 March 2014; CNN, UK formally ends combat mission in Afghanistan, 26 October 2014.

⁽⁷⁷⁾ CNN, Operation Enduring Freedom Fast Facts, updated on: 27 October 2014.

⁽⁷⁸⁾ NATO, Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan, updated on: 27 February 2015; UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Afghanistan, 15 May 2015, p. 2.

⁽⁷⁹⁾ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 10 June 2015, p. 4.

⁽⁸⁰⁾ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 18 June 2014; UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 9 September 2014; RFE/RL, Explainer: Key Points In U.S.-Afghan Bilateral Security Agreement, 30 September 2014.

⁽⁸¹⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan Midyear Report 2015, Protection of civilians in armed conflict, August 2015, p. 86.

⁽⁸²⁾ RFE/RL, Taliban Splinter Groups Add To Election Fears In Afghanistan, 13 March 2014.

⁽⁸³⁾ UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Afghanistan, 15 May 2015, pp. 3, 6.

In June 2015, the UN reported that the majority of an estimated 7,180 foreign fighters across the country were associated with Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU).⁽⁸⁴⁾

Most of the groups mentioned in this chapter have a history or roots in prior phases of Afghanistan's recent conflict history, even dating back to the first mujahideen period in the 1970s. However, more details about their respective backgrounds do not fall within the scope of this report.

Taliban

The Taliban are insurgent groups that acknowledged the leadership (Amir-ul-Momineen) of Mullah Mohammad Omar and the Taliban Leadership Council in Quetta, Pakistan. The Taliban leadership ruled Afghanistan between 1996 and 2001 and regrouped after it was ousted from power. The different groups have varying operational autonomy, but there is a governing system under the Leadership Council with several regional and local layers. They have a Military Council and a command structure with, at the lowest level, front commanders overseeing a group of fighters. The governing structure and military command is defined in the Taliban's Lahya or Code of Conduct.⁽⁸⁵⁾

Amir-ul-Momineen Mullah Mohammad Omar reportedly died on 23 April 2013 and was laid to rest in Afghanistan where he lived. However, his death was not officially announced until more than two years later. Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansoor was appointed as the new leader in July 2015. During the reign of the Islamic Emirate, he worked as the minister of aviation and post-2001 he was Jihadi in-charge of Kandahar province and member of the leading council. Mullah Omar appointed him as the deputy head of the Islamic Emirate in 2010.⁽⁸⁶⁾ With the announcement of the leader's death and the appointment of Mansoor as new leader, rifts emerged within the Taliban leadership about the succession. But Mansoor got the support of a significant part of the leadership and al Qaeda leader, al-Zawahiri, also pledged allegiance to Mansoor.⁽⁸⁷⁾ Rival Taliban factions continued to exist and challenge the new leader nevertheless.⁽⁸⁸⁾

On 22 April 2015, the Taliban announced its spring offensive, named *Azm*, and indicated the following targets: 'foreign occupiers especially their permanent military bases, their intelligence and diplomatic centres, as well as government officials and Afghan security forces'.⁽⁸⁹⁾ The offensive started off with almost simultaneous attacks in 22 provinces in Afghanistan.⁽⁹⁰⁾

Haqqani network

The Haqqani network is an insurgent network in the south-east of Afghanistan, with its origins in the 1970s mujahideen groups. Its leader, Jalaluddin Haqqani, has attacked Afghan government officials since 1971. It is believed he fled to Pakistan in late 2001, where currently the network has its most important base in North Waziristan. Due to his age, he handed over the practical leadership to his son, Serajuddin Haqqani. Although the network has maintained an autonomous position, structure and its own modus operandi, it is considered part of the Taliban. It is known for various high-profile attacks on targets in Kabul city.⁽⁹¹⁾

Hezb-e Islami Afghanistan

Hezb-e Islami Afghanistan (HIA) is an insurgent group led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. The group has the withdrawal of foreign troops as a goal, has conducted high-profile attacks in the capital, but has been more open to negotiation with the Afghan government than the Taliban. The latter criticise HIA for this and on occasions there has been fighting between both insurgent groups in different areas. On other occasions they have cooperated. HIA's strongholds are

⁽⁸⁴⁾ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 10 June 2015, p. 5.

⁽⁸⁵⁾ EASO, Country of Origin Information Report, Afghanistan, Taliban Strategies – Recruitment, July 2012, pp. 18-20.

⁽⁸⁶⁾ Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, A detailed interview of Zabihullah Mujahid with the Daily Asharq Al-Awsat about the recent developments, September 2015; RFE/RL, Afghan Government Says Taliban Leader Mullah Omar Dead, updated on: 29 July 2015.

⁽⁸⁷⁾ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 1 September 2015, p. 2; RFE/RL, Top Taliban Official Quits Amid Succession Questions, 4 August 2014.

⁽⁸⁸⁾ Jibrán, A., Exclusive: Dissident commanders meet to choose rival Afghan Taliban leader, 20 October 2015; NY Times, Taliban's New Leader in Afghanistan Moves to Quash Dissent, 6 September 2015.

⁽⁸⁹⁾ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 10 June 2015, p. 4.

⁽⁹⁰⁾ UN Security Council, Letter dated 18 August 2015 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council, 26 August 2015, p. 5.

⁽⁹¹⁾ Jamestown Foundation, 'The Haqqani Network and Cross-Border Terrorism in Afghanistan', 24 March 2008; Ruttig, T., Talking Haqqani, 1 July 2010; Washington Times, Haqqani Network, Pakistan terror group, grows into worst enemy for U.S., 5 June 2014.

located in the east and south-east of Afghanistan, in the areas surrounding Kabul, in Baghlan and Kunduz. The group's major field commander is Kashmir Khan, who is active in eastern Afghanistan. ⁽⁹²⁾

Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan

The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) is an insurgent network with many fighters who fled government suppression in Uzbekistan. It has links with the Taliban and with insurgent groups in Pakistan. It is active in areas of Faryab, Takhar, Balkh and Kunduz and also operates in East Afghanistan where it is affiliated with al Qaeda. It conducts attacks on ANSF. ⁽⁹³⁾

On 31 March 2015, the IMU reportedly pledged allegiance to Islamic State (IS). ⁽⁹⁴⁾

Al Qaeda and affiliated groups

In the east of Afghanistan, al Qaeda is present and its affiliated groups carry out attacks on ANSF. Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Lashkar-e Taiba (LeT), and Lashkar-e Jhangvi (LeJ) are groups ⁽⁹⁵⁾ mainly operating from Pakistan. ⁽⁹⁶⁾ Al Qaeda-related groups were reportedly not organised under a coordinated leadership, but they contribute to insecurity in border regions with Pakistan. ⁽⁹⁷⁾

Al Qaeda was reported to have training camps established in several locations in the south and the east of Afghanistan. ⁽⁹⁸⁾

Islamic State (IS)

It has been recently reported that Islamic State (IS; also called ISIS, ISIL or *Daesh*) infiltrated the Afghan insurgent scene. ⁽⁹⁹⁾ There has been discussion about the real or actual importance of the appearance of IS in Afghanistan; some groups in Afghanistan have started using the flag and name of IS without having a real link to the organisation. Several sources report that this mainly concerns discontented insurgents. ⁽¹⁰⁰⁾

On the other hand, there are groups that have a real relation with IS in Syria. Islamic State has historical links with groups in Pakistan, where several IS fighters and commanders were trained. Using these networks, IS individuals travelled back to Pakistan and Afghanistan where they contacted insurgent groups such as factions of the TTP. ⁽¹⁰¹⁾ IS envisages global expansion of the caliphate, and calls the region of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran and central-Asian republics, *wolayat Khurasan*. A Jamestown report confirms the contacts between IS and jihadist groups in Pakistan and Afghanistan. The report affirms the allegiance pledged to the leader of IS, al-Baghdadi, by groups such as Tehrik-e-Khilafat Pakistan, the Shahidullah Shahid Group of TTP and Jundullah. ⁽¹⁰²⁾ Also IMU pledged allegiance to IS. ⁽¹⁰³⁾

⁽⁹²⁾ EASO, Country of Origin Information Report, Afghanistan, Taliban Strategies – Recruitment, July 2012, p. 24; Münch, P. and Ruttig, T., 'Between Negotiations and Ongoing Resistance. The Situation of the Afghan Insurgency', 2014.

⁽⁹³⁾ EASO, Country of Origin Information Report, Afghanistan, Taliban Strategies – Recruitment, July 2012, p. 24; UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 18 June 2014.

⁽⁹⁴⁾ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 10 June 2015, p. 5.

⁽⁹⁵⁾ See [Glossary](#).

⁽⁹⁶⁾ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 18 June 2014; EASO, Country of Origin Information Report, Afghanistan, Taliban Strategies – Recruitment, July 2012, p. 24.

⁽⁹⁷⁾ UN Security Council, Letter dated 18 August 2015 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council, 26 August 2015, pp. 10-11.

⁽⁹⁸⁾ LWJ, US military strikes large al Qaeda training camps in southern Afghanistan, 13 October 2015.

⁽⁹⁹⁾ RFE/RL, Islamic State Seen Making Small Inroads In Afghanistan, 14 August 2015.

⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ Latifi, Ali M., Skype interview, 7 September 2015; Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, A detailed interview of Zabihullah Mujahid with the Daily Asharq Al-Awsat about the recent developments, September 2015; UN Security Council, Letter dated 18 August 2015 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council, 26 August 2015, pp. 9-10.

⁽¹⁰¹⁾ Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - September 2015; Clark, K. and Osman, B., First wave of IS attacks? Claim and denial over the Jalalabad bombs, 22 April 2015; Osman, B., The Shadows of 'Islamic State' in Afghanistan: What threat does it hold?, 12 February 2015; UN Security Council, Letter dated 18 August 2015 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council, 26 August 2015, pp. 9-10.

⁽¹⁰²⁾ Jamestown Foundation (The), 'Islamic State in Afghanistan Ready to Capitalize on Mullah Omar's Death', 3 September 2015.

⁽¹⁰³⁾ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 10 June 2015, p. 5.

IS recruit mainly ideologically motivated individuals. ⁽¹⁰⁴⁾ The insurgent groups operating under the flag of IS show most activity in Nangarhar, where they are engaged in a struggle with the Taliban and the ANSF. ⁽¹⁰⁵⁾ There appears to be daily contact between IS in Nangarhar and Laghman and the leadership in Raqqa in Syria. ⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ IS activities, groups or individuals have also been reported in other provinces of Afghanistan, including Helmand, Farah and Logar. ⁽¹⁰⁷⁾

IS-affiliated fighters close schools, stop polio vaccinations, abduct and force widows and young girls to marry their fighters, burn homes of Taliban supporters, execute elders and Taliban leaders. They have a strong rhetoric against foreigners and their presence creates inaccessibility of areas, mainly in several districts in Nangarhar. They loot, burn or take over houses which drives people to flee. ⁽¹⁰⁸⁾ It was reported that IS groups have more sophisticated and heavy weapons than other insurgent groups in Afghanistan. ⁽¹⁰⁹⁾

1.3 Recent security trends and armed confrontations

Between 15 February and 31 July 2015, the UN recorded 11,129 security-related incidents relevant to the work, mobility and safety of civilian actors, a number consistent with the records for the same reporting period in 2014. Nevertheless, according to the UN, during the summer of 2015, the conflict grew in intensity and geographical scope, with a spike in high-profile attacks in Kabul. ⁽¹¹⁰⁾ In July 2015, USAID reported that security conditions had worsened across Afghanistan due to increased Taliban attacks and renewed fighting. ⁽¹¹¹⁾

1.3.1 Armed clashes and assaults

Since the start (2012) of the withdrawal of foreign troops, closure of IMF bases and transition of security responsibilities into the hands of the ANSF (2013), the dynamics in the conflict have changed. Insurgents have increasingly attacked and challenged ANSF, operating in larger fronts (up to several hundreds fighters, using small arms fire, rockets, mortars and grenades). They increasingly took control over larger territories outside the urban centres and became more successful in capturing district administrative centres. These developments led to an increase in violence, characterised by more direct ground engagements or armed clashes. Mostly the ANSF has been able to regain control quickly, but certain district centres fell under the sustained control of Taliban forces. ⁽¹¹²⁾

In 2015, the Long War Journal reported on a Taliban offensive aimed at controlling districts in four provinces in the North and North-east of the country: Badakhshan, Baghlan, Kunduz and Takhar. According to research done by the Long War Journal, the Taliban have full control of 29 districts and are contesting 36 others in all regions of Afghanistan. ⁽¹¹³⁾ Thomas Ruttig, Director of the Afghanistan Analysts Network was more conservative about the number of districts and reported 17 under full Taliban control. ⁽¹¹⁴⁾

⁽¹⁰⁴⁾ Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - September 2015.

⁽¹⁰⁵⁾ Jamestown Foundation (The), 'Islamic State in Afghanistan Ready to Capitalize on Mullah Omar's Death', 3 September 2015; Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - September 2015.

⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - September 2015.

⁽¹⁰⁷⁾ Clark, K. and Osman, B., First wave of IS attacks? Claim and denial over the Jalalabad bombs, 22 April 2015; Osman, B., The Shadows of 'Islamic State' in Afghanistan: What threat does it hold?, 12 February 2015; UN Security Council, Letter dated 18 August 2015 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council, 26 August 2015, pp. 9-10.

⁽¹⁰⁸⁾ NY Times, Afghan ISIS Branch Makes Inroads in Battle Against Taliban, 13 October 2015; Washington Post (The), The Islamic State is making these Afghans long for the Taliban, 13 October 2015; Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - September 2015.

⁽¹⁰⁹⁾ Latifi, Ali M., Skype interview, 7 September 2015; Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - September 2015.

⁽¹¹⁰⁾ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 1 September 2015, p. 4; UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 10 June 2015, p. 4.

⁽¹¹¹⁾ USAID, Afghanistan - complex emergency, 2 July 2015.

⁽¹¹²⁾ Münch, P. and Ruttig, T., 'Between Negotiations and Ongoing Resistance. The Situation of the Afghan Insurgency', 2014, p. 28; LWJ, Taliban controls or contests scores of districts in Afghanistan, 5 October 2015; UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 1 September 2015, p. 4; RFE/RL, Taliban Captures District Center in Afghan Opium Heartland, 26 August 2015; Ruttig, T., The Second Fall of Musa Qala: How the Taliban are expanding territorial control, 3 September 2015; Institute for the Study of War, Militant Attack and Support Zones in Afghanistan: April - September 2015, 18 September 2015; UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 18 June 2014; UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 9 September 2014, p. 6; UNAMA, Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict, July 2014, pp. 1-3, 8-9; Pajhwok Afghan News, MPs fear Kunduz-style attacks in other provinces, 5 October 2015; ICG, Afghanistan's Insurgency after the Transition, 12 May 2014, pp. 1, 11-13, 19-21, 27-28, 36-37.

⁽¹¹³⁾ LWJ, Taliban controls or contests scores of districts in Afghanistan, 5 October 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, MPs fear Kunduz-style attacks in other provinces, 5 October 2015; NY Times, 14 Years After U.S. Invasion, the Taliban Are Back in Control of Large Parts of Afghanistan, updated: 16 October 2015.

⁽¹¹⁴⁾ Ruttig, T., Kunduz: Bombenangriff auf MSF-Klinik und allgemeine Lage, 4 October 2015.

These developments triggered a number of ANSF counter-offensives and clearance operations in several provinces. ⁽¹¹⁵⁾ According to the UN Secretary General, more than half of the recorded security incidents in the summer of 2015 were armed clashes. ⁽¹¹⁶⁾

On Monday morning, 28 September 2015, the Taliban launched a major assault on the provincial capital of Kunduz. Government forces withdrew and the city fell to Taliban control. This was the first time since 2001 the Taliban managed to take control over a major city. The rise of the white Taliban flag on the provincial headquarters was an important political and mental victory for the Taliban. ⁽¹¹⁷⁾ The BBC called it ‘their most significant advance since being forced from power in 2001’. ⁽¹¹⁸⁾ According to the government, the city was retaken after a counter-offensive on 1 October 2015, however the Taliban contested this claim. ⁽¹¹⁹⁾ According to several sources, fighting was still ongoing in the city centre for days after 1 October. ⁽¹²⁰⁾ Reuters reported ongoing hit-and-run attacks by Taliban fighters. ⁽¹²¹⁾ While events in Kunduz were still ongoing, another attack on a northern provincial capital was launched by the Taliban, on Monday 5 October: Maimana in Faryab. ANSF managed to repulse the attack. ⁽¹²²⁾ Nevertheless, on 9 October, the UN evacuated its staff from Maimana city. ⁽¹²³⁾

Another main development is the appearance of Islamic State (see [section 1.2.2](#) on IS) on the Afghan battle scene. They are mainly active in Nangarhar, where they attack ANSF checkpoints. ⁽¹²⁴⁾ IS groups have also attacked Taliban groups. This has led to fierce fighting between both insurgent factions and the Taliban has sent fighters from the provinces of Helmand, Kandahar, Kapisa and Laghman to support its local groups in Nangarhar. ⁽¹²⁵⁾

1.3.2 Improvised Explosive Devices

According to the UN Secretary General, 26 % of the recorded security incidents between June and September 2015 were IED explosions. ⁽¹²⁶⁾

An IED can be initiated by the victim or by the attacker. Victim-initiated IEDs are very often pressure plate IEDs (PP-IED) which are prohibited in Afghanistan, being party to the Ottawa Convention or the so-called Mine-Ban Treaty. The use of this weapon is most often a violation of international humanitarian law, as it cannot make a distinction between civilian and military targets. Attacker-initiated IEDs can either be with a timer or remote-controlled (mobile phone, radio, wire). One specific kind of IED is the magnetic IED, which is placed against vehicles. ⁽¹²⁷⁾

Suicide IEDs are not time- or distance-controlled and can be body-borne or vehicle-borne (BBIED or SVBIED). ⁽¹²⁸⁾

⁽¹¹⁵⁾ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 1 September 2015, p. 5; RFE/RL, Kabul Says 88 Militants Killed Across Afghanistan, 9 October 2015; UN Security Council, Letter dated 18 August 2015 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council, 26 August 2015, p. 5; Ruttig, T., The Second Fall of Musa Qala: How the Taleban are expanding territorial control, 3 September 2015; Guardian (The), Afghanistan’s warlord vice-president spoiling for a fight with the Taliban, 4 August 2015; Tolonews, 57 Taliban insurgents killed in nationwide ANSF operations, 2 May 2015; Tolonews, 34 Taliban insurgents killed in ANSF operations, 11 May 2015; Tolonews, 19 insurgents killed in Afghan forces operations, 3 February 2015; Ariana News, 23 insurgents killed in fresh ANSF joint military raids, 5 July 2015; Ariana News, 180 anti-government killed, 90 arrested in wide nation operation: MoD, 25 July 2015.

⁽¹¹⁶⁾ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 1 September 2015, p. 5.

⁽¹¹⁷⁾ International NY Times, Taliban Fighters Capture Kunduz City as Afghan Forces Retreat, 28 September 2015; Al Jazeera, Taliban fighters raid Kunduz in Afghanistan, 28 September 2015; Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, The liberation of Kunduz showed military capability and moral magnitude of Mujahideen, 7 October 2015.

⁽¹¹⁸⁾ BBC, Afghanistan profile – Timeline, updated on: 27 October 2015.

⁽¹¹⁹⁾ RFE/RL, Afghan Officials Say Have Retaken Control Of Most Of Kunduz, 1 October 2015; LA Times, Even as Afghan forces reclaim Kunduz, question remains: Why did city fall?, 1 October 2015; Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Remarks of spokesman of Islamic Emirate regarding report by Amnesty International, 2 October 2015.

⁽¹²⁰⁾ Afghan, Mirwais [Twitter], posted on: 6 October 2015; Sarwary, Bilal [Twitter], posted on: 6 October 2015; Tolonews [Twitter], posted on: 6 October 2015.

⁽¹²¹⁾ Reuters, Taliban fighters launch hit-and-run attacks in Afghanistan’s Kunduz, 6 October 2015.

⁽¹²²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban attack on Maimana repulsed with people’s help, 5 October 2015; International NY Times, Afghan Forces Report Progress in Kunduz as Taliban Press Other Fronts, 5 October 2015; International Business Times, Afghanistan: Taliban attacks Faryab capital Maimana sparking fighting, 5 October 2015.

⁽¹²³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, UN staff evacuated from Maimana City, 9 October 2015.

⁽¹²⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 25 border police killed in clashes with IS in east, 5 October 2015; RFE/RL, IS militants attack Afghan security checkpoints, 27 September 2015.

⁽¹²⁵⁾ Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - September 2015; Jamestown Foundation (The), ‘Islamic State in Afghanistan Ready to Capitalize on Mullah Omar’s Death’, 3 September 2015; UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 1 September 2015, pp. 1, 5-6.

⁽¹²⁶⁾ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 1 September 2015, p. 5.

⁽¹²⁷⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan Midyear Report 2015, Protection of civilians in armed conflict, August 2015, pp. 45-49, 89.

⁽¹²⁸⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan Midyear Report 2015, Protection of civilians in armed conflict, August 2015, p. 89.

1.3.3 High-profile attacks

Insurgents continued to conduct high-profile attacks in Kabul and other main urban centres in order to get media attention, intimidate and create fear. Such attacks are mainly aimed at government or international forces, but the highest numbers of casualties inflicted by them concern civilians. In a series of attacks in Kabul between 7 and 10 August 2015, 55 persons were killed and more than 330 injured. ⁽¹²⁹⁾

1.3.4 Targeted killings

The UN recorded an 11.4 % increase in targeted killings during the summer of 2015, compared to the same period in 2014. Between 1 May and 31 July 2015, 291 assassinations and attempted assassinations were recorded. This is a tactic used by insurgents to create fear and intimidate. ⁽¹³⁰⁾

UNAMA reported 659 civilian casualties from targeted killings in the first six months of 2015. This was a significant increase compared to the first half of 2014 (424 civilian casualties) and a continuation of the steadily increasing trend in previous years (89 in the first half of 2009; 204 in the first half of 2010; 227 in the first half of 2011; 344 in the first half of 2012; 446 in the first half of 2013). ⁽¹³¹⁾

1.4 State ability to secure law and order

According to the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Afghan authorities are, in general, unable to provide protection against violence, with the only possible exception being the city of Kabul, but only to some extent. ⁽¹³²⁾ For 2014, the US Department of State (USDOS) reported widespread disregard for the Rule of Law and impunity for human rights abusers. Abuses by officials were not effectively prosecuted. Furthermore, Taliban and other armed actors continue to kill, abduct and injure civilians and security personnel. ⁽¹³³⁾ The capturing by the Taliban of territory, including district centres and the provincial capital of Kunduz in September and early October 2015 (see [section 1.3.1](#) on armed clashes and assaults), was perceived by analysts as significant evidence of the weakness of the Afghan government and the ANSF. ⁽¹³⁴⁾

In mid-2015, UNAMA observed ‘a consistent failure of the Afghan authorities to protect civilian communities from human rights abuses and harm perpetrated by pro-Government armed groups, and an absence of accountability for such actions’. ⁽¹³⁵⁾

1.4.1 Security Forces

USDOS reported for 2014 that the ‘civilian authorities generally maintained control over the security forces, although there were instances in which security forces acted independently.’ Extrajudicial killings, widespread violence, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture and abuse of detainees and other human rights abuses by security forces were reported. Efforts have been made to train security forces. Nevertheless, ANSF personnel appeared to be largely unaware of their responsibilities and defendants’ rights. ⁽¹³⁶⁾

⁽¹²⁹⁾ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 1 September 2015, p. 5; RFE/RL, Taliban Claims Responsibility For Kabul Bombing, 10 August 2015; UNAMA, PRESS STATEMENT: UNAMA calls on Anti-Government Elements to cease attacks in civilian areas, 8 August 2015; Clark K., The triple attack in Kabul: A message? If so, to whom?, 10 August 2015.

⁽¹³⁰⁾ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 1 September 2015, p. 5.

⁽¹³¹⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan Midyear Report 2015, Protection of civilians in armed conflict, August 2015, p. 53.

⁽¹³²⁾ Nederland, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, Algemeen Ambtsbericht Afghanistan, September 2014, p. 26.

⁽¹³³⁾ USDOS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014 Afghanistan, 25 June 2015, p. 2.

⁽¹³⁴⁾ Reuters, Insight - Taliban audacity trumps Afghan forces’ weak defences in Kunduz, 30 September 2015; Wall Street Journal (The), Afghan Forces Recapture Central Kunduz From Taliban, updated: 1 October 2015; Dam, Bette, ‘Kunduz was always vulnerable’, 8 October 2015; International NY Times, Taliban Fighters Capture Kunduz City as Afghan Forces Retreat, 28 September 2015; Al Jazeera, Taliban fighters raid Kunduz in Afghanistan, 28 September 2015; Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, The liberation of Kunduz showed military capability and moral magnitude of Mujahideen, 7 October 2015.

⁽¹³⁵⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan Midyear Report 2015, Protection of civilians in armed conflict, August 2015, p. 73.

⁽¹³⁶⁾ USDOS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014 Afghanistan, 25 June 2015, pp. 1-10; Nederland, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, Algemeen Ambtsbericht Afghanistan, September 2014, pp. 49-52; UNAMA, Afghanistan Midyear Report 2015, Protection of civilians in armed conflict, August 2015, pp. 69-72.

The Afghanistan Analysts Network reported on the increasing challenges to the ANSF: ⁽¹³⁷⁾

The 332,000-strong ANSF, however, often only seem to be able to react to the multi-pronged Taliban mini-offensives when the latter have already captured a district centre, as in the cases of Musa Qala, Nawzad or Yamgan. Even with the 28,400 Afghan Local Police (ALP) forces and other official and unofficial auxiliary forces, the ANSF seem to be overstretched on the large and topographically difficult Afghan territory and, as a result, often outnumbered at specific flashpoints. The latest assessment by the US government's Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) speaks of a generally, although slowly, decreasing capability of the ANSF compared to 2013, attributed to "the stresses imposed on ANSF units at the beginning of the 2015 fighting season, in particular with command and control and the coordination of joint-force operations' and despite slightly declining attrition rates.

1.4.2 Justice

Seven authorities are involved in the criminal justice sector: the Ministry of Justice, the Attorney General's Office, the Supreme Court, the MoI, the NDS, the MoD and the High Office of Oversight. ⁽¹³⁸⁾ The formal court system, as established in the Constitution, consists of a Supreme Court, High Court of Appeal, Provincial Courts, lower Primary Courts and some specialised courts such as the Juvenile and Family Courts and Counter-Narcotics Courts. However, these courts are not operational in all provinces and all courts lack capacity. ⁽¹³⁹⁾

The judiciary is relatively strong in the larger urban centres, where the government is in control, but very weak or non-existent in rural areas, where local elders and shuras ⁽¹⁴⁰⁾ settle both criminal and civil cases. In some areas the Taliban has enforced a parallel judicial system based on strict interpretation of sharia. Both unofficial systems provide no guarantees for Rule of Law and basic rights of defence. Often, women are victims of these traditional judicial systems and harsh punishments are executed, such as mutilation. The Taliban increasingly targets official courts and kills judges, court officials and prosecutors. ⁽¹⁴¹⁾

USDOS reported for 2014 that 'the judiciary continued to be underfunded, understaffed, inadequately trained, ineffective, and subject to threats, bias, political influence, and pervasive corruption.' Impartiality of the judiciary is undermined by bribery and pressure from different parties. Courts use a mixture of law systems (codified; sharia; local custom) without uniformity and even in Supreme Court, judges appeared to have limited knowledge of civilian jurisprudence. ⁽¹⁴²⁾

UNDP states: ⁽¹⁴³⁾

Afghanistan has witnessed over thirty years of conflict, which have severely constrained the justice system and the government's ability to serve its people. Legislation is often not compliant with international best practices, human rights conventions signed by Afghanistan, and even other national laws. The vast size and rural nature of the country's provinces as well as widespread poverty and low levels of education prevent people from accessing justice through State channels. Illiteracy compounds these issues, resulting in a lack of awareness among people about their rights. As a result, approximately 80% of disputes in the country are settled by traditional justice bodies, at times, in contradiction with human rights standards. Women are particularly limited in accessing fair and equitable justice through both formal and informal channels.

1.4.3 Detention

US Department of State reported 'harsh and sometimes life-threatening conditions and abuse in official detention centers' and private prisons run by ANSF members used for torture of arrestees. Furthermore, inadequate food and

⁽¹³⁷⁾ Ruttig, T., The Second Fall of Musa Qala: How the Taliban are expanding territorial control, 3 September 2015.

⁽¹³⁸⁾ USDOS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014 Afghanistan, 25 June 2015, p. 8; Nederland, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, Algemeen Ambtsbericht Afghanistan, September 2014, p. 49-52.

⁽¹³⁹⁾ Tahmindjis, P., The Rule of Law, Democracy and the Legal Profession in the Afghan Context: Challenges and Opportunities, January 2014.

⁽¹⁴⁰⁾ A shura is a community council.

⁽¹⁴¹⁾ Tahmindjis, P., The Rule of Law, Democracy and the Legal Profession in the Afghan Context: Challenges and Opportunities, January 2014; USDOS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014 Afghanistan, 25 June 2015, pp. 13-18; RFE/RL, Militants Storm Afghan Court, Killing Prosecutors, Officials, 28 October 2014; Nederland, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, Algemeen Ambtsbericht Afghanistan, September 2014, pp. 46-48; AI, Afghanistan: Abhorrent punishment of 100 lashes for 'adultery' must be investigated, 2 September 2015; UNAMA, Afghanistan Midyear Report 2015, Protection of civilians in armed conflict, August 2015, pp. 54-55, 58-59, 94.

⁽¹⁴²⁾ USDOS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014 Afghanistan, 25 June 2015, pp. 13-18.

⁽¹⁴³⁾ UNDP, Justice and Human Rights in Afghanistan (JHRA), n.d.; Guardian (The), First female nominee fails to win seat on Afghan supreme court, 8 July 2015.

water, and poor sanitation facilities were common. A lack of facilities with as a result overcrowding was a serious problem. However, according to USDOS: ‘inmate deaths were infrequent and largely due to natural causes’.⁽¹⁴⁴⁾

Arbitrary arrest and detention were a widespread problem. Prosecutors and police reportedly ‘detained individuals without charge for actions that were not crimes under the law’ (moral crimes, breach of contract, family disputes).⁽¹⁴⁵⁾ UNAMA reported in February 2015 arbitrary arrests, practices of torture and ‘a general spirit of impunity for human rights violations’ within the NDS.⁽¹⁴⁶⁾

1.5 Impact of the violence

1.5.1 ANSF

In 2013 and 2014, ANSF suffered the highest numbers of casualties since the insurgency started. For the first time in the conflict, insurgents have been able to inflict nearly as many ANSF casualties as they suffered themselves. According to data provided by the Afghan government, as of March 2014 more than 13,000 ANSF had been killed in the conflict, most of them after 2010.⁽¹⁴⁷⁾

According to the Pentagon, in 2014, some 4,634 Afghan security personnel were killed. Between 1 January and 31 July 2015, 4,302 Afghan security personnel were killed and 8,009 injured, a 36% increase compared to the same period in 2014.⁽¹⁴⁸⁾

1.5.2 Civilian population⁽¹⁴⁹⁾

Between 1 January 2009 and 31 December 2014, UNAMA recorded 47,745 civilian casualties (17,774 killed and 29,971 injured). The most deadly year so far was 2014:⁽¹⁵⁰⁾

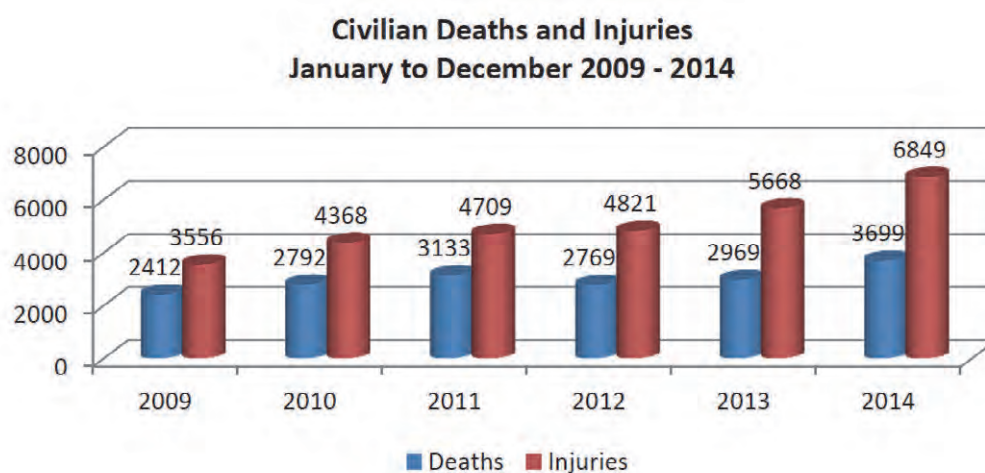


Figure 1: Civilian casualties per year (UNAMA)

In the first six months of 2015, UNAMA recorded 4,921 civilian casualties (1,592 civilians deaths and 3,329 injured), a one percent increase compared to the first six months of 2014.⁽¹⁵¹⁾ In the first eight months of 2015, UNAMA documented the highest level of civilian casualties since it began records.⁽¹⁵²⁾

⁽¹⁴⁴⁾ USDOS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014 Afghanistan, 25 June 2015, pp. 6-8.

⁽¹⁴⁵⁾ USDOS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014 Afghanistan, 25 June 2015, p. 12.

⁽¹⁴⁶⁾ UNAMA, Update on the Treatment of Conflict Related Detainees in Afghan Custody: Accountability and Implementation of Presidential Decree 129, February 2015, pp. 14-30.

⁽¹⁴⁷⁾ ICG, Afghanistan’s Insurgency after the Transition, 12 May 2014; NY Times, War Deaths Top 13,000 in Afghan Security Forces, 3 March 2014.

⁽¹⁴⁸⁾ ABC News, 13,000 Afghan Security Forces Killed in Last Three Years, 14 August 2015.

⁽¹⁴⁹⁾ For a definition of civilian, see [glossary](#).

⁽¹⁵⁰⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan Annual Report 2014, Protection of civilians in armed conflict, February 2015, p. 1.

⁽¹⁵¹⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan Midyear Report 2015, Protection of civilians in armed conflict, August 2015, p. 1.

⁽¹⁵²⁾ UNIFEED/UNTV, UN / Afghanistan [TV script], 17 September 2015.

In the first half of 2015, ground engagements continued to be the leading cause of civilian casualties (379 deaths and 1,198 injured). Most of the casualties were inflicted by indirect fire (mortars, rockets, grenades, artillery) used in civilian-populated areas. A new trend is that an equal amount of civilian casualties in ground engagements is attributed to pro-government forces and insurgents respectively. The second cause is still IEDs (385 deaths and 723 injured), followed by complex and suicide attacks (183 deaths and 839 injured) and targeted killings (440 deaths and 259 injured), two tactics that resulted in substantial increases in numbers of civilian victims. The latter became the leading cause for civilian deaths. Furthermore, UNAMA reported an increase in civilian victims of abduction and aerial bombings. ⁽¹⁵³⁾

Examples were reported of civilians remaining trapped in battle zones: tens of thousands were trapped in Kunduz province in June 2015. ⁽¹⁵⁴⁾ In November 2014, ALP prohibited civilian population from leaving the area of fighting in Farah. ⁽¹⁵⁵⁾

UNAMA expressed its concerns about the sustained use of IEDs by insurgents ‘in areas crowded with civilians, including bazaars, central areas of towns and cities, mosques and close to hospitals or schools, despite the indiscriminate and disproportionate impact upon civilians in such circumstances’. ⁽¹⁵⁶⁾ Furthermore, suicide and complex attacks in urban centres cause a lot of harm: In the first half of 2015, 12 incidents in Kabul city caused 302 civilian casualties; eight incidents in Lashkar Gah city caused 171 civilian casualties; one attack in Jalalabad city caused 158 civilian casualties. ⁽¹⁵⁷⁾ In a series of attacks in Kabul between 7 and 10 August, 55 persons were killed and more than 330 injured. ⁽¹⁵⁸⁾

Looking at the recent events in Kunduz city (see [section 1.3](#)), Amnesty International highlighted that the Taliban tactics exposed civilians to high levels of risk. Taliban conducted door-to-door searches for government allies or ANSF staff. Taliban fighters also used civilian houses as hiding places and an ICRC medical vehicle during operations. They looted NGO offices and seized equipment and vehicles. They also torched local media offices. ⁽¹⁵⁹⁾

Children

The UN Secretary General on Children and Armed Conflict reported that, in 2014, more children have been killed in the conflict in Afghanistan than during any other year since 2010. Between 1 September 2010 and 31 December 2014, 2,302 children were killed and 5,047 injured. The main reasons were insurgent attacks and ANSF operations leading to an increase in armed clashes in which explosives were used in populated areas. IED attacks were another main cause, together with airstrikes and drones. Consecutive armed conflicts in the past decades have left approximately 521 square kilometres of land contaminated with unexploded remnants of war, to which children are particularly vulnerable, due to their curiosity, lack of understanding of the dangers and poverty. The latter reason motivates children to collect scrap metal to be sold, which can cause accidental detonation of unexploded devices. ⁽¹⁶⁰⁾

In the first six months of 2015, UNAMA recorded 1,270 child casualties (320 deaths and 950 injuries), a 13% increase compared to the first half of 2014. Armed clashes remained the main cause, followed by IEDs and explosive remnants of war. ⁽¹⁶¹⁾

For 2014, the UN reported that ANP and ALP continued to recruit and use children, despite the adoption and implementation of a government action plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children by ANSF since 2011. Insurgents also recruited minors. They mainly used the children to manufacture, transport and plant IEDs. Insurgents also used children as suicide attackers. ⁽¹⁶²⁾

In 2014, attacks on schools were mainly attributed to insurgents targeting schools that were used as polling stations for the elections. Attacks, burnings, intimidation and killing of educational staff by insurgents were also reported.

⁽¹⁵³⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan Midyear Report 2015, Protection of civilians in armed conflict, August 2015, pp. 6-9.

⁽¹⁵⁴⁾ USAID, Afghanistan - complex emergency, 2 July 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁵⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan - Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, 01 – 30 November 2014, November 2014, pp. 3-4.

⁽¹⁵⁶⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan Midyear Report 2015, Protection of civilians in armed conflict, August 2015, p. 45.

⁽¹⁵⁷⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan Midyear Report 2015, Protection of civilians in armed conflict, August 2015, p. 49.

⁽¹⁵⁸⁾ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 1 September 2015, p. 5.

⁽¹⁵⁹⁾ Amnesty International, Afghanistan: Taliban tactics put civilians in harm's way, 29 September 2015.

⁽¹⁶⁰⁾ UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Afghanistan, 15 May 2015, pp. 3, 8-10; UNAMA, Afghanistan Midyear Report 2015, Protection of civilians in armed conflict, August 2015, pp. 9-10, 20.

⁽¹⁶¹⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan Midyear Report 2015, Protection of civilians in armed conflict, August 2015, pp. 5, 20.

⁽¹⁶²⁾ UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Afghanistan, 15 May 2015, p. 6.

Girls' education is particularly vulnerable to such incidents. ⁽¹⁶³⁾ Also in 2015, schools were forcibly closed by insurgents. Islamic State fighters forcibly closed schools and threatened teachers on a large scale in the province of Nangarhar. In September 2015, it was reported that 300,000 children were unable to go to school due to this. ⁽¹⁶⁴⁾

Furthermore, insurgents reportedly attacked polio workers to prevent polio vaccination campaigns in the South, East, South-East and West. ⁽¹⁶⁵⁾

Health facilities

Between 1 January and 31 July 2015, the UN reported 140 security incidents involving humanitarian personnel or facilities, including the killing, injuring and abduction of aid workers and an ANSF raid on a hospital in Kunduz run by an NGO, over the allegation of giving care to an insurgent fighter. ⁽¹⁶⁶⁾ It was reported that health supplies to clinics were diverted by insurgents, health facilities were closed due to the conflict and doctors' safety could not be guaranteed. ⁽¹⁶⁷⁾

In the counter-offensive against the Taliban who captured Kunduz city at the end of September 2015, a Médecin sans Frontières (MSF) hospital was hit in a US airstrike. 23 people were killed, including 13 medical staff and three children in the incident that was widely covered in international media and led to the withdrawal of MSF from Kunduz. This was the only medical centre in the region that had a trauma centre. ⁽¹⁶⁸⁾

Socio-economic life

An Afghan journalist based in Kabul reported that economic conditions were different than a few years ago. He explained the current situation for people in Afghanistan as: ⁽¹⁶⁹⁾

a combination of security and economic concerns. Economy has taken a huge tumble and there are not many prospects. There are fewer foreign companies and NGOs, the foreign troops that left also used to provide employment. Investors do not feel safe investing, because of the security situation. People from Wardak, Kandahar or other provinces used to come to Kabul and had a chance of building up a life here. They could find a job or education. Now this is not possible anymore. For young kids it is difficult because it costs a lot of money to come to live in Kabul.

Many people, even those who used to have well-paid jobs, have been out of work for at least a year now. Now, you also see that at the passport office in the west of Kabul, there are hundreds of people lined up looking for a passport. Everyone is desperately trying to get out.

Several of these findings are confirmed by a 2015 Government report (with UN Habitat support) on the state of Afghan cities. The report mentioned insecurity as a structural issue undermining the business atmosphere and confidence. The report further confirms that for a majority of Afghan households it is very difficult to obtain a house in the formal housing sector. It is reported that lack of employment opportunities in the cities are causing youngsters to leave the country and that the worsening economic situation is to be seen in combination with a worsening security situation. Regarding the socio-economic effects of the withdrawal of international presence, the report provides the example of the city of Herat where the customer base has changed due to this. ⁽¹⁷⁰⁾

Other sources also confirm that the worsening economic and security situation goes hand-in-hand leading to displacement and migration. ⁽¹⁷¹⁾

⁽¹⁶³⁾ UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Afghanistan, 15 May 2015, p. 7; UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Afghanistan, 15 May 2015, pp. 12-13.

⁽¹⁶⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Thousands of students out of school due to fighting, 31 August 2015; Tolonews, Daesh Closes Schools in Nangarhar's Achin District, 28 August 2015; Press TV, 300,000 Afghan children out of school in Nangarhar over Daesh, 20 September 2015; Khaama Press, 300,000 children face uneducated future because of Daesh in Nangarhar, 20 September 2015.

⁽¹⁶⁵⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan Midyear Report 2015, Protection of civilians in armed conflict, August 2015, pp. 22-23.

⁽¹⁶⁶⁾ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 1 September 2015, p. 13.

⁽¹⁶⁷⁾ UNOCHA, Operational Coordination Team – Badghis Province, Meeting Minutes, 2 July 2015; Shaista Sadat Lameh [Twitter], posted on: 12 April.

⁽¹⁶⁸⁾ MSF, Kunduz Hospital Airstrike, updated: 8 October 2015; NY Times, Airstrike Hits Doctors Without Borders Hospital in Afghanistan, 3 October 2015; Irinnews, Hospitals and war crimes: a patchy record, 7 October 2015; Al Jazeera, MSF medical charity leaves Kunduz after air strike, 4 October 2015.

⁽¹⁶⁹⁾ Latifi, Ali M., Skype interview, 7 September 2015.

⁽¹⁷⁰⁾ Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, State of Afghan cities, 2015, pp. 56, 61-63 and 93.

⁽¹⁷¹⁾ Washington Post (The), As the U.S. pulls back, more Afghans descend into joblessness, 17 August 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, My first Eid in decades not to sacrifice animal, 24 September 2015; Majidi, N., 'Helping Them Help Themselves Transitioning out of displacement in Afghanistan, from networks to development aid', Autumn 2015.

Regarding daily life in Kabul, the same Afghan journalist explained: ⁽¹⁷²⁾

People have limited their movements and they do so especially after a bombing. For a few days or weeks people try avoiding going out too much, but at the end of the day you have to come out, you will have to go to the market. But, as an example, the incident in which more than 200 people were wounded, many of them had scratches from glass etc... It happened at 1am and most of the injured were sleeping at home. From now, we do not feel safe even at home anymore. We feel like there could be a bomb or incident at any time that happens in a residential area.

Refugees, returnees and IDPs

In a protracted refugee crisis caused by 35 years of conflict in Afghanistan, at least 10 million Afghans fled the country. ⁽¹⁷³⁾

Between 2002 and October 2015, more than 5.8 million Afghans returned to Afghanistan (deported or voluntary return). Between January and October 2015, UNHCR assisted 54,000 Afghans to return to their home country, almost as much as the combined totals of 2013 and 2014. As of May 2015, more than 2.6 million registered Afghan refugees were in 70 countries in the world. ⁽¹⁷⁴⁾ As of May 2015, at least 2.5 million registered Afghan refugees were hosted by Iran and Pakistan. In addition, Pakistan counted approximately 1 million unregistered Afghans and Iran 1.4 million. ⁽¹⁷⁵⁾ In August 2015, the Ministry of Interior of Iran reported that 2,000 Afghans entered Iran illegally every day. ⁽¹⁷⁶⁾

IOM reported: ⁽¹⁷⁷⁾

Between January and August 2015, a total of 417,825 Afghans spontaneously returned or were deported through Torkham, Islam Qala and Milak borders. Compared with the same period in 2014, spontaneous returns through the three borders have increased by 49% (270,579 vs. 181,882), while deportations have increased by 4% (147,246 vs. 142,085).

UNHCR reported: 'Kabul, Nangarhar, Kunduz, Logar, and Baghlan provinces in Afghanistan are the top five province of destination and have received 65% of total returnees in 2015. Kabul, Nangarhar and Kunduz are among the top five provinces of return since 2002.' ⁽¹⁷⁸⁾

Deportations

Between 2007 and 2013, there were 200,000 to 300,000 Afghans deported from Iran and Pakistan per year (the vast majority from Iran). ⁽¹⁷⁹⁾ Between 1 January and 31 August 2015, UNHCR reported a total of 150,764 undocumented Afghans to be deported from Iran, a 13 % increase compared to the same period in 2014. In addition, UNHCR reported 19 registered Afghan refugees (Amayesh holders) to be deported from Iran. In the same period, UNHCR reported a total of 9,122 undocumented Afghans to be deported from Pakistan, a substantial increase compared to the total of 1,848 in the same period in 2014. In addition, reportedly 17 registered Afghan refugees (PoR card holders) were deported by Pakistan. ⁽¹⁸⁰⁾

Voluntary return

Between January and August 2015, UNHCR assisted 51,000 registered Afghan refugees from Pakistan to return to Afghanistan. 34% of them returned to the north of the country, 31% to central areas, 19% to the east, 9% to the

⁽¹⁷²⁾ Latifi, Ali M., Skype interview, 7 September 2015.

⁽¹⁷³⁾ Irinnews, In-depth: From pillar to post - the plight of Afghans abroad, 27 February 2012.

⁽¹⁷⁴⁾ UNHCR, UN High Commissioner calls for renewed international focus on Afghanistan, 6 October 2015; UNHCR, International community commits to refocus attention on Afghan refugee situation; calls for increased support for regional solutions, 8 October 2015; IOM, IOM Humanitarian Compendium, Afghanistan, updated: 10 May 2015.

⁽¹⁷⁵⁾ UNHCR, UN High Commissioner calls for renewed international focus on Afghanistan, 6 October 2015; Irinnews, In-depth: From pillar to post - the plight of Afghans abroad, 27 February 2012; UNHCR, International community commits to refocus attention on Afghan refugee situation; calls for increased support for regional solutions, 8 October 2015; IOM, IOM Humanitarian Compendium, Afghanistan, updated: 10 May 2015.

⁽¹⁷⁶⁾ IRNA, Interior Minister: 2,000 illegal Afghan refugees enter Iran a day, 12 August 2015.

⁽¹⁷⁷⁾ IOM Afghanistan, Newsletter, Autumn 2015.

⁽¹⁷⁸⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan voluntary repatriation and border monitoring monthly update, 1 January—31 August 2015.

⁽¹⁷⁹⁾ UNHCR, 2013 Global Report – Afghanistan, n.d.; UNHCR, The 2014 Afghanistan Refugee and Returnee Overview, 29 October 2014, p. 5; Irinnews, Afghanistan: Mass deportation from Iran may cause crisis, official warns, 17 February 2008; UNHCR, Volrep and Border Monitoring Monthly Update, December 2013, p.4; UNHCR, Volrep and Border Monitoring Monthly Update, September 2014, p. 5.

⁽¹⁸⁰⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan voluntary repatriation and border monitoring monthly update, 1 January-31 August 2015, 31 August 2015, pp. 5-6.

south-east and 5% to the south. Between 2002 and August 2015, approximately 3.9 million Afghan refugees returned home voluntarily. ⁽¹⁸¹⁾ Between 1 January and 19 September 2015, IOM registered 79,833 undocumented Afghans who returned spontaneously via Torkham (Afghan-Pakistani border). The vast majority of them returned in the first three months of 2015, in the aftermath of the December 2014 Peshawar attack, in which two of the attackers were Afghans. Since then, Afghans faced an increase in harassment and Pakistani police have raided Afghan settlements, detained and beaten Afghan men. ⁽¹⁸²⁾

UNHCR reported the following main push factors mentioned in 2015 by Afghan returnees from Pakistan: ‘eviction notices by the authorities, harassment, intimidation, movement limitations, economic factors, settlement closure/consolidation and fear of arrest and/or deportation’. ⁽¹⁸³⁾

Between 1 January and 31 August 2015, a total of 2,044 Afghans voluntarily returned from Iran. ⁽¹⁸⁴⁾

Internal displacements

As of October 2015, there were 1,117,153 profiled IDPs. ⁽¹⁸⁵⁾ In the first half of 2015, the UN profiled a total of 103,000 people in accessible areas in Afghanistan who were displaced by conflict. ⁽¹⁸⁶⁾ UNHCR identified insurgents’ ground offensives and counteroffensives by ANSF as the main reasons for conflict-induced displacement. Special reference was made to fighting between the Taliban and other groups declaring their allegiance to IS in Nangarhar ‘with increasing level of violence prompting the population to flee the areas’. ⁽¹⁸⁷⁾ In October 2015, more than 100,000 displaced people were reported following the capturing of Kunduz city by the Taliban and the ANSF offensive that followed. ⁽¹⁸⁸⁾

1.6 Geographical overview of the security situation

1.6.1 Urban/rural divide

Afghanistan’s history is characterised by a structural urban-rural divide. Urban centres have been hubs for administration, market-driven methods of production, taxation, education and reforms. This contributed to the success of opposition among the rural population, which did not benefit from these developments. ⁽¹⁸⁹⁾

In general, Afghan urban centres are seen as more secure than rural areas. Some urban centres suffer more insecurity, including Kandahar, Gardez ⁽¹⁹⁰⁾ and Khost ⁽¹⁹¹⁾, while, as figures from 2009 until 2015 show, Mazar-e Sharif and Herat counted the lowest numbers of civilian victims in their city centres. Nevertheless, when urban centres do experience high-profile attacks, these can have a severe psychological impact on the population and often cause high casualties. ⁽¹⁹²⁾ See also [section 1.3](#) on recent security trends in the city of Kunduz.

1.6.2 Regional differences

Information obtained from a Western security official made mention of a total of 15,714 security incidents in Afghanistan from 1 January until 31 August 2015. ⁽¹⁹³⁾

⁽¹⁸¹⁾ UNHCR, UNHCR facilitates the return of 51,000 Afghans refugees from Pakistan, 27 August 2015.

⁽¹⁸²⁾ IOM, Return of Undocumented Afghans from Pakistan, updated: 19 September 2015; IOM, Sharp Increase in Afghans Returning from Pakistan Raises Concerns, 6 February 2015; HRW, Pakistan: Stop Forced Returns of Afghans, 21 February 2015; HRW, What Are You Doing Here?, 18 November 2015.

⁽¹⁸³⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan voluntary repatriation and border monitoring monthly update, 1 January-31 August 2015, 31 August 2015, p. 1.

⁽¹⁸⁴⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan voluntary repatriation and border monitoring monthly update, 1 January-31 August 2015, 31 August 2015, p. 1.

⁽¹⁸⁵⁾ ERCC, ECHO Daily Map, Afghanistan and Pakistan: Refugees, 13 October 2015.

⁽¹⁸⁶⁾ UNOCHA, Afghanistan 2015 Humanitarian response plan, Midyear review, July 2015, p. 3.

⁽¹⁸⁷⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, July 2015.

⁽¹⁸⁸⁾ Khaama Press, Around 100,000 people internally displaced in Kunduz because of violence, 9 October 2015.

⁽¹⁸⁹⁾ Giustozzi, A. and Ibrahim, N., Thirty Years of Conflict: Drivers of anti-Government Mobilisation in Afghanistan, 1978-2011, January 2012, pp. 7-8.

⁽¹⁹⁰⁾ Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, State of Afghan cities, volume one, 2015, pp. 22-23; 62-63; Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - October 2015.

⁽¹⁹¹⁾ Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - October 2015.

⁽¹⁹²⁾ Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, State of Afghan cities, volume one, 2015, pp. 22-23; Latifi, Ali M., Skype interview, 7 September 2015.

⁽¹⁹³⁾ Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - September 2015.

UNAMA reported in its 2015 Midyear report on the regional spread of civilian victims. From 2009 until 2015, an overall increase in numbers is noticed in all regions, with a few exceptions including for example the year 2012 for the eastern and southern regions: ⁽¹⁹⁴⁾

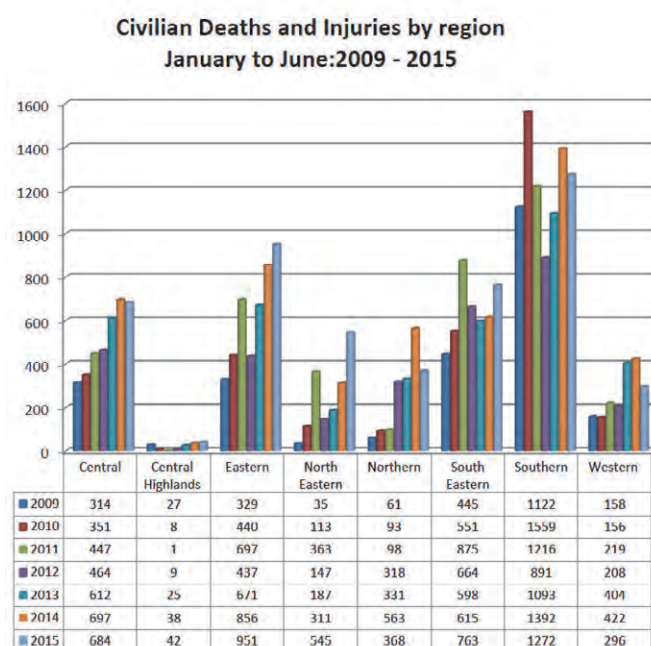


Figure 2: Civilian casualties by region (UNAMA)

The UN reported that during the summer of 2015: ‘the majority of incidents were reported in the southern and eastern parts of the country, with the provinces of Kandahar, Nangarhar, Ghazni, Hilmand and Kunar accounting for 44.5 per cent of all security incidents’. But the conflict has substantially spread in ‘the north-eastern regions around Kunduz, Badakhshan and Badghis Provinces, in the north-west towards Faryab Province, in the south-east region of Nangarhar Province and in the south, including Hilmand Province’. ⁽¹⁹⁵⁾

The Institute for the Study of War published a map indicating insurgent support and attack areas (from April to October 2015). ⁽¹⁹⁶⁾

In Figure 3, an overview per province of the security incidents is shown on a map. ⁽¹⁹⁷⁾

⁽¹⁹⁴⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan Midyear Report 2015, Protection of civilians in armed conflict, August 2015, pp. 6-9.

⁽¹⁹⁵⁾ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 1 September 2015, p. 4; UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 10 June 2015, p. 4.

⁽¹⁹⁶⁾ ISW, Militant attack and support zones in Afghanistan: April- October 6, 2015, 6 October 2015.

⁽¹⁹⁷⁾ Map created by EASO: data on incidents provided by Western security official (see [introduction](#)).

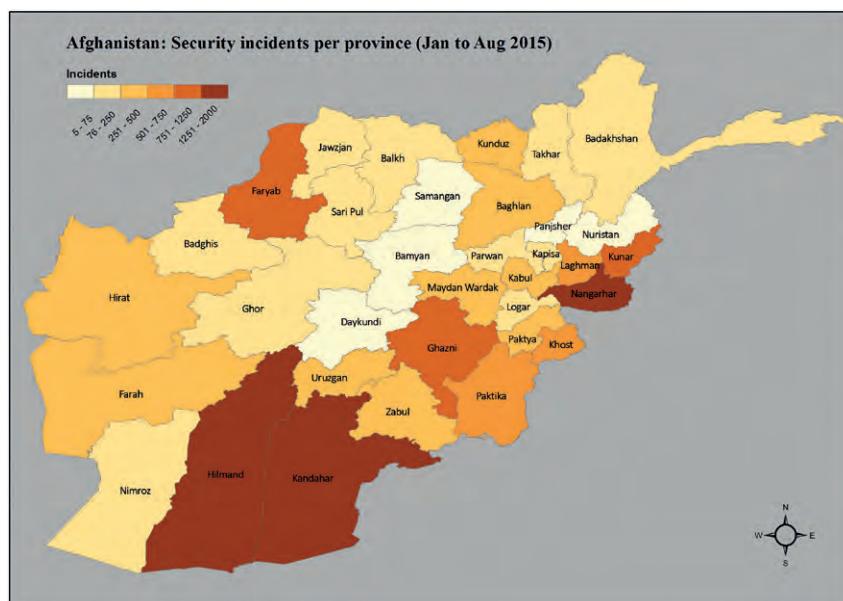


Figure 3: Afghanistan: security incidents per province (Jan – Aug 2015)

In Figure 4, an overview is given per province of how the number of violent incidents relates to the number of inhabitants, which can be used as one indicator in the assessment of the ‘real risk’ of civilians suffering harm due to violent incidents. However, this is only one possible indicator among others. The risk for an individual in a province is very complex to estimate and depends on a combination of elements, such as detailed information on the nature and target of the violent incidents, the locations where they take place, the extent of civilian casualties, etc. Further information on the violent incidents taken into account in this quantitative calculation and more information on relevant indicators can be found in each provincial part of this report under ‘Regional description of the security situation’. The population estimates come from the Afghanistan Central Statistics Organization (ACSO: 2012-13). The reference period for security incidents is also 1 January – 31 August 2015. ⁽¹⁹⁸⁾

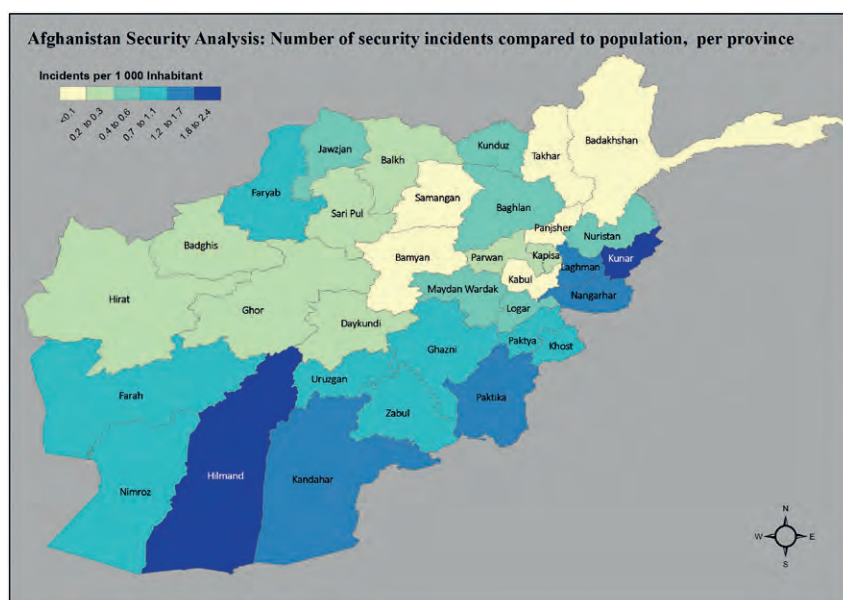


Figure 4: Security incidents compared to population (Jan – Aug 2015)

⁽¹⁹⁸⁾ Map created by EASO, sources: ACSO, Settled Population of Kunar province by Civil Division, Urban, Rural and Sex-2012-2013; data on incidents provided by Western security official (see introduction).

1.6.3 Road security

It was reported that overall road security has not improved. Due to the increased Taliban control over rural areas (see section on [armed clashes and assaults](#) under recent security trends) roads are less safe and people from some districts are cut off from the cities. Sources mentioned the example of Bamyan, which has basically two access roads: one via Wardak that was traditionally considered as the most dangerous of both (called *Road of death* due to insecurity), and one via Parwan through the Ghorband Valley. People used to take the latter route; however, recently the Taliban has been attacking targets on the road to such an extent that people prefer to go via Wardak. ⁽¹⁹⁹⁾ A Western security official stated that road security and the possibility to travel via different routes in Afghanistan must be assessed from day to day. ⁽²⁰⁰⁾

Ruttig and Münch reported that since 2013, insurgents were more successful in cutting off major highways, especially in the north. ⁽²⁰¹⁾ It was reported that, since early 2014, insurgents increasingly control main transport and access routes. ⁽²⁰²⁾ Several reports indicate the inaccessibility of roads due to insurgent activities. ⁽²⁰³⁾ For example, in October 2015 the Taliban blocked the major highway from Kabul to Kandahar. The road has a history of insecurity and fighting, but now the entire road was blocked causing all traffic to be stopped. This resulted in fighting between ANSF and the Taliban around the road, with incidents reported in Ghazni and Zabul. Blocked travellers reportedly had to flee the fighting. ⁽²⁰⁴⁾

This has continued and increased. For example, an Afghan journalist reported on his travel to the province of Ghor. He explained that: ‘137 commanders control 70% of the province. To get from point A to point B, most times means passing by three or four different commanders with checkpoints and they stop you and want to know what you are doing.’ ⁽²⁰⁵⁾ As another example, a shopkeeper from Farah city supplying vegetables and fruit to other shops in Kabul, Herat and Kandahar mentioned road insecurity as a problem: ‘Many roads are inaccessible because the Taliban stop our cars. Some years ago, my father was kidnapped and we had to pay all our savings to get him freed.’ ⁽²⁰⁶⁾

Kidnapping reports are increasing, for example, UNAMA reported: ‘On 16 February, Anti-Government Elements abducted a driver in Shib Koh district, Farah province, and demanded a ransom for his release. On 16 March, local villagers found the driver’s remains in Qala-e-Kah district, Farah province, following failure to pay the ransom.’ ⁽²⁰⁷⁾ During a *Meshrano Jirga* (upper-house in Parliament) meeting, senators underlined the increased abductions on highways and one legislator warned her colleagues: ‘Kidnapping on the highways has now become a trend and we are extremely worried about these incidents. If the issue is not addressed, we will witness more serious kidnapping incidents.’ ⁽²⁰⁸⁾

UNOCHA reported already in 2014 that, due to the intensification of the conflict, the ability of the population to reach health facilities had decreased. The causes were: unofficial/illegal checkpoints, military action and lack of public transport. ⁽²⁰⁹⁾

⁽¹⁹⁹⁾ Latifi, Ali M., Skype interview, 7 September 2015; Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - October 2015; Afghanistan, Ministry of Counter-Narcotics, Established Fruit Orchards in Daikundi Benefited All Districts of the Province, n.d.

⁽²⁰⁰⁾ Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - September 2015.

⁽²⁰¹⁾ Münch, P. and Ruttig, T., ‘Between Negotiations and Ongoing Resistance. The Situation of the Afghan Insurgency’, 2014.

⁽²⁰²⁾ ICG, Afghanistan’s Insurgency after the Transition, 12 May 2014; Nederland, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, Algemeen Ambtsbericht Afghanistan, September 2014, p. 28.

⁽²⁰³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Khas Uruzgan road reopens after 3 months, 9 July 2015; Van Bijlert, M., Trouble in Khas Uruzgan: Insults, assaults, a siege and an airlift, 2 September 2015.

⁽²⁰⁴⁾ Osman, B., The Road to Ghazni: Bombs, battles and blockades, 13 July 2013; Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Kabul Kandahar highway remains closed off, 12 October 2015; Al Jazeera, Afghan travellers stranded after Taliban blocks highway, 14 October 2015.

⁽²⁰⁵⁾ Latifi, Ali M., Skype interview, 7 September 2015.

⁽²⁰⁶⁾ Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, State of Afghan cities, volume one, 2015, p. 68.

⁽²⁰⁷⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan Midyear Report 2015, Protection of civilians in armed conflict, August 2015, p. 62.

⁽²⁰⁸⁾ Tolonews, Senators Blast Government Over Insecurity in North, 26 April 2015.

⁽²⁰⁹⁾ UNOCHA, 2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan, November 2014, p. 8.

2. Regional description of the security situation in Afghanistan

In the following sections, security trends are explained in greater detail, by geographic subdivision (Kabul city and 34 provinces). In each provincial section a general description is included, followed by a description of the violence, displacement and actors in the conflict.

Under the sub-sections several incidents are described. These should be read as illustrations of trends in the security situation and not as an exhaustive list of incidents.

2.1 Centre

2.1.1 Kabul city

General description of the city

The city of Kabul is a separate district in the province of Kabul, alongside 14 other districts. In this report, Kabul city is highlighted because of its prominent position as Afghanistan's capital. Because of its high concentration of government buildings, international organisations, diplomatic compounds and international and national security forces, the city has a different security outlook than most of Afghanistan's other districts and provinces. ⁽²¹⁰⁾

Kabul is by far the biggest city in Afghanistan and certainly the fastest growing. Massive returnee populations, IDPs and economic migrants have spurred rapid growth in Kabul. ⁽²¹¹⁾ Currently, the population of Kabul is estimated to be 3,678,034 inhabitants. ⁽²¹²⁾ Other estimates run as high as 7 million. ⁽²¹³⁾ More than three quarters of Kabul province's population lives in the city of Kabul. ⁽²¹⁴⁾

The city of Kabul is subdivided into 17 districts, often referred to as districts 1 to 17. ⁽²¹⁵⁾ Some maps show 22 police districts. ⁽²¹⁶⁾

Kabul is an ethnically diverse city, with communities of almost all ethnicities present in the country. Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras, Uzbeks, Turkmen, Baluchs, Sikhs and Hindus all reside there ⁽²¹⁷⁾ with no group clearly dominating. As people tend to move to areas where they already have family or into particular districts as part of a larger group with the same ethnicity, different neighbourhoods have become associated with different ethnic groups. ⁽²¹⁸⁾

Description of the violence

Organisations monitoring the security situation in Kabul noticed a spike in insurgent attacks in the city in October 2014 and again in May 2015 and August 2015. ⁽²¹⁹⁾

⁽²¹⁰⁾ Giustozzi, A., Afghanistan: Human Rights and Security situation, 9 September 2011; Foschini, F., Striking at Kabul, in 2013: the attack on the traffic police HQ, 21 January 2013; Lifos, Rapport från utredningsresa till Afghanistan den 5 – 8 oktober 2013, 28 November 2013; Ruttig, T., Some things got better – how much got good? A review of 12 years of international intervention in Afghanistan, 30 December 2013; Clark K., The triple attack in Kabul: A message? If so, to whom?, 10 August 2015.

⁽²¹¹⁾ Metcalfe, V., Haysom, S. and Martin, E., Sanctuary in the city? Urban displacement and vulnerability in Kabul, June 2012, pp. 6-8; APPRO, Migration and Urban Development in Kabul: Classification or Accommodation?, October 2012, pp. 6-8.

⁽²¹²⁾ UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Population estimate for 2015, 26 August 2015.

⁽²¹³⁾ Metcalfe, V., Haysom, S. and Martin, E., Sanctuary in the city? Urban displacement and vulnerability in Kabul, June 2012, p. 5; APPRO, Migration and Urban Development in Kabul: Classification or Accommodation?, October 2012, pp. 6-8.

⁽²¹⁴⁾ ACSO, Kabul Province Socio-Demographic and Economic Survey Highlights, 13 January 2015, p. 5.

⁽²¹⁵⁾ ACSO, Population of Kabul city by district and sex 2012- 2013., n.d.

⁽²¹⁶⁾ Edinburgh International, Kabul Security Analysis: 2015-2016 Forecast, 1 June 2015; UNOCHA, Kabul Informal Settlements, as of 11 December 2014, 15 December 2014.

⁽²¹⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Kabul Province Background Profile, n.d.

⁽²¹⁸⁾ APPRO, Migration and Urban Development in Kabul: Classification or Accommodation?, October 2012, p. 8.

⁽²¹⁹⁾ Edinburgh International, Kabul Security Analysis: 2015-2016 Forecast, 1 June 2015; ISW, The Taliban Resurgent: Threats to Afghanistan's Security, March 2015; Clark K., The triple attack in Kabul: A message? If so, to whom?, 10 August 2015; Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - September 2015.

After President Ghani and the National Unity Government were sworn in, and ahead of the final security transition between the international military forces of ISAF and the ANSF at the end of 2014, Kabul city saw a spike in insurgent attacks during October and November 2014 with 10 suicide attacks in these months, decreasing to five such attacks in the following two months. ⁽²²⁰⁾ The London-based private security company (PSC) Edinburgh International (EI) and the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) also noticed a similar spike in suicide attacks in November 2014. ⁽²²¹⁾ The capital saw 31 suicide attacks in 2014, compared to 18 the previous year. IED attacks in the city also decreased from 18 in the October to November period to 5 in December 2014 and 2 in January 2015. ⁽²²²⁾

Several attacks targeted ANA vehicles and buses in October 2014, killing many soldiers and several civilian bystanders. ⁽²²³⁾ On 16 December 2014, all public transportation of ANSF personnel was suspended because of the high pace of militant attacks on these targets in the capital. Of the 10 attacks on ANSF transportation in the capital, six happened in the last three months of 2014. ⁽²²⁴⁾ According to Edinburgh International: ⁽²²⁵⁾

Desiring to maintain the pace of high profile attacks in the city yet failing to inflict major damages to Kabul's secure ISAF or international facilities, militants are instead increasingly turning towards softer targets where heavy casualties can be inflicted with minimal expenditure. Attacks on ANSF transport vehicles have historically proven an attractive target for this reason, with roadside IEDs or single SVEST bombers able to deliver the same impact as the more meticulously planned complex attacks.

From 1 January to 13 September 2015, Kabul city saw 217 security incidents, including 68 explosions (roughly two-thirds IEDs and one-third suicide attacks). There were between one and four suicide attacks every month from January to July, and six in August. Table 1 provides an overview of the nature of the security incidents: ⁽²²⁶⁾

Violence targeting individuals	37
Armed confrontations	15
Explosions	68
Security enforcement	50
Non-conflict related violent incidents	40
Other violent incidents	7
Total security incidents	217

Table 1: Security incidents by type, Kabul City (1 Jan - 13 Sep 2015)

Highprofile and often complex attacks have also targeted Afghan and international officials. At the end of November 2014, Edinburgh International noticed a 300% increase in attacks on expatriates in Kabul in the preceding month. ⁽²²⁷⁾ Additionally, highprofile locations were targeted with suicide bombs and IEDs. ⁽²²⁸⁾ The Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation ACCORD has compiled all major incidents that occurred in Kabul for the past few years. Insurgents continuously carried out high-profile attacks in Kabul, e.g. against several buses transporting army personnel and a NATO convoy in October 2014; the vehicle convoy of a prominent female MP; the police headquarters; a compound housing foreign workers known as the Green Village; another army minibus; US soldiers; a British embassy vehicle; an NGO compound and a foreign charity project in November 2014; a French financed school and another bus carrying army personnel in December 2014; a vehicle of the European Police Training Mission (EUPOL) in January 2015; a Turkish diplomatic vehicle in February 2015; the Uruzgan province chief of police and a member of parliament from Paktia in March 2015 and a NATO convoy in April 2015. ⁽²²⁹⁾

⁽²²⁰⁾ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 27 February 2015, pp. 4-5.

⁽²²¹⁾ Edinburgh International, Kabul Security Analysis: 2015-2016 Forecast, 1 June 2015; ISW, The Taliban Resurgent: Threats to Afghanistan's Security, March 2015, p. 19.

⁽²²²⁾ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 27 February 2015, pp. 4-5.

⁽²²³⁾ Tolonews, Suicide attack targets ANA vehicles in Kabul, 1 October 2014; Tolonews, Suicide attack on ANA kills and wounds dozen, 2 October 2014; Tolonews, 16 killed, dozens wounded in Kabul over one week, 2 October 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, 4 soldiers killed in fresh suicide attack on ANA bus, 2 October 2014.

⁽²²⁴⁾ Edinburgh International, Afghanistan Weekly Security Report 18 December 2014, 18 December 2014.

⁽²²⁵⁾ Edinburgh International, Afghanistan Weekly Security Report 18 December 2014, 18 December 2014.

⁽²²⁶⁾ For more information on the source of the data and the methodology, see [introduction](#).

⁽²²⁷⁾ Edinburgh International, Afghanistan Weekly Security Report 27 November 2014, 27 November 2014.

⁽²²⁸⁾ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 10 June 2015, p. 4.

⁽²²⁹⁾ Tolonews, One foreign national injured in IRD attack in Kabul, 27 November 2014; ACCORD, [ecoi.net featured topic on Afghanistan: General Security Situation in Afghanistan and Events in Kabul](#), updated on: 31 August 2015.

Following the announcement of the Taliban spring offensive *Azm* on 22 April 2015, May saw another spike in high-profile attacks. In its statement, the Taliban declared that targets would be ‘foreign occupiers especially their permanent military bases, their intelligence and diplomatic centres’, and also threatened government officials and Afghan security forces. ⁽²³⁰⁾ In May 2015 Kabul city saw two attacks against government buses carrying employees of the Attorney General, two attacks against hotels for foreigners, another EUPOL vehicle near the international airport and the Ministry of Justice. ⁽²³¹⁾ No high-profile attacks occurred in the first three weeks of June 2015, ⁽²³²⁾ but in the last week attacks followed against the Parliament building, a NATO convoy and a police headquarters. Another NATO convoy, a building used by Afghanistan’s intelligence service and a police car were attacked in July 2015. Almost all of these attacks caused significant collateral damage among civilian bystanders. ⁽²³³⁾

Another wave of attacks hit Kabul in August 2015. On 7 August, three attacks resulted in 368 victims. Fifty two were killed and 316 injured, of whom 355 were civilians; 42 of the civilians were killed and 313 injured. UNAMA counts the 28 killed and 29 injured, all police cadets, in the second attack as civilians, as they did not take part in any hostilities. The first attack was a detonation of an explosive-laden truck in the area of Shah Shahid, the second targeted a police academy. The third attack targeted a base for US Special Forces in the Qasaba area, outside the city centre and did not include any civilian casualties. ⁽²³⁴⁾ AAN analyst Kate Clark analysed all three attacks: the first and most deadly was the detonation of an explosive-laden truck in the densely populated area of Shah Shahid. Homes and shops bore the brunt of the blast; 15 civilians were killed and 283 were wounded. Two aspects were atypical of this attack: there was no obvious military target and the timing – in the middle of the night – led her to suggest that it may have been a premature explosion. The fact that the two other attacks later that day clearly targeted military installations, a police academy and a US Special Forces base, support the speculation that the bomb-truck was meant to strike later that day in a coordinated attack against high-profile targets. Nevertheless, that day was one of the worst days for civilians in Kabul since 2001. ⁽²³⁵⁾ Three days after this deadly string of attacks, insurgents targeted the entrance of the international airport and later in August 2015 another NATO convoy, killing three US private contractors, but also nine civilians and wounding 60 others waiting outside a nearby hospital. ⁽²³⁶⁾

Other specific targets of insurgent attacks include a shoot-out at a Sufi mosque in March 2015 and the targeted killing of the Paktia prosecutor outside his home in Kabul in May 2015. ⁽²³⁷⁾

In October 2014, three missile attacks occurred inside the city, without any casualties reported but still worrying residents. ⁽²³⁸⁾ Another such rocket attack was thwarted by police in August 2015. ⁽²³⁹⁾

According to the analysis of Edinburgh International: ⁽²⁴⁰⁾

attacks in the capital Kabul have traditionally served two purposes. In the first case, militant activity has aimed to physically weaken the power of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) traditionally achieved through the assassination of state officials and supply routes. More commonly however, extremist networks have sought to use the publicity generated by attack in Kabul to win symbolic propaganda victories [...] While the security services continue to improve and develop their capability to counter such tactics (a recent attack on a foreign guesthouse in the Wazir Akbar Khan neighbourhood was put down without military or civilian casualties by the country’s Quick Reaction Force on 26 May 2015), the sheer scale and ingenuity of militant aggression within Kabul’s central districts has meant that an underlying threat is unlikely to be entirely removed at any point in the near future.

⁽²³⁰⁾ Roggio B., Afghan Taliban announces new spring operations, 22 April 2015; Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Statement by the Leading Council of the Islamic Emirate regarding the inauguration of Spring Operations called ‘*Azm*’ (Resolve), 22 April 2015.

⁽²³¹⁾ ACCORD, ecoi.net featured topic on Afghanistan: General Security Situation in Afghanistan and Events in Kabul, updated on: 31 August 2015.

⁽²³²⁾ Edinburgh International, Afghanistan Weekly Security Report 18 June 2015, 18 June 2015.

⁽²³³⁾ ACCORD, ecoi.net featured topic on Afghanistan: General Security Situation in Afghanistan and Events in Kabul, updated on: 31 August 2015; Germany: Federal Office for Migration and Asylum, Information Centre Asylum and Migration Briefing Notes (20 July 2015), 20 July 2015; United States Department of Defence, Report on Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan, June 2015, p. 26.

⁽²³⁴⁾ UNAMA, PRESS STATEMENT: UNAMA calls on Anti-Government Elements to cease attacks in civilian areas, 8 August 2015; Clark K., The triple attack in Kabul: A message? If so, to whom?, 10 August 2015.

⁽²³⁵⁾ Clark K., The triple attack in Kabul: A message? If so, to whom?, 10 August 2015.

⁽²³⁶⁾ ACCORD, ecoi.net featured topic on Afghanistan: General Security Situation in Afghanistan and Events in Kabul, updated on: 31 August 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Kabul airport suicide attack leaves 5 dead, 16 hurt, 10 August 2015.

⁽²³⁷⁾ ACCORD, ecoi.net featured topic on Afghanistan: General Security Situation in Afghanistan and Events in Kabul, updated on: 31 August 2015.

⁽²³⁸⁾ Tolonews, Kabul residents criticise govt over rockets attack, 31 October 2014.

⁽²³⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Police claim thwarting possible rocket strike in Kabul, 23 August 2015.

⁽²⁴⁰⁾ Edinburgh International, Kabul Security Analysis: 2015-2016 Forecast, 1 June 2015.

According to the same source, police district 9 is one of the most volatile districts within the city, because of the presence of the largest ISAF installations in the city and the main road towards Jalalabad. ⁽²⁴¹⁾ Other central districts – district 2, district 4 and district 10 – are also prone to insurgent attacks because of the density of ministries, embassies and other foreign presence. ⁽²⁴²⁾

In March 2015 ISW stated: ‘In these attacks, militants focused on targeting Afghan government and Western interests, including foreign military and diplomatic personnel, Afghan security forces, and western NGOs’. ⁽²⁴³⁾

Although many insurgent attacks happen without consideration for collateral damage to civilians, according to analyst Fabrizio Foschini the choice of these targets appears to indicate that AGEs are somehow looking for legitimacy for their actions. ⁽²⁴⁴⁾

In 2015 from January to August, 126 Kabul civilians were killed and 717 injured. A large part of these civilian casualties resulted from the string of attacks in August 2015, most notably the one in the Shah Shahid neighbourhood. ⁽²⁴⁵⁾ According to an assessment of several sources by the UK’s Home Office the surge of terrorist attacks in Kabul in mid-May 2015 alone led to at least 26 deaths and more than 80 injuries. ⁽²⁴⁶⁾

Displacement

In the UNHCR Monthly Updates on Conflict Induced Displacement, Kabul is in this reporting period not mentioned as a province of origin for conflict-induced IDPs, only as a province of arrival of certain IDP movements from other provinces. IDPs originate mostly from neighbouring provinces such as Kapisa, Wardak and Logar. In Kabul province, the majority of IDPs from Kapisa settle in Kabul city and in the district of Surobi. ⁽²⁴⁷⁾ In late November and early December 2014, UNHCR registered more than 1,000 families or more than 6,000 individuals in Kabul city who were fleeing military operations and insurgent harassment in Tagab, Kapisa. ⁽²⁴⁸⁾ In February 2015 another 107 families, or 652 individuals, did the same ⁽²⁴⁹⁾ In April 2015, joint assessment teams identified 266 families or 1841 individuals in Kabul city and in neighbouring Baghrami districts. These families were displaced between December 2014 and April 2015 from Kapisa, Wardak, Logar and Parwan. While general insecurity triggered their displacement, the possibility of improved access to services in Kabul city played a role in the choice of the place of displacement. ⁽²⁵⁰⁾ In May 2015, UNHCR stated: ⁽²⁵¹⁾

Although the province experienced a significant number of incidents, Kabul remained a main destination for the displaced families from the Central Region, largely due to the perception of a better security situation and the hope to find better coping mechanisms. During the reporting month, a joint assessment team [...] assessed 454 IDP families in various urban districts of Kabul city. They were displaced from various districts of Logar province in January 2015, as well as from rural areas of Kabul province. The families were largely living in rented houses and had access to basic services available in Kabul. Yet, the high living costs and the lack/very low income of the families have been raised as their major concern. Reportedly, most of the children were working to contribute to the families’ income.

Apart from internal displacement due to the conflict in Afghanistan, Kabul city saw large flows of Afghan refugees returning to Afghanistan after fleeing Pakistani military operations in FATA, and unregistered Afghans being expelled by Pakistan since December 2014, when a military school in Peshawar was attacked by the Taliban. The Washington Post reported in August 2015 that more than 82,000 unregistered Afghans had been ‘pushed out’ of Pakistan since January 2015, along with about 150,000 Afghans deported from Iran over the same period. Many of them arrive in Kabul and try to survive doing daily labour. ⁽²⁵²⁾

⁽²⁴¹⁾ Edinburgh International, Afghanistan Weekly Security Report 27 November 2014, 27 November 2014.

⁽²⁴²⁾ Edinburgh International, Kabul Security Analysis: 2015-2016 Forecast, 1 June 2015.

⁽²⁴³⁾ ISW, The Taliban Resurgent: Threats to Afghanistan’s Security, March 2015, pp. 17-18.

⁽²⁴⁴⁾ Foschini, F., Striking at Kabul, in 2013: the attack on the traffic police HQ, 21 January 2013.

⁽²⁴⁵⁾ Anonymous source specialized in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - September 2015.

⁽²⁴⁶⁾ United Kingdom: Home Office, Country Information and Guidance - Afghanistan: Security and humanitarian situation, 15 August 2015, p. 23.

⁽²⁴⁷⁾ UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, January 2015; UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update, June 2015.

⁽²⁴⁸⁾ UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, December 2014.

⁽²⁴⁹⁾ UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, February 2015.

⁽²⁵⁰⁾ UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, April 2015.

⁽²⁵¹⁾ UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, May 2015.

⁽²⁵²⁾ Washington Post, As the US pulls back, more Afghans descend into joblessness, 17 August 2015; RFE/RL, Afghan Refugees Again on the Run – This Time From Pakistan, 30 August 2015.

Actors in the conflict

The Taliban shadow governor for Kabul is Hafiz Mohibullah, affiliated to the Taliban's Quetta Shura. ⁽²⁵³⁾ In Kabul, certain analysts refer to a Kabul Attack Network involved in many of the highprofile attacks. This is a network of combatants from the Haqqani Network, HIA, Taliban, al Qaeda and LeT. ⁽²⁵⁴⁾ According to the ISW: ⁽²⁵⁵⁾

[t]here has been a slight escalation in the complexity of Kabul attacks in 2014, matching Haqqani Network signatures, suggesting their continued involvement. The Haqqani Network's ratlines to Kabul lead from its sanctuaries in Pakistan's tribal areas, where the senior leadership plays an important role in selecting targets and creating an overall strategy for spectacular attacks in Kabul. Interviews with captured insurgents in Kabul in early 2015 indicate that many of them have been radicalized and trained in the tribal areas, allegedly by Haqqani operatives. Haqqani commanders serve as the key figures in the 'network of networks' that the Kabul Attack Network uses to move suicide attackers, weapons, and bombmaking materials into the capital from the surrounding provinces.

[t]he escalation of violence in Kabul is likely linked to the increase of Taliban activity in the periphery. As ISAF troops closed their forward operating bases and pulled back to provincial capitals in the transition to Resolute Support, the insurgency was able to operate with greater freedom of movement and consolidate pre-existing strongholds in areas around Kabul. The insurgency maintains safe-havens in areas abutting three major highways leading into Kabul. The Taliban can funnel weapons, funds, and fighters from these areas and along the highways in order to support operations in Kabul. The Taliban's ability to reinforce the Kabul Attack Network is made easier by an ineffective ANSF presence around the capital. With their limited capabilities, Afghan forces are reportedly struggling to maintain an adequate level of security on the roadways leading into Kabul.

In a meeting with lawmakers on December 17, 2014, NDS chief Rahmatullah Nabil said that the ANSF can monitor only four of the 26 access points into Kabul. He added that more than 100 armed groups were active in Kabul. ⁽²⁵⁶⁾

As for the threat of IS committing any attacks in the capital, Edinburgh International notes: ⁽²⁵⁷⁾

Emerging threats, including the ISIS phenomenon may also serve to raise the risk profile within the capital from 2016 onwards, though so far the effectiveness of such groups has yet to be proven within the capital, with ISIS-affiliates more concerned at present with intra-militant feuds against the Taliban and other extremist factions in rural Nangarhar, Farah and Zabul than targeted attacks on international organizations.

⁽²⁵³⁾ UN Security Council, Letter dated 18 August 2015 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council, 26 August 2015, p. 20.

⁽²⁵⁴⁾ CMFC, The Kabul Attack Network, July 2011; Roggio, B., Taliban continue to launch suicide assaults in Kabul, 29 March 2014; ISW, The Taliban Resurgent: Threats to Afghanistan's Security, March 2015, p. 18.

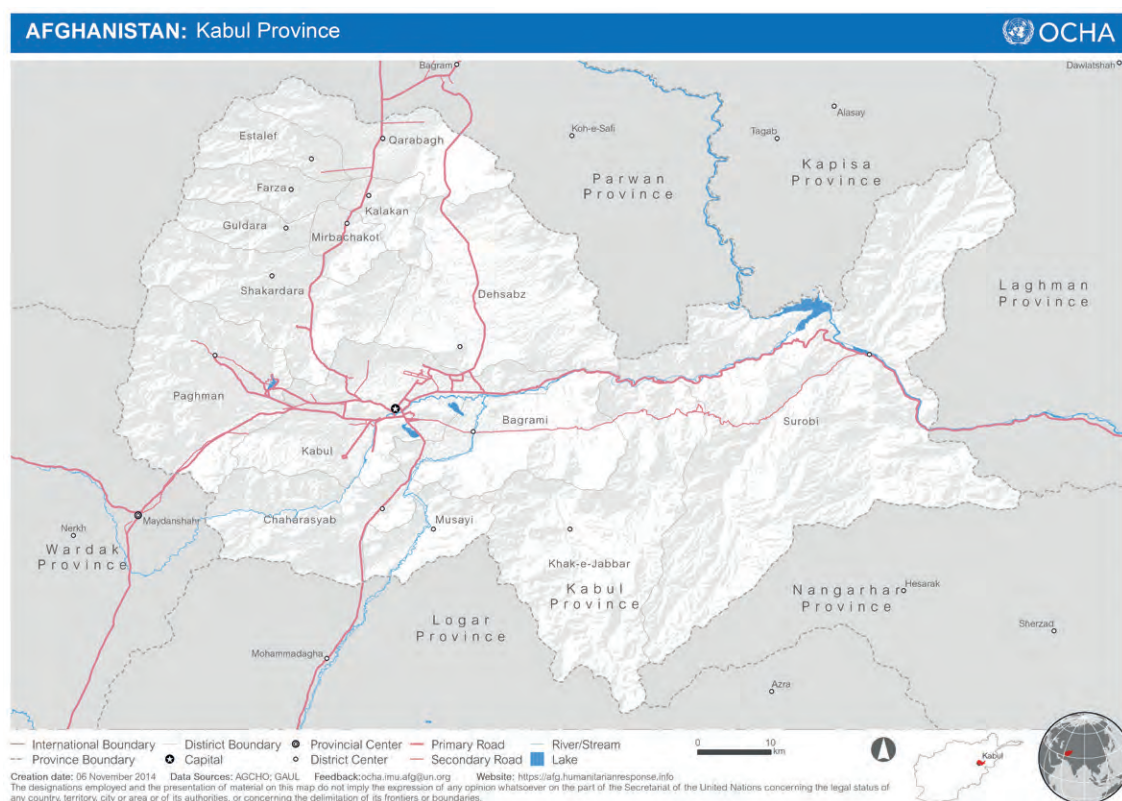
⁽²⁵⁵⁾ ISW, The Taliban Resurgent: Threats to Afghanistan's Security, March 2015, p. 18.

⁽²⁵⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Over 100 armed groups in Kabul, NDS, 17 December 2014.

⁽²⁵⁷⁾ Edinburgh International, Kabul Security Analysis: 2015-2016 Forecast, 1 June 2015.

2.1.2 Kabul Province

General description of the province



Kabul Province is made up of 15 districts with the district of Kabul city at the centre: Bagrami, Chaharasyab, Deh Sabz, Istalif, Farza, Guldara, Kabul, Kalakan, Khake Jabbar, Mir Bacha Kot, Musayi, Paghman, Qarabagh, Shakardara, Surobi. ⁽²⁵⁸⁾ The security situation in Kabul city is discussed in the previous chapter. The province is estimated to have 4,372,977 inhabitants, of which 3,678,034 live in Kabul city. ⁽²⁵⁹⁾

Kabul province is located in the Central Region and is bordered by the provinces of Parwan to the northwest, Kapisa to the northeast, Laghman in the east, Nangarhar in the southeast, Logar in the south, and Wardak in the southwest. More than half of the province is mountainous or semimountainous terrain while more than one-third of the area is made up of flat land. ⁽²⁶⁰⁾ Much of the land is very fertile rangeland and is largely rain fed. North of Kabul city lies the Shomali plain which stretches for 70 kilometres from the outskirts of the city to the Salang pass. This area, which lies in parts of the districts Kalakan, Qarabagh, Mir Bacha Kot and some of the districts of Parwan and Kapisa, particularly suffered from fighting between the Taliban and Northern Alliance in the 1990s when much of its population was forcibly displaced and its housing and agricultural infrastructure destroyed. The inhabitants of the Shomali plain are mainly Tajik and, to a lesser extent, Uzbek, Hazara and Pashtun. ⁽²⁶¹⁾

Major ethnic groups in Kabul province are Tajik, Pashtun and Hazara. According to UNHCR district profiles dating from 2002, Pashtuns dominate the southern and eastern districts of Surobi, Paghman, Chaharasyab, Bagrami, Deh Sabz, Khake Jabbar and Musayi, and Tajik dominate the northern districts of Istalif, Kalakan, Mir Bacha Kot, Shakardara and Qarabagh. In other districts, no ethnic group is clearly dominant. ⁽²⁶²⁾

⁽²⁵⁸⁾ UNOCHA, AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries, 25 September 2012.

⁽²⁵⁹⁾ UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Population estimate for 2015, 26 August 2015.

⁽²⁶⁰⁾ WFP, Provincial Profile. Kabul, n.d.

⁽²⁶¹⁾ OSI, Casting Shadows: War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity: 1978-2001, 2005, p. 127.

⁽²⁶²⁾ UNHCR, Kabul District Profiles, 2002.

Description of the violence

From 1 January to 31 August 2015, Kabul province counted 352 security incidents, including the incidents in the district of Kabul city. Table 1 provides an overview of the nature of the security incidents, including and excluding the numbers of incidents in the district of Kabul city (see [previous section](#)): ⁽²⁶³⁾

	Incl. city	Excl. city
Violence targeting individuals	40	3
Armed confrontations	68	53
Explosions	103	35
Security enforcement	94	44
Non-conflict related violent incidents	40	0
Other violent incidents	7	0
Total security incidents	352	135

Table 2: Security incidents by type, Kabul province (1 Jan – 31 August 2015)

The map in figure 5 presents the number of security incidents per district in Kabul province. ⁽²⁶⁴⁾

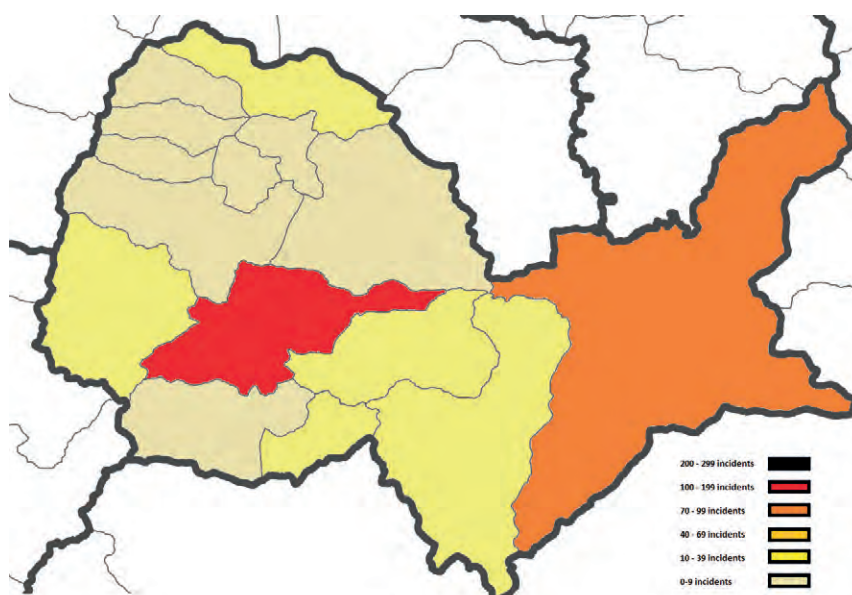


Figure 5: Kabul province: security incidents (Jan - Aug 2015)

Most volatile in Kabul province is the district of Surobi. Here, most of the heavy fighting between insurgents and international military forces (French) happened in the Uzbin valley. Uzbin is a side valley in Surobi on the way to Jalalabad. The valley extends for some 30 kilometres north of the district centre and the highway that crosses it. Uzbin is nestled among other insecure districts, such as Tagab of Kapisa province, Qarghayi and Badpakh of Laghman and Hesarak in Nangarhar, to which it connects through relatively traversable passes. This location has had a negative impact on the security situation in Surobi. ⁽²⁶⁵⁾ The broader area is reported as being increasingly controlled by the armed opposition and became an important crossing point and sanctuary for insurgents. ⁽²⁶⁶⁾

Analyst Fabrizio Foschini stated in July 2015 ‘[r]ecently, security on the [Kabul-Jalalabad] highway has deteriorated again, with recurrent attacks against ANSF posts and vehicles even in broad daylight. Most happened where the road abuts the mouth of the Uzbin valley.’ ⁽²⁶⁷⁾

⁽²⁶³⁾ For more information on the source of the data and the methodology, see [introduction](#).

⁽²⁶⁴⁾ For more information on the source and the methodology of the maps, see [introduction](#).

⁽²⁶⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Kabul province some parts experiencing insecurity: Residents, 2 December 2013.

⁽²⁶⁶⁾ Foschini F., *Classics of Conflict (2): Reviewing some of Afghanistan’s most notorious hotspots*, 9 July 2015; APPRO, *Afghanistan: Monitoring Women’s Security in Transition*, October 2013, p. 19; Pajhwok Afghan News, Hesarak on the verge of falling to rebels, 12 July 2014.

⁽²⁶⁷⁾ Foschini F., *Classics of Conflict (2): Reviewing some of Afghanistan’s most notorious hotspots*, 9 July 2015.

The Taliban presence in Musayi and Guldara goes underreported, according to analyst Thomas Ruttig. ⁽²⁶⁸⁾

A major attack was staged in Qarabagh district in October 2014, when a bomb exploded on market day, injuring 22 civilians, including children. ⁽²⁶⁹⁾ In April 2015, an IED targeting a police vehicle in Qarabagh district killed four policemen and two civilians, injuring two more. ⁽²⁷⁰⁾

In December 2014, an attack targeting an ANSF vehicle killed and wounded several security personnel in Deh Sabz. The attacker planned to execute his suicide mission in Kabul city, but when intercepted targeted the police who came to arrest him. ⁽²⁷¹⁾ In May 2015, an influential jihadi commander was killed by gunmen on his way home in Deh Sabz district. ⁽²⁷²⁾

In July 2015, a child was injured in an explosion in Baghrami district, when two suicide bombs went off, according to Khaama Press, apparently due to a premature explosion. ⁽²⁷³⁾

In August 2015, two rockets were launched towards the Paghman residence of Abdul Rab Rassoul Sayyaf, head of the Dawlat-e Islamia Party and well-known former jihadi commander. No one was hurt in this attack. ⁽²⁷⁴⁾ Paghman was also included in the Afghanistan Public Policy Research Organisation (APPRO) monitoring study on the impact of the security transition for women. Inhabitants of this district said in December 2014 that security had improved over time, in part due to closer collaboration between the community and ANP. There had been a number of reports of roadside bombs or suspected bombs by community members to the security authorities. However, the improvement was limited to Paghman district during the daytime. Women remained fearful of being outside the home during the dark because of incidents of rape and robberies in September 2014 and heightened insurgent activity in Kabul. The community was generally satisfied with ANP and regarded security personnel as helpful and respectful towards women. Despite the concerns about heightened insurgent activity in Kabul City, women in Paghman remain comfortable in carrying out their daily chores outside the home, with many seeing the security situation as having improved significantly compared to the previous reporting period. ⁽²⁷⁵⁾

In August 2015 ANSF launched a major cleaning operation in Surobi, deploying more than 2,000 ANSF personnel. ⁽²⁷⁶⁾ This operation was part of a wider military operation called 'Iron Fist' against insurgent safe heavens in the area Azra (Logar), Surobi (Kabul), Hesarak, Shirzad and Khogayani (Nangarhar). ⁽²⁷⁷⁾ The operation also aimed at breaking up logistical insurgent supply routes from Pakistan's Waziristan to the capital Kabul. ⁽²⁷⁸⁾ Government officials claimed no civilian casualties were inflicted in Surobi during this month-long operation. ⁽²⁷⁹⁾

Displacement

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNHCR, in this reporting period regularly mentions IDPs fleeing violence in Kapisa's restive southern districts into Surobi and, to a lesser extent, also into the district of Bagrami. ⁽²⁸⁰⁾ In July 2015, UNHCR registered 489 families or 2886 individuals displaced by the fighting in Southern Nangarhar between IS and the Taliban towards Kabul city and Bagrami district. Others came from Kapisa, Kunduz, Helmand, Kunar, Laghman and Logar provinces. ⁽²⁸¹⁾

Apart from receiving IDP communities, Surobi also produced IDPs in this reporting period going to Parwan. ⁽²⁸²⁾

⁽²⁶⁸⁾ Ruttig T., The Second Fall of Musa Qala: How the Taleban are expanding territorial control, 3 September 2015.

⁽²⁶⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 22 hurt in blast, girl killed on spying charges, 13 October 2014.

⁽²⁷⁰⁾ Khaama Press, Explosion in Kabul leaves 6 people dead, 2 others wounded, 6 April 2015.

⁽²⁷¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 1 police dead, 3 hurt in Kabul suicide attack, 18 December 2014.

⁽²⁷²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Influential ex-jihadi leader killed in Kabul, 28 May 2015.

⁽²⁷³⁾ Khaama Press, Suicide blast in Kabul leaves a child wounded, 11 July 2015.

⁽²⁷⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Rocket lands close to Sayyaf home in Paghman; no casualties, 28 August 2015.

⁽²⁷⁵⁾ APPRO, Afghanistan: Monitoring Women's Security in Transition, January 2015, p. 35.

⁽²⁷⁶⁾ Tolonews, Afghan forces launch joint operation in Kabul's Sorobi district, 6 August 2015.

⁽²⁷⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 17 Sarobi villages cleared of militants: officials, 6 August 2015.

⁽²⁷⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban planned inroads in Kabul, Hesarak, 27 August 2015.

⁽²⁷⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Afghan local police strength being increased in Nangarhar, 30 August 2015.

⁽²⁸⁰⁾ UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, May 2015; UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, June 2015.

⁽²⁸¹⁾ UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, July 2015.

⁽²⁸²⁾ UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, January 2015; UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, March 2015.

Actors in the conflict

The security deterioration in the south-eastern rural belt led to the creation of the ALP, besides the regular ANSF components. According to the US Department of Defense in 2013, ALP is active in Paghman, Surobi, Musayi, Chahar Asayab, Kabul and Deh Sabz. ⁽²⁸³⁾ A source in Kabul said an ALP staff of 475 men will soon be reduced to 350, deployed in three districts – Surobi (150), Musayi and Paghman (100 each). ⁽²⁸⁴⁾ According to Foschini, in July 2015: ⁽²⁸⁵⁾

security observers report declining numbers of ANSF troops and decreased effectiveness of the ANSF operations in Sarobi, due to a lack of resources and poor coordination. ALP units man a handful of posts besides the district centre bazaar, but are too small (four to five, at most ten, local policemen) to withstand attacks by the insurgents. ⁽²⁸⁶⁾

[...] the government's sway over the whole of Sarobi had grown weaker in recent years. Not only is all of upper Uzbini completely beyond the control of the ANSF; other areas in the districts do not fare much better. Parts of Tezin area see no real government presence or activity, while in the deserted slopes near Tang-e Abrisham, locals who venture to hunt or gather brushwood are told to stay out by Taliban, saying this is *their* hunting ground. To the south of the district, in the Lataband area where the old Kabul-Jalalabad road passes through, government control shrinks to just a few kilometres from the district centre. Beyond, the no man's land is a prime insurgent crossing area connecting Sarobi to Hesarak district and the war-ridden Spin Ghar region bordering Pakistan.

Insurgents active in the province include the Taliban, Haqqani Network and Hezb-e Islami. ⁽²⁸⁷⁾ According to analyst Foschini, fighters from both Hezb-e Islami (Hekmatyar) and the Taliban were consistently present in Surobi, although Hezb-e Islami were traditionally stronger in Surobi. ⁽²⁸⁸⁾ The Taliban shadow governor for Kabul is Hafiz Mohibullah, affiliated to the Taliban's Quetta Shura. ⁽²⁸⁹⁾ His deputy is mufti Abdul Rahman Sahib and in charge of the Kabul-Jalalabad Highway is mawlawi Abdullah. ⁽²⁹⁰⁾

In their military operation in Surobi in August 2015, ANSF claimed to have killed several foreign insurgent fighters, including Chechens and Arabs. ⁽²⁹¹⁾

Hazara politician Mohammad Mohaqiq stated in July 2015 that IS was recruiting fighters in 'the outskirts of Kabul province' without going into detail on how and where. ⁽²⁹²⁾

⁽²⁸³⁾ US Department of Defense, Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, November 2013, p. 70.

⁽²⁸⁴⁾ International organisation, e-mail, 15 September 2015.

⁽²⁸⁵⁾ Foschini F., Classics of Conflict (2): Reviewing some of Afghanistan's most notorious hotspots, 9 July 2015.

⁽²⁸⁶⁾ Foschini F., Classics of Conflict (2): Reviewing some of Afghanistan's most notorious hotspots, 9 July 2015.

⁽²⁸⁷⁾ Münch, P. and Ruttig, T., 'Between Negotiations and Ongoing Resistance. The Situation of the Afghan Insurgency', 2014, pp. 25-41.

⁽²⁸⁸⁾ Foschini F., Classics of Conflict (2): Reviewing some of Afghanistan's most notorious hotspots, 9 July 2015.

⁽²⁸⁹⁾ UN Security Council, Letter dated 18 August 2015 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council, 26 August 2015, p. 20; Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Pledges of allegiance to the new Amir take place throughout Afghanistan, 9 August 2015.

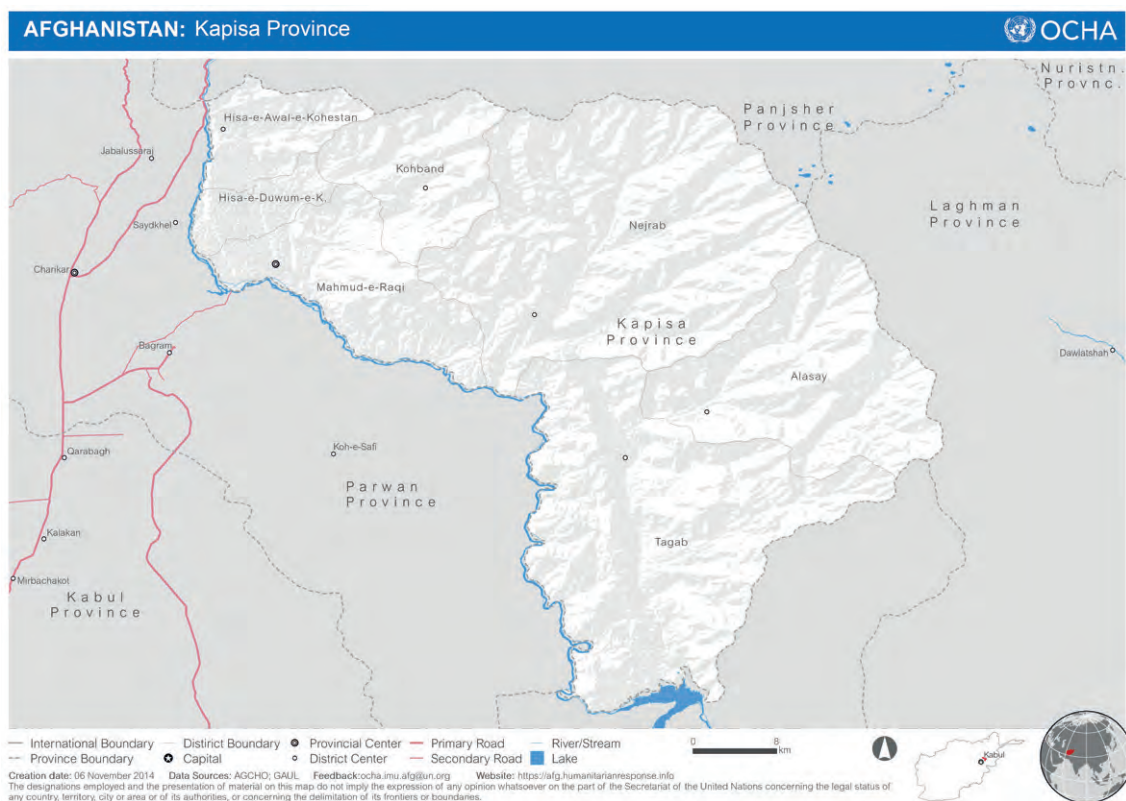
⁽²⁹⁰⁾ Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Pledges of allegiance to the new Amir take place throughout Afghanistan, 9 August 2015.

⁽²⁹¹⁾ Tolonews, Afghan forces launch joint operation in Kabul's Sorobi district, 6 August 2015.

⁽²⁹²⁾ Khaama Press, ISIS recruiting fighters in the outskirts of Kabul: Mohaqiq, 21 July 2015.

2.1.3 Kapisa

General description of the province



According to OCHA, the population is 441,010. ⁽²⁹³⁾ Kapisa is bordered by Panjshir, Laghman, Kabul and Parwan provinces and is divided into seven districts: Tagab, Nejrab, Alasay, Mahmud-e Raqi, Hisa-i Awal-e Kohestan, Hisa-i Duwum-e Kohestan, and Koh Band. ⁽²⁹⁴⁾ Agriculture is the main source of income. ⁽²⁹⁵⁾ The province comprises diverse ethnic groups (mainly Tajik, also Pashtuns, Pashaais, Hazaras, Nuristanis and Kuchis). ⁽²⁹⁶⁾

Description of the violence

Foreign troops transferred the security responsibilities of the province to ANSF in July 2012. ⁽²⁹⁷⁾

From 1 January to 31 August 2015, Kapisa province counted 118 security incidents. Table 3 provides an overview of the nature of the security incidents: ⁽²⁹⁸⁾

Violence targeting individuals	11
Armed confrontations and airstrikes	74
Explosions	13
Security enforcement	18
Non-conflict related violent incidents	2
Total security incidents	118

Table 3: Security incidents by type, Kapisa (Jan - Aug 2015)

⁽²⁹³⁾ UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Population Estimate for 2015, 26 August 2015.

⁽²⁹⁴⁾ MRRD, Kapisa Provincial Profile, March 2014.

⁽²⁹⁵⁾ ISW, Regional Command East, n.d.

⁽²⁹⁶⁾ Tolonews, Provincial Profile: Kapisa, n.d.

⁽²⁹⁷⁾ Friday Times (The), What will happen after foreign troops leave Afghanistan, July 2012.

⁽²⁹⁸⁾ For more information on the source of the data and the methodology, see [introduction](#).

The map in figure 6 presents the number of security incidents per district in Kapisa province. ⁽²⁹⁹⁾

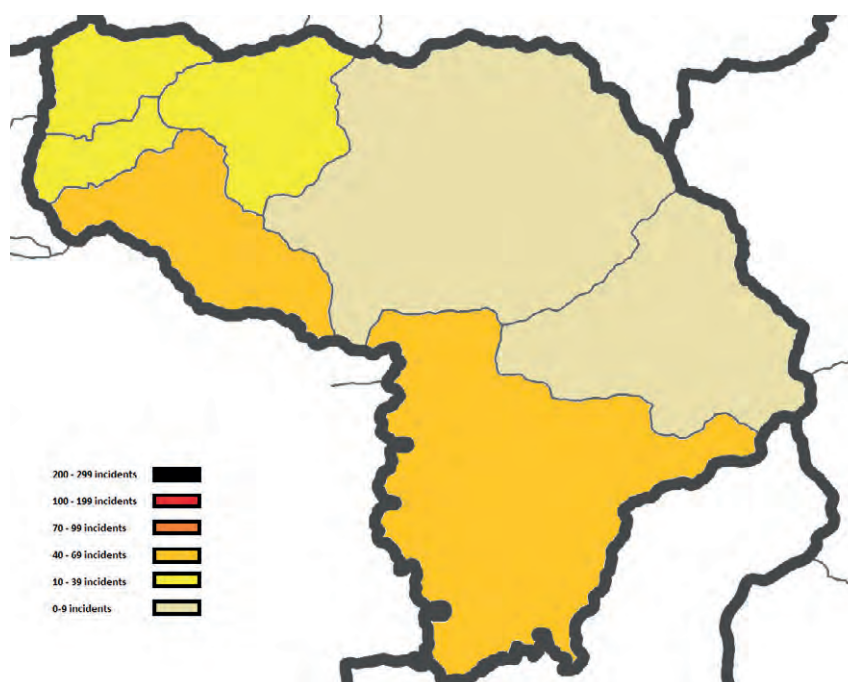


Figure 6: Kapisa province, security incidents (Jan - Aug 2015)

In February 2015, a police officer said that a number of leading Taliban commanders had been killed in security operations, which improved law and order in the province. ⁽³⁰⁰⁾ But in April 2015, AAN remarked that the Taliban had already established an administrative system governing Alasay district. At the same time, in other previously quiet districts, such as Koh Band, the security situation was deteriorating. However, the provincial council claimed to have settled a number of complicated tribal feuds and achieving progress in other areas. ⁽³⁰¹⁾

ANSF and NATO-led operations in Kapisa have led to casualties among the insurgents. Six Taliban militants, including the shadow district chief, Maulvi Aziz, and a shadow district police chief, Shahid, were killed in a NATO drone strike in December 2014. Five militants, including a foreign national, were killed in an airstrike carried out by Afghan security forces in January 2015. ⁽³⁰²⁾ Many other insurgents were hurt, arrested or killed in similar operations during 2015. ⁽³⁰³⁾

Clashes between militant groups also led to the deaths of insurgents. A former jihadi commander was shot dead by unidentified gunmen in central Kapisa province in January 2015. ⁽³⁰⁴⁾ The Taliban were probably behind the killing of a leading former jihadi and his bodyguard in a roadside blast in February 2015. ⁽³⁰⁵⁾

Civilians also suffered as a result of clashes between armed groups. In January 2015, residents said that some schools had been closed for two years as well as health clinics due to infighting between former jihadi commanders in the Koh Band district. Two commanders had hired gunmen and established bunkers and checkpoints in the area. But the government, despite having enough resources and forces, was unable to disarm the commanders or reopen the schools. Dozens of people died or were injured during clashes between the rivals. ⁽³⁰⁶⁾

In February 2015, residents of Kohistan district said that insecurity and crime had increased due to insufficient strength of security forces. Activities of irresponsible gunmen had increased at night so residents could not leave

⁽²⁹⁹⁾ For more information on the source and the methodology of the maps, see [introduction](#).

⁽³⁰⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Law, order markedly improved in Kapisa: Talwar, 9 February 2015.

⁽³⁰¹⁾ Obaid, Ali, Fire in Pashai Hills: a two-district case study from Kapisa, 6 April 2015.

⁽³⁰²⁾ 1TVnews, Afghan airstrike kills senior Taliban militant in Kapisa, January 2015.

⁽³⁰³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 6 militants killed, 7 hurt in Kapisa operation, 14 July 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 militants killed, 6 captured in Kapisa raid, 19 July 2015; Tolonews, 110 Insurgents Killed in Afghan Military Operations, 11 June 2015; Tolonews, Six Taliban Insurgents Killed in Kapisa Operation, 16 April 2015; RFE/RL, Kabul Says 23 Taliban Killed in Latest Afghan Army Operations, 21 January 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, US drone strike in Kapisa kills 5 rebels, 4 January 2015; Tolo News, Police Operation Kills 4 Militants in Kapisa, 4 January 2015.

⁽³⁰⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Former jihadi commander shot dead in Kapisa, 13 January 2015.

⁽³⁰⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Former Jihadi commander dead in Kapisa landmine blast, 15 February 2015.

⁽³⁰⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Infighting between ex-jihadis shuts Kapisa schools, 19 January 2015.

their homes in the evening. Gunmen appeared on roads in the afternoon and created problems for locals. They took money and other possessions from people, intimidated and assaulted them. Such incidents have lately increased, forcing residents to stay at home after evening. There had been clashes between militants and security forces, with both the sides suffering casualties. The fewer number of police in the district could not deal with the increasing number of illegal gunmen and insurgents. ⁽³⁰⁷⁾

People were also injured during security operations ⁽³⁰⁸⁾, killed in roadside blasts ⁽³⁰⁹⁾ or in clashes between police and militants. ⁽³¹⁰⁾ In July 2015, condemning civilian deaths in recent terrorist attacks including 10 deaths in Kapisa. Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the government of Afghanistan Abdullah Abdullah said those killing innocent people should expect their own death as well. ⁽³¹¹⁾

The army and police suffered casualties due to clashes with insurgents. ⁽³¹²⁾ A lawmaker escaped unhurt in a roadside bombing that killed his guard and injured three others. ⁽³¹³⁾ A journalist survived a kidnapping and attack in Kapisa by local warlords. ⁽³¹⁴⁾

Displacement

Growing insecurity led to a considerable increase in the number of displaced families in central Kapisa province in December 2014. ⁽³¹⁵⁾ By May 2015, 331 families comprising 2,316 individuals were displaced. Reportedly, families were displaced in January and February 2015. They originated from Tagab and Nejrab. According to selected key informants, families moved in an effort to prevent being caught in the ongoing clashes between AGEs and ANSF. ⁽³¹⁶⁾ According to a recent OCHA update, 4,200 persons were displaced in Kapisa between 1 January 2015 and 31 July 2015. ⁽³¹⁷⁾

Actors in the conflict

As mentioned above, there is an increasing number of unidentified gunmen. The Taliban and other armed groups are fighting each other and Afghan security forces. Some tribes and families, including former jihadi commanders, had been in conflict for years which led to death of tens of people and gave rise to illegal armed men. ⁽³¹⁸⁾ Tensions exist between militias run by rival commanders of the former mujahedin factions Hezb-e Islami and Jamiat-e Islami. AAN examined the two Pashai-inhabited districts of Alasay and Koh Band as examples of how the government is losing its grip on Kapisa. ⁽³¹⁹⁾ For example, two men, Zabit Wakil and commander Gul Nazim, who were members of Jamiat-i Islami Afghanistan and Hezb-e Islami Afghanistan (HIA), had been fighting each other for the past few years. Both commanders are armed with small and heavy weapons which they were using to target each other's position. ⁽³²⁰⁾

Abdul Ghaffar, aka Mawlawi Shafaq, was the Taliban's shadow deputy governor for Kapisa. He was killed in an airstrike in January 2015. ⁽³²¹⁾

⁽³⁰⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Insecurity, crimes rise in Kapisa's Kohistan-II, 7 February 2015.

⁽³⁰⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 8 killed, 12 injured in Kapisa, Wardak incidents, 21 December 2014.

⁽³⁰⁹⁾ 1TV News, Bomb kills 10 Afghan civilians in Kapisa, July 2015.

⁽³¹⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 16 Kapisa civilians wounded in Police, militants clash, 13 February 2015.

⁽³¹¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Civilian deaths to be avenged: Abdullah, 13 July 2015.

⁽³¹²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Policemen among 5 hurt in Kapisa blast, 18 December 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, Policemen among 5 dead fresh bout violence, 15 April 2015.

⁽³¹³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Guard killed as MP survives bomb attack, 1 January 2015.

⁽³¹⁴⁾ SAMSN – IFJ, Journalists at risk as IS, Taliban and Warlords fight over power in Afghanistan, 29 July 2015.

⁽³¹⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Many families displaced by Kapisa insecurity, 10 December 2014.

⁽³¹⁶⁾ UNCHR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, May 2015.

⁽³¹⁷⁾ UNOCHA, Afghanistan : Conflict-Induced Displacement (January to July 2015) as profiled by IDP taskforce and UNHCR, 16 September 2015.

⁽³¹⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Complicated tribal feuds resolved in Kapisa: PC, 13 June 2015.

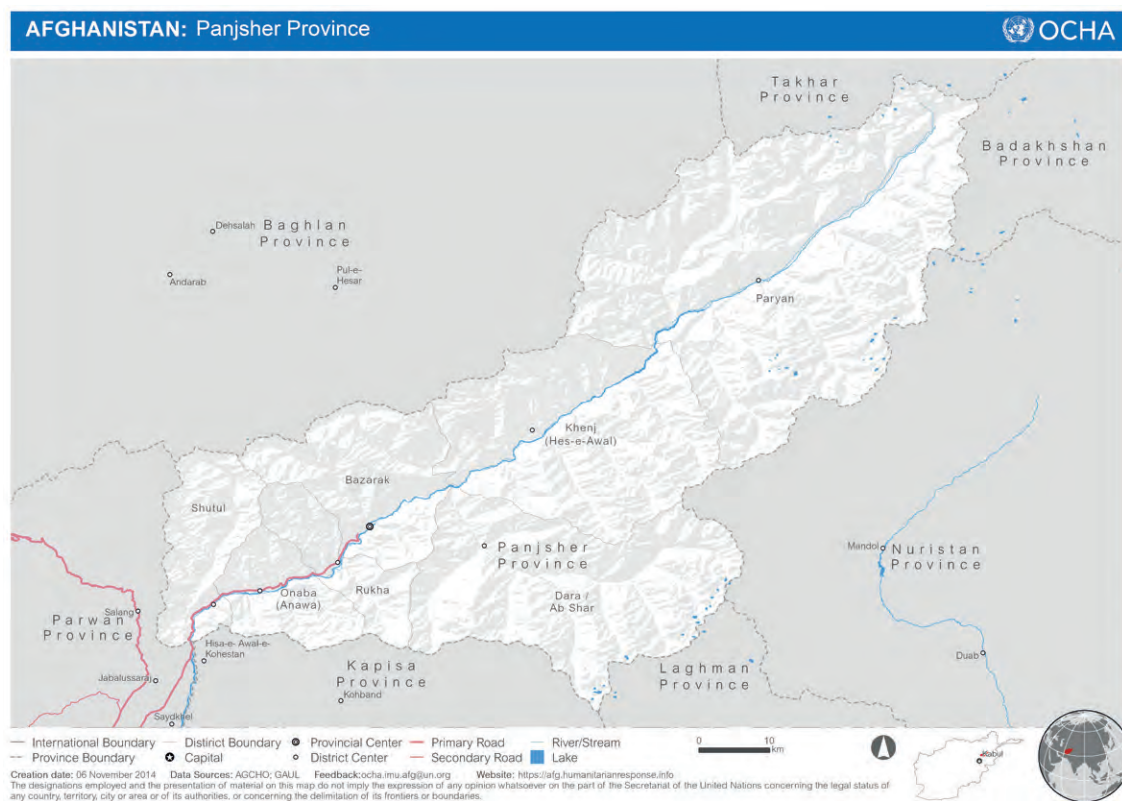
⁽³¹⁹⁾ AAN, Fire in Pashai Hills: a two-district case study from Kapisa, 6 April 2015.

⁽³²⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Civilians suffer fight between illegal groups, 26 April 2015.

⁽³²¹⁾ 1TVnews, Afghan airstrike kills senior Taliban militant in Kapisa, January 2015.

2.1.4 Panjshir

General description of the province



Panjshir province is located in the central zone of Afghanistan and surrounded by Nuristan in the east, Kapisa in the south, Parwan in the west, Baghlan in the northwest, Takhar to the north and Badakhshan in the northeast. Nearly the entire province is mountainous or semimountainous terrain while only about 4.4 % of the area is made up of flat land. ⁽³²²⁾ Panjshir was part of Parwan prior to 2004. ⁽³²³⁾ The province has an estimated 153,487 inhabitants. ⁽³²⁴⁾

Panshir province consists of the following districts: Bazarak, Dara/Ab Shar, Khenj (HeseAwal), Onaba (Anawa), Paryan, Rukha, Shutul. ⁽³²⁵⁾ The capital is Bazarak. 98% of its inhabitants are believed to be Tajiks while some Sunni Hazaras live in Dara and Paryan districts. A very small population of Kuchi is also reported. ⁽³²⁶⁾

Panjshir is a largely ethnically homogenous province. Its terrain and historical role against the Taliban has rendered insurgent infiltration difficult. ⁽³²⁷⁾

In February 2015, avalanches killed at least 186 people in Panjshir province. ⁽³²⁸⁾

Description of the violence

From 1 January to 31 August 2015, Panjshir counted 5 security incidents. Table 4 provides an overview of the nature of the security incidents: ⁽³²⁹⁾

⁽³²²⁾ MRRD, Panjshir Provincial Profile, n.d.

⁽³²³⁾ ISW, Regional Command East, Panjshir Province, n.d.

⁽³²⁴⁾ UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Population estimate for 2015, 26 August 2015.

⁽³²⁵⁾ UNOCHA, AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries, 25 September.

⁽³²⁶⁾ International organisation, e-mail, 15 September 2015; MRRD, Panjshir Provincial Profile, n.d.

⁽³²⁷⁾ International organisation, e-mail, 15 September 2015.

⁽³²⁸⁾ Daily Mail, Afghan Avalanche Death Toll rises amid Rescue Efforts, 28 February 2015.

⁽³²⁹⁾ For more information on the source of the data and the methodology, see [introduction](#).

Armed confrontations	4
IED explosions	1
Total security incidents	5

Table 4: Security incidents by nature, Panshjr (Jan - Aug 2015)

None of these incidents was tracked in the consulted media. Another source in Kabul stated that Panjshir had not witnessed any incident of armed conflict since May 2014. ⁽³³⁰⁾ There have been some isolated incidents and IED attacks have been recorded occasionally in the past, the latest against the provincial governor's office in May 2013 and against the district administrative centre of Dara and the wellguarded gate to the province in May 2014. ⁽³³¹⁾

Displacement

No displacement has been registered for Panjshir from January to July 2015. ⁽³³²⁾ An anonymous source reported some IDP movements to Panjshir, mainly coming from Nuristan. ⁽³³³⁾

Actors in the conflict

Panjshir is historically linked to the Jamiat-e Islami and its armed wing Shurae Nazar. These links date back to both the Jihad during Soviet presence and the Taliban in 1996-2001. The political space in Panjshir is therefore dominated by the Jamiate Islami party and former Shurae Nazar networks. Shurae Nazar was founded by the late Ahmad Shah Massoud. According to a source in Kabul, Hezb-e Islami had followers in the valley, but under Massoud's leadership Hezb-e Islami followers were persecuted, leaving Jamiat uncontested dominance in the province ever since. Panjshir has no ALP programme. ⁽³³⁴⁾

Because of its geographical isolation and ethnic homogeneity, insurgents have not maintained a hold in this province. Yet, authorities are concerned about insurgent intrusion through IDP movements, mainly coming from Nuristan. ⁽³³⁵⁾ Qari Baryal, affiliated to the Peshawar Shura, is believed to be the Taliban commander responsible for the area Laghman, Panjshir, Kapisa and Parwan. ⁽³³⁶⁾

⁽³³⁰⁾ International organisation, e-mail, 15 September 2015.

⁽³³¹⁾ International organisation, e-mail, 15 September 2015.

⁽³³²⁾ UNOCHA, Afghanistan : Conflict-Induced Displacement (January to July 2015) as profiled by IDP taskforce and UNHCR, 16 September 2015.

⁽³³³⁾ International organisation, e-mail, 15 September 2015.

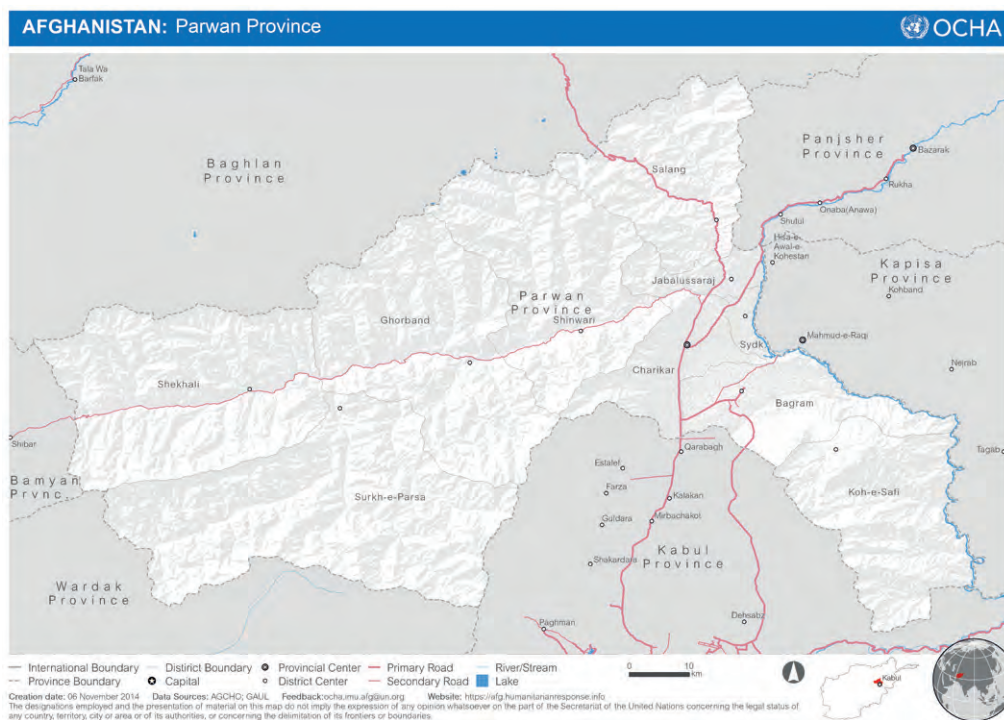
⁽³³⁴⁾ International organisation, e-mail, 15 September 2015.

⁽³³⁵⁾ International organisation, e-mail, 15 September 2015.

⁽³³⁶⁾ UN Security Council, Letter dated 18 August 2015 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council, 26 August 2015, p. 20.

2.1.5 Parwan

General description of the province



Parwan province is located north of Kabul and surrounded by Bamiyan, Baghlan, Kapisa, Kabul and Wardak provinces. More than two-thirds of the province is mountainous or semimountainous terrain while about one quarter of the area is flat land. ⁽³³⁷⁾ Parwan province is made up of the following districts: Bagram, Charikar, Ghorband (or Siagherd), Jabalussaraj, Kohe Safi, Salang, Shekhali, Shinwari, Surkh-e Parsa and Saydkhel. ⁽³³⁸⁾ Parwan is estimated to have 664,502 inhabitants; its capital Charikar houses an estimated 57,746. ⁽³³⁹⁾

Dari and Pashtu are the main languages spoken in the province; however Dari speakers outnumber Pashtu speakers by a ratio of 5 to 2. ⁽³⁴⁰⁾ According to an anonymous source in Kabul, 70% of Parwan's inhabitants are Tadjik, 18% Pashtun, 11% Hazara and 1% Turkmen. ⁽³⁴¹⁾

Ethnic Tajiks have a presence in every district in Parwan and are the majority in Salang. Shinwari has a Pashtun majority and Ghorband a significant Pashtun population. ⁽³⁴²⁾ Parwan province also has a population of Kuchis or nomads whose numbers vary in different seasons. ⁽³⁴³⁾ According to a source in Kabul, Tajiks live predominantly in Charikar, Salang, Jabalussaraj, Sayedkhel, Bagram, Sorkh-e Parsa and some parts of Shekhali districts while Pashtuns predominantly live in the more restive districts of Shinwari, Koh-e Safi and parts of Ghorband. Hazaras and the small Turk minority reside in Shekhali and Surkh-e Parsa districts. ⁽³⁴⁴⁾ Surkh-e Parsa is inhabited by Sunni Hazara, who are, according to analyst Thomas Ruttig, traditionally at odds with the Shia Hazara in Bamiyan and therefore supportive of Hezb-e Islami. ⁽³⁴⁵⁾

Highway 1 runs through the province connecting Kabul with Pule Khumri and other northern provincial capitals. From the Charikar, the principal access road to Bamiyan, the Ghandak Highway runs over the Shibar pass and through

⁽³³⁷⁾ MRRD, Parwan Provincial Profile, n.d.

⁽³³⁸⁾ UNOCHA, AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries, 25 September 2012.

⁽³³⁹⁾ UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Population estimate for 2015, 26 August 2015.

⁽³⁴⁰⁾ MRRD, Parwan Provincial Profile, n.d.

⁽³⁴¹⁾ International organisation, e-mail, 15 September 2015.

⁽³⁴²⁾ Ruttig, T., Ghorband – A valley once friendly, 19 July 2011.

⁽³⁴³⁾ MRRD, Parwan Provincial Profile, n.d.

⁽³⁴⁴⁾ International organisation, e-mail, 15 September 2015.

⁽³⁴⁵⁾ Ruttig, T., Ghorband – A valley once friendly, 19 July 2011.

the Ghorband valley. ⁽³⁴⁶⁾ Bagram has an important military airfield; this was once the largest American military base in the country where at its peak 40,000 military personnel and civilian contractors lived. The base also houses an infamous detention centre, previously run by the US but handed over to the Afghan government by the end of 2014. ⁽³⁴⁷⁾ In October 2015, the US government decided to maintain its military presence in Bagram throughout 2016. ⁽³⁴⁸⁾

Description of the violence

From 1 January to 31 August 2015, Parwan province counted 154 security incidents. Table 5 provides an overview of the nature of the security incidents: ⁽³⁴⁹⁾

Violence targeting individuals	19
Armed confrontations and airstrikes	63
Explosions	25
Security enforcement	38
Non-conflict related violent incidents	6
Other violent incidents	3
Total security incidents	154

Table 5: Security incidents by type, Parwan (Jan - Aug 2015)

The map in figure 7 presents the number of security incidents per district in Parwan province. ⁽³⁵⁰⁾

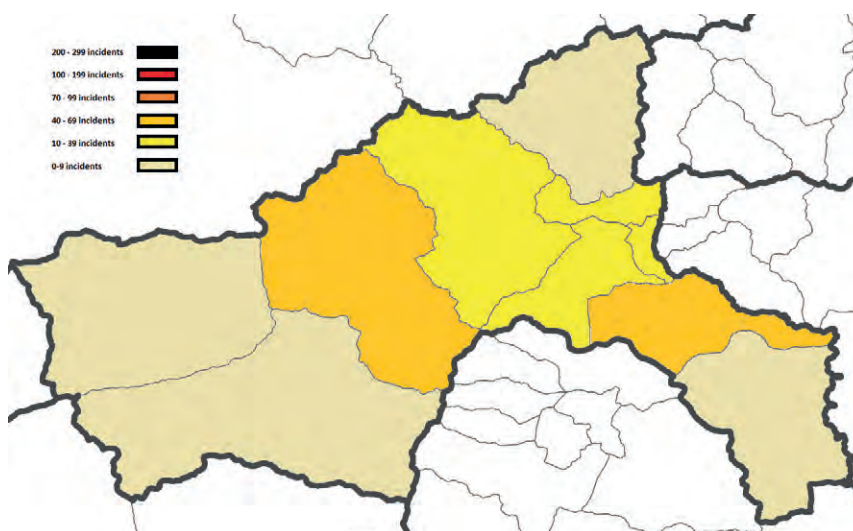


Figure 7: Parwan, security incidents (Jan - Aug 2015)

A monitoring study on the security situation for women, conducted by APPRO, found in January 2015 that: ⁽³⁵¹⁾

[d]espite a decline in AOG [Armed Opposition Group] activity in Parwan, except in Shinwari, Siahgard and Ghorband districts, the overall security situation has deteriorated compared to the previous monitoring round. The decline in AOG activity is attributed to government's employment of more experienced personnel and more effective counter-insurgency strategies. The main source [of] concern during this cycle is criminality, which has increased significantly. This rise is attributed to an increase in firearm possession since the elections [in April and June 2014], combined [with] a rise in unemployment and general poverty.

⁽³⁴⁶⁾ Landinfo, Temanotat Afghanistan Sikkerhetsoppdatering, 9 January 2014, p. 19.

⁽³⁴⁷⁾ Time, Inside Afghanistan's Bagram Airfield, 27 February 2015.

⁽³⁴⁸⁾ BBC, US troops to stay in Afghanistan in Policy shift, 15 October 2015.

⁽³⁴⁹⁾ For more information on the source of the data and the methodology, see [introduction](#).

⁽³⁵⁰⁾ For more information on the source and the methodology of the maps, see [introduction](#).

⁽³⁵¹⁾ APPRO, Afghanistan: Monitoring Women's Security in Transition. Cycle 5, January 2015, p. 53.

In July 2015, residents and local politicians complained about the deteriorating security situation. This was due to either armed clashes between insurgents and the Afghan security forces, or the presence of illegal armed groups, often thought to be linked with local powerbrokers. ⁽³⁵²⁾ Disputes are frequently settled with violence, resulting in several killed and/or injured. ⁽³⁵³⁾ In June 2015, NATO forces conducted a massive raid on the compound of a local Jamiaat-affiliated former Jihadi commander, who also headed Abdullah's campaign team. The aim of this raid, which sparked fierce local protest, was to destroy a large weapons cache in his home. ⁽³⁵⁴⁾

A local resident of Charikar quoted by Pajhwok stated 'The security situation is deteriorating with each passing day. Clashes often erupt between rebels and security forces twice in a week in the provincial capital.' ⁽³⁵⁵⁾

In the large Ghorband valley, which stretches over the districts Shinwar, Ghorband (or Siagherd) and Shekhali, security has deteriorated since 2009. The ANSF responded with various clearing operations in restive areas. ⁽³⁵⁶⁾ Insurgents are said to operate with freedom of movement in the Ghorband valley allowing them to harass and threaten the local population. ⁽³⁵⁷⁾ In January 2015, APPRO researchers noted that in the three districts of the Ghorband valley, access to education for girls was severely affected due to insecurity. However, access to public life for women was not affected by the general deterioration in security. ⁽³⁵⁸⁾

Cleaning operations are mentioned in the press in January 2015. ⁽³⁵⁹⁾ In June 2015, ANSF conducted a major cleaning operation in Ghorband, lasting for several days. ⁽³⁶⁰⁾ International military forces remained active in the Ghorband valley mainly through airpower and the use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV), targeting insurgents but occasionally killing civilians. ⁽³⁶¹⁾

In September 2015 analyst Thomas Ruttig stated: 'operations against the Taliban in Parwan province seem to have been successful; there were no recent reports of incidents on the Kabul-Bamyan route through Ghorband.' ⁽³⁶²⁾ Still, according to local residents quoted by Pajhwok in July 2015, militants had intensified their activities in Ghorband district and the nearby Shinwari district. ⁽³⁶³⁾

In April 2015, an IED in a vending cart targeted an ALP patrol in the main bazar of Ghorband, injuring 11 people, of which only three ALP men. ⁽³⁶⁴⁾ In June, a civilian was beaten to death by an ALP commander in retaliation for a bomb targeting an ALP vehicle in the district. ⁽³⁶⁵⁾

In Bagram district, the main targets are the IMF and the military airport. In November 2014, a rocket attack on the base injured dozens of inmates of the jail on the airfield and a suicide attack on a NATO patrol injured several foreign soldiers. ⁽³⁶⁶⁾ In December 2014, another rocket attack at the air base killed two Afghan workers and an IED targeted an IMF convoy, killing several foreign soldiers. ⁽³⁶⁷⁾ In May, a local civilian was injured in a force protection incident. ⁽³⁶⁸⁾ In June 2015, an American was killed in a rocket attack on the airbase. ⁽³⁶⁹⁾ In the summer, the insurgent tactics shifted toward targeting influential local people: In June 2015 a former jihadi commander was killed by unknown

⁽³⁵²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Insecurity growing in Parwan say dwellers, 20 July 2015.

⁽³⁵³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Illegal armed men kill 2 in Parwan, 29 December 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, 5 members of one family shot dead in Parwan, 30 January 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, 3 killed, 6 wounded when rival groups clash in Parwan, 4 February 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, 28 more rebels dead in Zabul clashes, 23 May 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Family feud, traffic crash leave 4 dead, 9 hurt, 1 July 2015; Tolonews, Land dispute leaves five dead in Parwan, 11 July 2015.

⁽³⁵⁴⁾ Tolonews, Attack on former jihadi leaders house sparks protest in Parwan, 29 June 2015.

⁽³⁵⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Insecurity growing in Parwan say dwellers, 20 July 2015.

⁽³⁵⁶⁾ International organisation, e-mail, 15 September 2015.

⁽³⁵⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, ISAF regrets civilian casualties in Parwan operation, 16 January 2014.

⁽³⁵⁸⁾ APPRO, Afghanistan: Monitoring Women's Security in Transition. Cycle 5, January 2015, pp. 53-55.

⁽³⁵⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 3 police, many rebels killed in violence, 7 January 2015.

⁽³⁶⁰⁾ Tolonews, Five Taliban insurgents killed in Parwan operation, 5 June 2015.

⁽³⁶¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 Taliban commanders killed in drone strike, 10 November 2014; Tolonews, Foreign drone strike kills 17 in Parwan, 11 December 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, ISAF airstrike kills 5 students in Parwan, 11 December 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban commander among 3 wounded in airstrike, 26 March 2015.

⁽³⁶²⁾ Ruttig, T., The Second Fall of Musa Qala: How the Taleban are expanding territorial control, 3 September 2015.

⁽³⁶³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Insecurity growing in Parwan say dwellers, 20 July 2015.

⁽³⁶⁴⁾ Tolonews, 11 people injured in blast in Parwan, 11 April 2015.

⁽³⁶⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 3 killed in Parwan, Uruzgan violence, 6 July 2015.

⁽³⁶⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 26 wounded in rocket attack on jail, 1 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, 3 NATO soldiers injured in Parwan suicide attack, 14 November 2014.

⁽³⁶⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 Afghan workers dead in Bagram rocket strike, 8 December 2014; Tolonews, Roadside bomb hits foreign troops convoy in Parwan, 13 December 2014.

⁽³⁶⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Foreign forces shoot, injure driver in Parwan, 7 May 2015.

⁽³⁶⁹⁾ NBC News, Afghanistan attack: US women killed in attack on US base, 10 June 2015.

gunmen and a few days later a police commander and his bodyguard were killed in an ambush. ⁽³⁷⁰⁾ In August 2015, a religious leader was killed by unknown gunmen in front of the airfield. ⁽³⁷¹⁾ A few days later, a school principal was killed by unknown gunmen. A student was wounded in the attack. This murder sparked outrage among local residents. ⁽³⁷²⁾ This targeted killing spread to Charikar district too. There was an ambush on a police vehicle in July 2015 ⁽³⁷³⁾ and another ambush on an NDS-officer in August 2015. ⁽³⁷⁴⁾ In Jabalussaraj, a female officer was shot dead from a distance in August 2015. ⁽³⁷⁵⁾

In May 2015, a US helicopter crashed in Koh-e Safi district and the Taliban claimed credit for the event. ⁽³⁷⁶⁾ In June 2015, insurgents staged an attack at night on a security post in Koh-e Safi district. The only casualties were insurgents. ⁽³⁷⁷⁾

In July 2015 several members of the Provincial Council of Parwan told the press that casualties in Parwan were higher than in the insecure provinces, without specifying which. They said that nearly 200 residents of the province had been killed in previous months. They described the low presence of the national security forces, unemployment and the existence of irresponsible armed people as the main factors behind the situation. ⁽³⁷⁸⁾

Displacement

In January 2015, UNHCR profiled 473 families or more than 3,000 displaced individuals in Parwan and in March 2015 175 families or about 1,000 more individuals. They fled their homes in neighbouring provinces such as Kapisa, Kabul, Nuristan or Laghman, but also the districts in Parwan Shinawar and Ghorband (Siagherd), and settled in the central districts of Charikar, Bagram, Saydkhel and Jabalussaraj. They fled mainly insurgency and counter-insurgency operations. Such operations are said to negatively affect the security and safety of the civilian population, disrupting normal life and forcing people to move. Also insurgents reportedly took advantage of civilian houses and villages to support and supply their positions and engage government forces. ⁽³⁷⁹⁾ In April 2015, UNHCR also registered 20 families or 150 individuals in Kabul, who fled due to general security fears in Ghorband. ⁽³⁸⁰⁾

Actors in the conflict

Reportedly, there are 150 ALP in Ghorband (Siagherd), 116 with 50 'volunteers' in Shinwari and 134 in Koh-e Safi districts, although it is difficult to determine the exact presence on the ground as ALP is regularly targeted by insurgents. ⁽³⁸¹⁾ According to a local official, quoted by Pajhwok, the province has about 1,000 policemen. He added the province needed 3,000 more to maintain law and order. ⁽³⁸²⁾ Besides ANSF, IMF remained active in the province in and around the military airbase in Bagram and in the Ghorband valley mainly through airpower and the use of UAVs or drones. The raid on a local power broker's compound in Charikar, with international ground troops and air support was an outlier in this respect. ⁽³⁸³⁾

Landinfo noted that the insurgent groups active in the province include the Taliban, Hezb-e Islami, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and al Qaeda. ⁽³⁸⁴⁾ Thomas Ruttig reported in 2011 that Pashtuns in Ghorband have traditionally been pro-Hezb-e Islami, but the Taliban has been able to absorb some of its structures during its regime. Local Taliban networks have been reactivated and a provincial shadow administration has been set up. ⁽³⁸⁵⁾ The provincial shadow governor is Mawlawi Ismail and the commander responsible for the region including Laghman, Panjshir, Kapisa and

⁽³⁷⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Former jihadi commander shot dead in Parwan, 30 June 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Police officer among 6 dead in road mishap, security incidents, 8 July 2015.

⁽³⁷¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban kidnap 4 judges in Sar-i Pul, 18 August 2015.

⁽³⁷²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Enraged protestors torch police post after principals murder, 23 August 2015.

⁽³⁷³⁾ Tolonews, Insurgents attack police on Kabul-Mazar highway, 23 July 2015.

⁽³⁷⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Rocket attack in Faizabad foiled, NDS officer killed, 1 August 2015.

⁽³⁷⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, militants kill policewoman in Parwan, 28 August 2015.

⁽³⁷⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, NATO chopper crashes in Parwan, Taliban claim credit, 31 May 2015.

⁽³⁷⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 3 rebels killed, weapons, explosives seized, 8 June 2015.

⁽³⁷⁸⁾ Mandegar Daily, 'Casualties in Parwan far higher than insecure provinces (Dari)', 22 July 2015.

⁽³⁷⁹⁾ UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, January 2015; UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, March 2015.

⁽³⁸⁰⁾ UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, April 2015.

⁽³⁸¹⁾ International organisation, e-mail, 15 September 2015.

⁽³⁸²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Insecurity growing in Parwan say dwellers, 20 July 2015.

⁽³⁸³⁾ Tolonews, Attack on former jihadi leaders house sparks protest in Parwan, 29 June 2015.

⁽³⁸⁴⁾ Landinfo, Temanotat Afghanistan Sikkerhetsoppdatering, 9 January 2014, p. 20.

⁽³⁸⁵⁾ Ruttig, T., Ghorband – A valley once friendly, 19 July 2011.

Parwan is Qari Baryal. Both are affiliated to the Peshawar Shura. ⁽³⁸⁶⁾ In a statement of August 2015, the Taliban said mullah Mohammad Nasim was the ‘Parwan In-charge’. ⁽³⁸⁷⁾

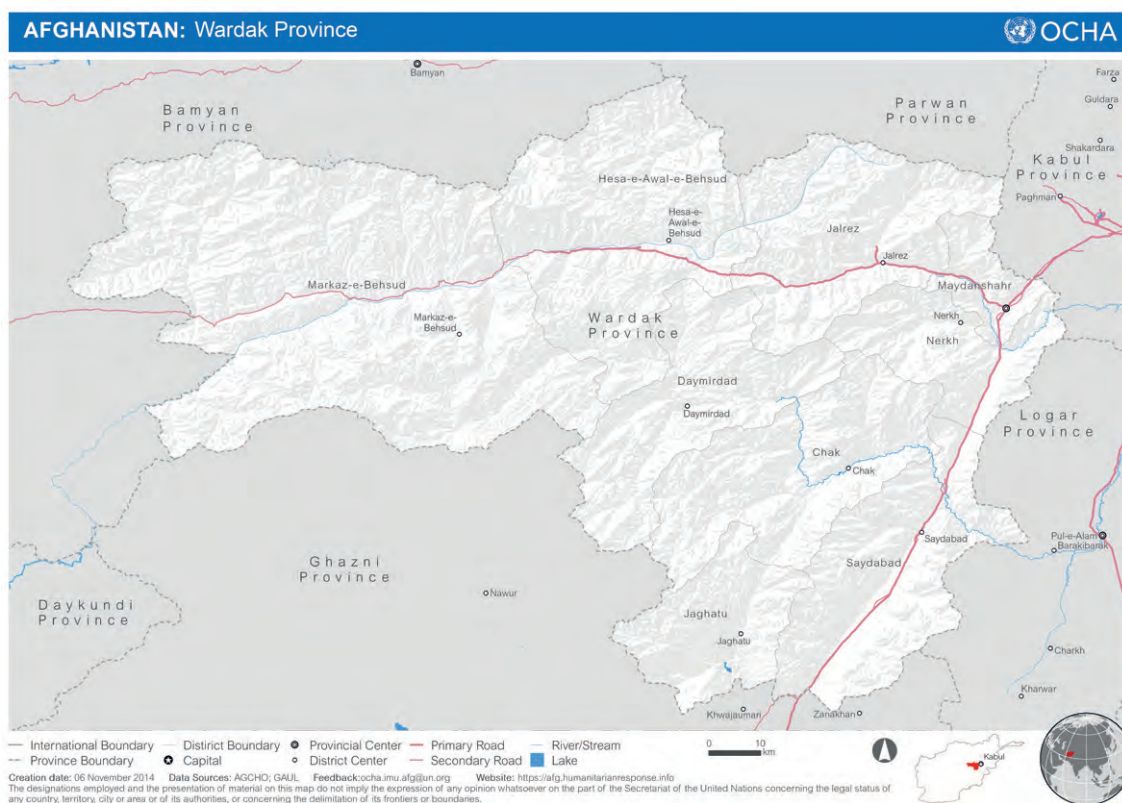
A source in Kabul states: ⁽³⁸⁸⁾

The Taliban in the province are constituted primarily by locals. In the mountainous Ghorband valley, Shinwari is a predominantly Pashtun district while Sia Gird [Ghorband] is a mixture of Pashtun and Tajiks. Koh-e-Safi district is located on the eastern part of the province with a Pashtun population (Safi). The presence of insurgents can be attributed to numerous factors: one is the perception of marginalization by the communities from the provincial government dominated by Jamiat-affiliated Tajiks which has contributed to the alliance of former HIG [Hezb-e Islami/Gulbuddin] commanders with Taliban; another is unresolved grievances and political divisions of past decades nurtured by key powerbrokers to further their political goals, an additional element, is the rural poverty of mountain valleys with deeply traditional and isolated communities sympathetic to religious fundamentalism, among other reasons.

There are reports of Islamic State (IS) infiltration and some activities in parts of Parwan such as Shinwari, Sia Gird [Ghorband] and Koh-e-Safi districts. In the past three months, reportedly the IS have entered at least two times from the neighbouring Baghlan province to Sia Gird and Shinwari districts and have tried to expand their existence but reportedly have faced the resistance of some local AGE [Anti-Government Elements]. The provincial authorities however did not confirm these reports.

2.1.6 Wardak

General description of the province



Wardak province, also known as Maydan Wardak, shares borders with Parwan and Bamiyan to the north, Kabul and Logar in the east, and Ghazni to the south and west. More than fourfifths of the province is mountainous or semimountainous terrain while a little more than onetenth of the area is made up of flat land. The province of Wardak

⁽³⁸⁶⁾ UN Security Council, Letter dated 18 August 2015 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council, 26 August 2015, p. 21.

⁽³⁸⁷⁾ Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Pledges of allegiance to the new Amir take place throughout Afghanistan, 9 August 2015.

⁽³⁸⁸⁾ International organisation, e-mail, 15 September 2015.

is divided into nine districts: Chak, Daymirdad, Hesae Awale Behsud, Jaghatu, Jalrez, Markaze Behsud, Maydanshahr, Nirkh, and Sayadabad. ⁽³⁸⁹⁾ The capital is the town of Maydan Shahr, which is located almost 35 kilometres west of Kabul city. ⁽³⁹⁰⁾

The province is estimated to house 596,287 residents. ⁽³⁹¹⁾ The major ethnic groups living in Wardak Province are Pashtuns, followed by Tajiks and Hazaras. Wardak province also has a population of Kuchis or nomads whose numbers vary in different seasons. ⁽³⁹²⁾ During spring, Kuchi migrations regularly cause violent clashes in the predominantly Hazara Bihsud districts. ⁽³⁹³⁾

The main KabulKandahar highway intersects the province through the districts of Maydan Shahr, Nirkh and Sayadabad. A provincial road runs west from Maydan Shahr to Bamiyan through Jalrez and the districts of Hisai Awali Bihsud and Markaz-i Bihsud. ⁽³⁹⁴⁾

Description of the violence

With its strategic proximity to Kabul, Wardak has experienced high levels of civilian casualties due to the conflict and exposure to mines and ERWs. The province has a lot of security incidents. ⁽³⁹⁵⁾ According to UNHCR, Wardak is one of the most unstable provinces of the central region. Insurgent influence is growing, leading to sustained confrontations with security forces. The districts of Chakh, Daymirdad and Nirkh are, according to UNHCR, particularly affected by the insurgency. ⁽³⁹⁶⁾ The provincial governor labelled Daymirdad, Jaghatu, Nirkh, Chak and Jalrez as volatile districts of the province. He also stated ‘although Behsud is a relatively calm district, there are disturbing questions about the rule of law there’. ⁽³⁹⁷⁾

From 1 January to 31 August 2015, Wardak province counted 312 security incidents. Table 6 provides an overview of the nature of the security incidents: ⁽³⁹⁸⁾

Violence targeting individuals	28
Armed confrontations and airstrikes	191
Explosions	66
Security enforcement	45
Total security incidents	312

Table 6: Security incidents by type, Wardak (Jan - Aug 2015)

The map in figure 8 presents the number of security incidents per district in Wardak province. ⁽³⁹⁹⁾

From July 2015, there were heavy clashes in Jalrez when hundreds of insurgents overran several police posts on the Kabul-Bamiyan highway. ⁽⁴⁰⁰⁾ Twenty four ALP members were killed, and some of them were decapitated and burnt. ⁽⁴⁰¹⁾ Reportedly, security forces targeted also civilian houses in the fighting, leading to several civilian casualties. ⁽⁴⁰²⁾ A tribal elder abducted on the highway during the operation was killed. ⁽⁴⁰³⁾ After a 10-day operation, Afghan security forces claimed to have retaken all security posts, blaming all civilian casualties on roadside bombs. ⁽⁴⁰⁴⁾

⁽³⁸⁹⁾ UNOCHA, AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries, 25 September 2012.

⁽³⁹⁰⁾ MRRD, Wardak Provincial Profile, n.d.; Pajhwok Afghan News, Background Profile of Maidan Wardak, n.d.

⁽³⁹¹⁾ UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Population estimate for 2015, 26 August 2015.

⁽³⁹²⁾ MRRD, Wardak Provincial Profile, n.d.

⁽³⁹³⁾ Landinfo, The conflict between Hazaras and Kuchis in the Beshud Districts of Wardak Province, 6 June 2011.

⁽³⁹⁴⁾ UNOCHA, Wardak Province District Atlas, 14 April 2014.

⁽³⁹⁵⁾ UNOCHA, 2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan, November 2014, p. 20.

⁽³⁹⁶⁾ UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, April 2015.

⁽³⁹⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Effective security uplift plans drawn by Wardak governor, 8 August 2015.

⁽³⁹⁸⁾ For more information on the source of the data and the methodology, see [introduction](#).

⁽³⁹⁹⁾ For more information on the source and the methodology of the maps, see [introduction](#).

⁽⁴⁰⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Hundreds of Taliban storm security posts in Jalrez district, 2 July 2015. Pajhwok Afghan News, 30 rebels, 18 ALP men dead in Jalrez fighting, 3 July 2015.

⁽⁴⁰¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Jalrez probe findings be made public soon: NSC, 26 August 2015.

⁽⁴⁰²⁾ Sarnavesht Daily, ‘Police target civilian houses in Jalrez’, 4 July 2015.

⁽⁴⁰³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Tribal elder, 2 women killed in separate incidents, 13 July 2015.

⁽⁴⁰⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Operation wrapped up in Jalrez, 10 rebels killed, 15 July 2015.

The Taliban commander responsible for the attack was later in July killed in a drone strike. ⁽⁴⁰⁵⁾ Civilian victims of the insurgents and family members of the slain ALP received compensation from the governor's office and 6 security personnel were later fired because of negligence, as NDS had warned of an imminent attack shortly beforehand. ⁽⁴⁰⁶⁾

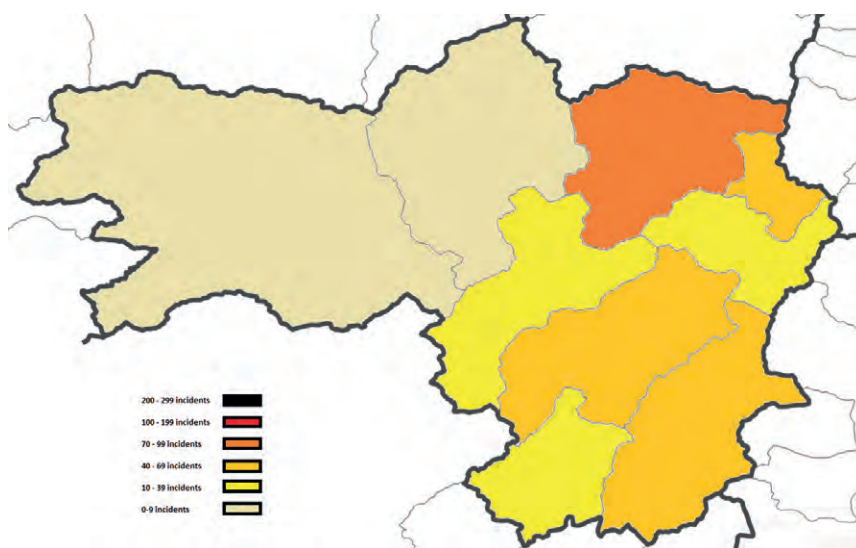


Figure 8: Wardak, security incidents (Jan - Aug 2015)

According to a BBC report from October 2014 on Sayadabad's Tangi valley, this area is firmly under Taliban control. The Taliban collects taxes, runs the schools and maintains a rudimentary court system there. ⁽⁴⁰⁷⁾ In March 2015, gunmen opened fire on civilian vehicles on the highway through Saydabad, killing 13 passengers from a bus headed south. ⁽⁴⁰⁸⁾ This sparked a military operation in the district in which, among others, the son of the local Taliban commander responsible for the shooting was arrested. ⁽⁴⁰⁹⁾ After some village elders decided no one in their village was allowed to take part in anti-state activities, insurgents abducted them and several others after prayers in the mosque in July 2015. ⁽⁴¹⁰⁾ A landmine killed four children in July 2015. ⁽⁴¹¹⁾ During confrontations in Sayadabad in August 2015, four soldiers died. Several civilians were also killed and wounded when a rocket hit their house in different incidents in August. ⁽⁴¹²⁾

In Nirkh, Taliban and Hezb-e Islami fighters are involved in a long-standing power struggle, often turning into open conflict. ⁽⁴¹³⁾ These confrontations have a serious impact on the local population, as UNHCR regularly mentions conflict and infighting between 'anti-government elements' as a reason for hundreds of families, or thousands of individuals, to flee the district. ⁽⁴¹⁴⁾

In January 2015, officials claimed to have retaken Chak district from the insurgents. Chak was considered the insurgent headquarters for the past 13 years. The Taliban had set up several checkpoints in the district and ran a parallel judicial system. ⁽⁴¹⁵⁾ In July 2015, however, provincial council members claimed that half of all security posts in Chak district had fallen to insurgents. ⁽⁴¹⁶⁾ In March 2015, Chak's district chief was abducted and killed in Saydabad. ⁽⁴¹⁷⁾ In June 2015, a local Taliban commander, some of his Afghan and foreign fighters, his wife and children were all killed when

⁽⁴⁰⁵⁾ Tolonews, Drone strike in Wardak kills 8 insurgents, including commander, 16 July 2015.

⁽⁴⁰⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Bereaved Jalrez families provided with cash assistance, 4 August 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, 6 security men accused of negligence in Jalrez carnage, 29 August 2015.

⁽⁴⁰⁷⁾ BBC, Afghanistan conflict: Life Inside a Taliban Stronghold, 20 October 2014.

⁽⁴⁰⁸⁾ RFE/RL, Official Say gunmen kill 13 in Afghan Highway Attack, 24 March 2015.

⁽⁴⁰⁹⁾ Tolonews, 15 Taliban insurgents held in Maidan Wardak, 31 March 2015.

⁽⁴¹⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban kidnap 8 civilians in Wardak mosque, 2 July 2015.

⁽⁴¹¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 4 children killed in Wardak mine blast, 16 July 2015.

⁽⁴¹²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Dozens dead, wounded in Wardak, Zabul incidents, 10 August 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Effective security uplift plans drawn, Wardak governor, 8 August 2015.

⁽⁴¹³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Scores of dead, wounded in Hizb-e-Islami, Taliban clash, 17 June 2015.

⁽⁴¹⁴⁾ UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, November 2014; UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, February 2015; UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, June 2015.

⁽⁴¹⁵⁾ Tolonews, ANSF gain control of district Chack after 13 years, 28 January 2015.

⁽⁴¹⁶⁾ Tolonews, Fighting continues in Jalrez as Taliban seize several check points, 3 July 2015.

⁽⁴¹⁷⁾ Tolonews, Unknown gunmen kill Sayedabad district executive director, 6 March 2015.

a packed suicide vehicle prematurely went off inside their home in Chak. ⁽⁴¹⁸⁾ At the end of August 2015, insurgents entered the village of Ala-i Sang and burnt five houses, and beat the residents. One child was said to have been killed in the attack. ⁽⁴¹⁹⁾ Elders later complained about the security situation in their district, citing atrocities, robbing and harassment by both insurgents and security forces. Security forces also closed the road to the Alishai locality. ⁽⁴²⁰⁾

In May 2015, provincial capital Maidan Shahr saw a coordinated attack on the courthouse, in which several civilians were injured. ⁽⁴²¹⁾ In August 2015, an explosion targeted ANSF personnel (as they were shopping), wounding four though there were no civilian casualties. ⁽⁴²²⁾

Several attacks on security posts led to ANSF and civilian casualties in Daymirdad and there were clashes in Jaghato and clearing operations in Daymirdad in August 2015. ⁽⁴²³⁾

An ongoing problem independent of the clashes between insurgents and the government is the conflict between Kuchi nomads and Hazara villagers in both Behsud districts, and sometimes also Daymirdad. The conflict dates back many generations and is about access to summer pastures for the nomads. This year, two to four people were reported dead after clashes in Markaz-i Behsud in June 2015 and several houses were torched in Daymirdad in July. ⁽⁴²⁴⁾

Displacement

In 2014, according to UNAMA, Wardak was one of the provinces with the highest levels of displacement ‘following an increase in activities of Anti-Government Elements that prompted the Afghan national security forces to launch military operations’. ⁽⁴²⁵⁾ In the first half of 2015, according to UNAMA, ‘displacement occurred continuously as a result of localised clashes and targeted attacks’. ⁽⁴²⁶⁾ In Wardak, about 5,400 individuals were displaced from January 2015 to July 2015, of which the majority moved from Sayadabad to Maydan Shahr. ⁽⁴²⁷⁾

UNHCR mentions displacement from Wardak almost every month in the period from November 2014 to July 2015. Wardak often features in the top 10 of IDP-affected provinces profiled by UNHCR. UNHCR regularly registered IDPs from rural Nirkh who sought shelter in the district centre and provincial centre Maidan Shahr; they fled armed clashes between insurgents and security forces, harassment and intimidation by insurgents, including restrictions of movement, and infighting between different insurgent groups. ⁽⁴²⁸⁾ In March 2015, UNHCR also identified hundreds of families from Saydabad and Jalrez in the provincial capital of Maidan Shahr. Although hosted by local communities, UNHCR said most IDPs needed humanitarian assistance. ⁽⁴²⁹⁾ In April 2015, UNHCR described a climate of insecurity and coercion by insurgent groups, prompting hundreds of families, or thousands of individuals, to flee, mainly from the districts of Chak, Nirkh and Daymirdad to the provincial centre Maidan Shahr and elsewhere. ⁽⁴³⁰⁾ While the provincial capital received most IDPs, 577 families, or 3876 individuals, fled from Maydan Shahr. This high number may partly be due to IDPs who experienced secondary displacement. ⁽⁴³¹⁾

⁽⁴¹⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Car bomb kills 6 inside Taliban leaders house, 11 June 2015.

⁽⁴¹⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban torch civilians houses in Maidan Wardak, 25 August 2015.

⁽⁴²⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Chak elders complain against Taliban security forces, 26 August 2015.

⁽⁴²¹⁾ Tolonews, Suicide bomber and gunmen attack court building in Maidan Wardak, 26 May 2015.

⁽⁴²²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Dozens dead, wounded in Wardak, Zabul incidents, 10 August 2015.

⁽⁴²³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 civilians among four dead in Wardak clashes, 30 July 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Dozens dead, wounded in Wardak, Zabul incidents, 10 August 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Militants suffer heavy casualties, claim officials, 11 August 2015.

⁽⁴²⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 dead as Hazara-Kuchi feud resurfaces in Wardak, 22 June 2015; Killid Group, ‘Clash between Kuchis, villagers takes toll (Dari)’, 12 July 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban kidnap 8 civilians in Wardak mosque, 2 July 2015.

⁽⁴²⁵⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan, Annual Report 2014, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, February 2015, p. 24.

⁽⁴²⁶⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2015. Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, August 2015, p. 25.

⁽⁴²⁷⁾ UNOCHA, Afghanistan : Conflict-Induced Displacement (January to July 2015) as profiled by IDP taskforce and UNHCR, 16 September 2015.

⁽⁴²⁸⁾ UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, November 2014; UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, December 2014; UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, February 2015; UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, March 2015; UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, April 2015; UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, May 2015; UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, June 2015.

⁽⁴²⁹⁾ UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, March 2015.

⁽⁴³⁰⁾ UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, April 2015.

⁽⁴³¹⁾ Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - September 2015.

Actors in the conflict

The provincial governor said there were 5,000 security personnel in Wardak compared to up to 1,500 insurgents. He also regretted the province had no army battalion of its own. The four ANA battalions in Wardak are operating under the Gardez-based brigade. ⁽⁴³²⁾ In August 2015, US drones performed air attacks in Daymirdad and Chakh districts. ⁽⁴³³⁾

The province experienced a series of local security problems. ⁽⁴³⁴⁾ In 2014, ALP staffing levels were reduced from 1,650 in seven districts to 975 in five districts, according to a source in Kabul, due to budgetary considerations. The ALP, like earlier initiatives, was plagued by ethnic and political problems, inadequate vetting procedures and lack of accountability. As a result, 258 ALP were dismissed in March 2012. According to the same source, there seems to be an improvement since, but issues of corruption and criminality among the ALP still need a lot of effort to eradicate. ⁽⁴³⁵⁾ International Crisis Group reports about continued abusive behaviour by ALP and the absence of a complaints mechanisms and accountability, e.g. in Chakh district. ⁽⁴³⁶⁾ According to a US Department of Defense report from April 2014, ALP is active in the districts of Seyedabad, Chakh, Nirkh, Jalrez and Maidan Shahr. ⁽⁴³⁷⁾

The Taliban shadow governor for Wardak is Qari Ahmadullah Mullahkhel, linked to the Peshawar Shura and former member of the Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. ⁽⁴³⁸⁾ In a statement issued by the Taliban in August 2015, Mawlawi Ahmadullah Mansur is called 'Wardak In-charge'. ⁽⁴³⁹⁾ According to Landinfo, rebels consist of local and regional Taliban groups, Hezb-e Islami and international groups of fighters. ⁽⁴⁴⁰⁾ In June 2015, the US Department of Defense reported that al Qaeda fighters, pushed out of their safe havens in Waziristan by a Pakistani military operation, started surfacing in Wardak, among other places, in the spring of 2015. ⁽⁴⁴¹⁾ Officials claimed Pakistani militants from Waziristan joined the insurgents when they overran several security posts in Jalrez in July 2015. ⁽⁴⁴²⁾

Since 2010, Taliban and Hezb-e Islami networks are fighting for control of Nirkh district. Despite ANSF support, Hezb-e Islami, though said by a Kabul source to be more locally embedded than the Taliban, has failed to curb Taliban control. ⁽⁴⁴³⁾ Violence escalated in Nirkh after foreign military forces pulled out of this province and the district gained notoriety when grave human rights abuses by American Special Forces and their Afghan aides surfaced in 2013. ⁽⁴⁴⁴⁾ According to an article from June 2015, fighting resumed after the Taliban received reinforcements from foreign fighters. ⁽⁴⁴⁵⁾

⁽⁴³²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Effective security uplift plan drawn, Wardak governor, 8 August 2015.

⁽⁴³³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, US drone strikes violence, leave 9 militants dead, 18 August 2015.

⁽⁴³⁴⁾ HRW, Just Don't Call It a Militia, 12 September 2011.

⁽⁴³⁵⁾ International organisation, e-mail, 26 October 2014.

⁽⁴³⁶⁾ ICG, The Future of the Afghan Local Police, 4 June 2015, p. 10.

⁽⁴³⁷⁾ US Department of Defense, Report on Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, April 2014, p. 55.

⁽⁴³⁸⁾ UN Security Council, Letter dated 18 August 2015 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council, 26 August 2015, p. 20.

⁽⁴³⁹⁾ Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Pledges of allegiance to the new Amir take place throughout Afghanistan, 9 August 2015.

⁽⁴⁴⁰⁾ Landinfo, Temanotat Afghanistan Sikkerhetsoppdatering, 9 January 2014, p. 10.

⁽⁴⁴¹⁾ US Department of Defense, Report on Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan, June 2015, p. 25.

⁽⁴⁴²⁾ Tolonews, Jalrez situation virtually under control as forces retake posts, 4 July 2015.

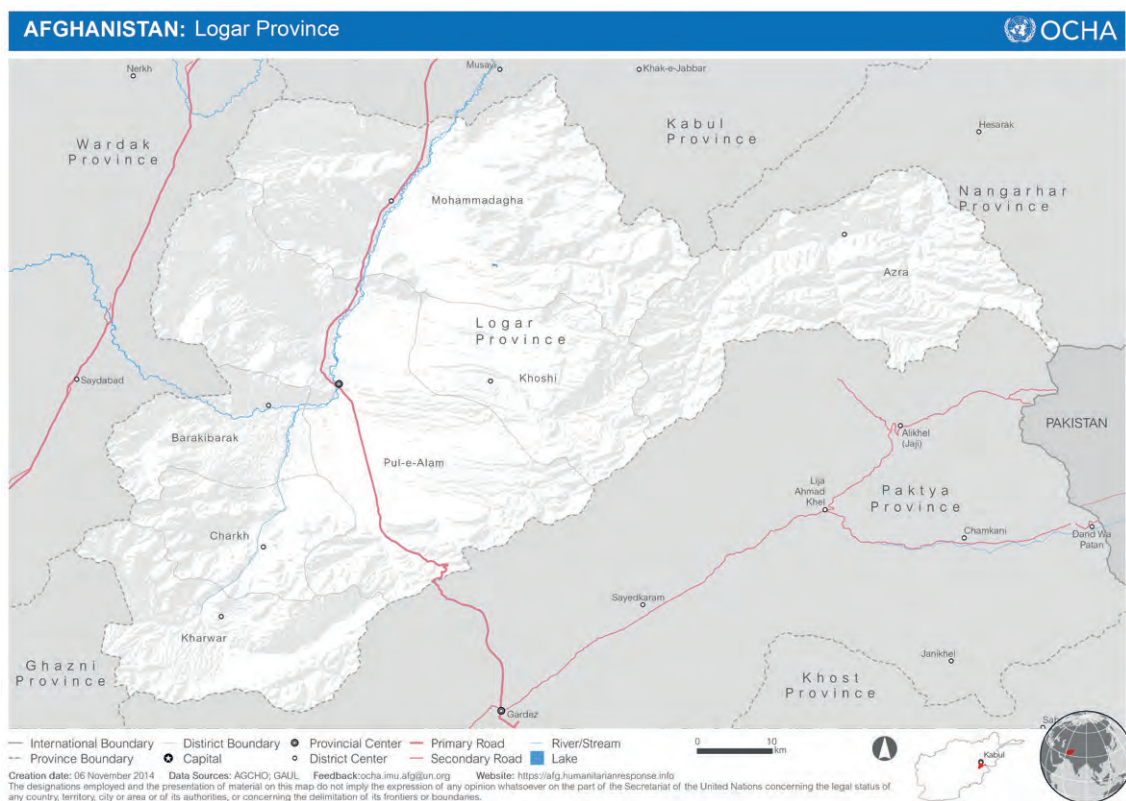
⁽⁴⁴³⁾ International organisation, e-mail, 26 October 2014.

⁽⁴⁴⁴⁾ Aikins, M., The A Team Killings, Rolling Stone, 6 November 2013.

⁽⁴⁴⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Scores of dead, wounded in Hizb-e-Islami, Taliban clash, 17 June 2015.

2.1.7 Logar

General description of the province



Logar province is located to the south of Kabul and is surrounded by Nangarhar, Paktya, Kabul, Wardak and Ghazni provinces. The province is divided into seven districts: Azra, Baraki Barak, Charkh, Kharwar, Khoshi, Mohammad Agha, Pule Alam. ⁽⁴⁴⁶⁾ The provincial capital is Pule Alam. ⁽⁴⁴⁷⁾ The road connecting Kabul with Gardez in Paktya runs through this province. The province is estimated to have 3 92,045 inhabitants. ⁽⁴⁴⁸⁾

According to a source in Kabul, the province is 70% Pashtun and 30% Tajik. Tajiks constitute 75% of the population in Charkh district, 50% in Khushi district, 40% in Baraki Barak, and 20-25% in Mohammad Agha and Pule Alam districts. Kharwar and Azra districts are homogenous Pashtun districts. ⁽⁴⁴⁹⁾

Description of the violence

The province is said to be one of the most volatile in the region and constitutes an ‘insurgents’ highway’ from Pakistan to Kabul, through an unguarded border of eight kilometres in Azra district. Local administration is alienated from local communities that suffered from ANSF operations, particularly night raids, while insecurity also limited government accessibility. ⁽⁴⁵⁰⁾

From 1 January to 31 August 2015, Logar province counted 243 security incidents. Table 7 provides an overview of the nature of the security incidents: ⁽⁴⁵¹⁾

⁽⁴⁴⁶⁾ Humanitarian Response, AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries, 25 September 2012.

⁽⁴⁴⁷⁾ MRRD, Logar Provincial Profile, n.d.

⁽⁴⁴⁸⁾ UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Population estimate for 2015, 26 August 2015.

⁽⁴⁴⁹⁾ International organisation, e-mail, 15 September 2015.

⁽⁴⁵⁰⁾ International organisation, e-mail, 15 September 2015.

⁽⁴⁵¹⁾ For more information on the source of the data and the methodology, see [introduction](#).

Violence targeting individuals	22
Armed confrontations and airstrikes	118
Explosions	44
Security enforcement	55
Non-conflict related incidents	2
Other incidents	1
Total security incidents	243

Table 7: Security incidents by type, Logar (Jan - Aug 2015)

The map in figure 9 presents the number of security incidents per district in Logar province. ⁽⁴⁵²⁾

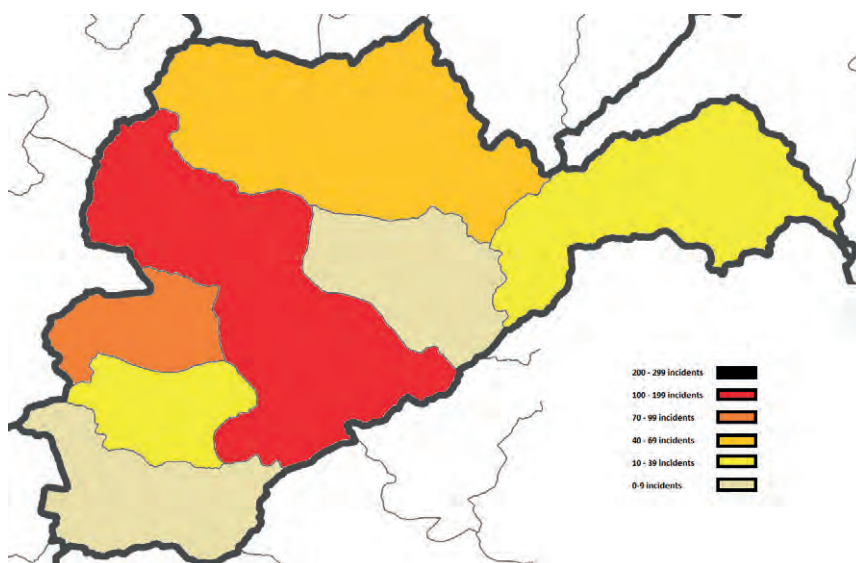


Figure 9: Logar, security incidents (Jan - Aug 2015)

AAN's Obaid Ali described the districts Mohammad Agha, Azra, Kharwar, Baraki Barak and Charkh as the worst hit by the insurgency. 'The situation in Logar – never completely calm – started to deteriorate in 2011. Assassinations and kidnappings became daily news, in addition to increasing numbers of victims being caught up in the fighting between Afghan National Security Forces and insurgents.' ⁽⁴⁵³⁾ According to local officials 'most parts of Charkh, Kharwar and Azra are under the control of armed opponents.' ⁽⁴⁵⁴⁾ A source in Kabul stated that Azra, Kharwar, Charkh and Baraki Barak districts have limited government accessibility due to security concerns. ⁽⁴⁵⁵⁾

ISW reported that 'the Taliban focused their attacks in Charkh district and neighboring towns, an area between the Kabul-Kandahar and the Kabul-Gardez highways. The Taliban likely wants to control Charkh in order to disrupt the road networks south of Kabul.' ⁽⁴⁵⁶⁾ On 25 March 2015, during a ground engagement between Afghan security forces and Anti-Government Elements in Charkh district, ANA fired a mortar that hit a civilian home, injuring eight civilians, including three women, two girls, and three boys. ⁽⁴⁵⁷⁾

According to Ali, 'the district centre of Mohammad Agha [...], only 23 kilometres beyond Kabul's city limits [...] is a key strategic area for the Taliban – not only because of the proximity to the capital but also because from there, local fighters can join insurgent fronts in the neighbouring provinces of Nangrahar in the east; Paktia, Paktika and Khost in the south; and Wardak and Ghazni in the west.' ⁽⁴⁵⁸⁾

⁽⁴⁵²⁾ For more information on the source and the methodology of the maps, see [introduction](#).

⁽⁴⁵³⁾ Obaid, A., The empty streets of Mohammad Agha. Logar's struggle against the Taleban, 15 December 2014.

⁽⁴⁵⁴⁾ Tolonews, Logar districts on the edge of collapse, officials, 12 December 2014.

⁽⁴⁵⁵⁾ International organisation, e-mail, 15 September 2015.

⁽⁴⁵⁶⁾ ISW, The Taliban Resurgent: Threats to Afghanistan's Security, March 2015, p. 17.

⁽⁴⁵⁷⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2015, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, July 2015, p. 18.

⁽⁴⁵⁸⁾ Obaid, A., The empty streets of Mohammad Agha. Logar's struggle against the Taleban, 15 December 2014.

The district witnessed many explosions, almost all causing civilian casualties. On 29 November 2014, an IED detonated under a bridge in Mohammad Agha district without causing casualties. When local students gathered to observe the consequences of the first detonation, a second IED exploded, causing eight civilian casualties (two students killed and six injured).⁽⁴⁵⁹⁾ On 31 March 2015, a magnetic IED detonated against an ANA vehicle in Mohammad Agha district injuring six civilian men travelling in another vehicle.⁽⁴⁶⁰⁾ In August 2015, a suicide bomber targeted an ANA Quick Reaction Force facility in Pul-e Alam, killing and wounding several civilians. According to one report, many wounded were medical personnel and patients of a nearby hospital facility.⁽⁴⁶¹⁾ Another suicide attack on an ALP vehicle in August 2015 in the district centre killed one ALP officer and wounded many, including civilians and ALP. The blast also destroyed several houses and shops.⁽⁴⁶²⁾

On 1 November 2014, a VBIED targeted a joint checkpoint of ANA and ALP in Azra district. The explosion caused 29 civilian casualties (five killed, including a pregnant woman and a child, and 24 injured, including four women and three children). The blast damaged five civilian houses and a mosque. The attack also killed and injured 21 ANA and ALP members.⁽⁴⁶³⁾ In August 2015, more than 2,000 security forces took part in an operation called 'Iron Triangular' which was launched simultaneously from Azra district, Kabul's Surobi district and Nangarhar's Khogyani in order to remove insurgent safe havens in these districts and break up the 'insurgent highway' from Pakistan's Waziristan to Kabul.⁽⁴⁶⁴⁾

In October 2015, insurgents launched a coordinated attack on police checkpoints in Baraki Barak, killing six Afghan policemen.⁽⁴⁶⁵⁾ In April 2015, a roadside bomb killed seven members of one family travelling by car in Baraki Barak.⁽⁴⁶⁶⁾ In June 2015, a mortar hit a civilian house near a police station, killing a man and wounding his wife and five children.⁽⁴⁶⁷⁾

The provincial police headquarters came under attack in Pul-e Alam. In November 2014 a suicide bomber tried to enter the premises and killed six policemen and a civilian near the entrance.⁽⁴⁶⁸⁾ In February 2015, four suicide bombers attacked the provincial police headquarters, killing at least 20 police officers.⁽⁴⁶⁹⁾ In July 2015 insurgents stormed a police checkpoint in Pul-e Alam district; in the ensuing firefight a stray mortar hit a house in a refugee township, killing two children.⁽⁴⁷⁰⁾

Around the provincial capital, insurgents also targeted humanitarian workers. In June 2015, gunmen abducted several deminers and shot and killed a polio vaccinator who was on his way to work.⁽⁴⁷¹⁾

Several of the aforementioned incidents included mortars hitting civilian homes. In several incidents, children were among the casualties.⁽⁴⁷²⁾ According to a source in Kabul, almost half of all victims in the first half of 2015 in Logar province were children.⁽⁴⁷³⁾

The IMF has regularly targeted insurgents in Logar by using air power.⁽⁴⁷⁴⁾ In December 2014, an ISAF airstrike killed five civilians in their home in Baraki Barak.⁽⁴⁷⁵⁾ In May 2015, an airstrike hit a primary school, killing two students and

⁽⁴⁵⁹⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan, Annual Report 2014, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, February 2015, p. 44.

⁽⁴⁶⁰⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2015, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, July 2015, p. 45.

⁽⁴⁶¹⁾ Khaama Press, Logar car bomb claimed six lives, 6 August 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Logar suicide attack leaves civilians among 6 dead, 6 August 2015.

⁽⁴⁶²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Policeman dead, 23 wounded in Logar suicide attack, 13 August 2015.

⁽⁴⁶³⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan, Annual Report 2014, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, February 2015, p. 72.

⁽⁴⁶⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban planned inroads in Kabul through Hesarak, 27 August 2015.

⁽⁴⁶⁵⁾ Khaama Press, 6 policemen martyred following Taliban attack in Logar, 14 October 2014.

⁽⁴⁶⁶⁾ Tolonews, Logar mine blast claims lives of 7 family members, 3 April 2015.

⁽⁴⁶⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Man dead, his five, 5 children wounded in Logar mortar shell, 3 June 2015.

⁽⁴⁶⁸⁾ Tolonews, Suicide bomber kills seven in Logar, 10 November 2014.

⁽⁴⁶⁹⁾ NY Times, Taliban Attack Kills at Least 20 Afghan Police Officers, 17 February 2015.

⁽⁴⁷⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Kids among 30 killed in Logar, Helmand clashes, 9 June 2015.

⁽⁴⁷¹⁾ Tolonews, Logar mine blast claims lives of 7 family members, 7 June 2015; UNAMA, Afghanistan, Midyear Report 2015, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, July 2015, p. 24.

⁽⁴⁷²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Kids among 30 killed in Logar, Helmand clashes, 9 July 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Logar blast kill 3 civilians, wound 6 police, 23 July 2015.

⁽⁴⁷³⁾ International organisation, e-mail, 15 September 2015.

⁽⁴⁷⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Key Taliban figures dead in Logar drone strike, 7 January 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Senior Taliban commander among 4 dead in drone strike, 2 August 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Commanders among 29 insurgents killed in Logar, Sari Pul, 6 August 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, US drone strikes, violence leave 9 militants dead, 18 August 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 senior Taliban killed in Logar airstrike, 6 June 2015; Khaama Press, Drone strike kills senior Taliban commander in Logar, 2 August 2015.

⁽⁴⁷⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 5 civilians dead in Logar airstrike, 26 December 2014.

injuring four, again in Baraki Barak. ⁽⁴⁷⁶⁾ And in July 2015, eight to 10 Afghan soldiers were killed when a US helicopter accidentally targeted their outpost in the same district. ⁽⁴⁷⁷⁾

According to AAN's Obaid Ali, Logar has become a 'dangerous place to live for many residents. The number of violent incidents and assassinations of locals committed by Taliban has increased starkly. [...] Perhaps the larger number of displaced and civilian casualties stems from the Taliban's change in tactics, turning to larger-scale operations, but it could also hail from the ANSF's takeover of ground engagements from ISAF.' ⁽⁴⁷⁸⁾ Maruf Stanekzai, the head of the Stanekzai tribe, one of the dominant tribes in Mohammad Agha, told AAN in December 2014, '[i]n the past few months many innocent people in Muhammad Agha were killed by insurgents. No one is safe anymore, even in health clinics or mosques.' ⁽⁴⁷⁹⁾

According to a source in Kabul, insecurity in the Logar province also restricts freedom of movement and access to education, in particular for girls. ⁽⁴⁸⁰⁾ A teacher was killed in Pul-e Alam and a mortar hit a school in Baraki Barak, killing two students and a teacher and injuring four others. ⁽⁴⁸¹⁾ In June 2015, 12 girls' schools were closed in Baraki Barak, after the Taliban threatened to burn the school and kill staff and students. Religious schools registered with the government, where teachers receive government pay, were also threatened. ⁽⁴⁸²⁾ In August 2015, the Taliban even closed a girls' school close to the provincial capital and prohibited all women from the area from attending the teachers' training centre in Pul-e Alam. ⁽⁴⁸³⁾ In August 2015, a school principal was killed in Mohammad Agha district and three students were killed on the same day in two separate incidents. One student died on his way home from school, when hit by a mortar shell in the district of Pul-e Alam. In another incident two students were killed in crossfire in Baraki Barak. ⁽⁴⁸⁴⁾ The provincial Education Department stated in August that, so far in 2015, 19 teachers and 30 students were killed in security incidents in Logar. ⁽⁴⁸⁵⁾

Displacement

Afghanistan's central region saw the highest levels of displacement in 2014, following an increase in activities of Anti-Government Elements that prompted the Afghan national security forces to launch military operations in Kapisa, Maidan Wardak and Logar provinces. ⁽⁴⁸⁶⁾

Between November 2014 and February 2015, UNHCR reported displacement of hundreds of families, or thousands of individuals, from the districts Mohammad Agha, Baraki Barak, Charkh, Kharwar and Khoshi to Pul-e Alam city; they fled armed conflict between insurgents and ANSF/ALP, cleaning operations and intimidation and harassment by insurgents. ⁽⁴⁸⁷⁾ In November 2014, UNHCR reported families in insecure areas were willing to leave their places of origin, but unable to do so due to their dire living conditions. They are reportedly unable to pay for transportation costs. ⁽⁴⁸⁸⁾ During January and February 2015, UNHCR registered smaller numbers of IDPs leaving their village in Mohammad Agha for the district centre, in search of safety from clashes between insurgents and ANSF and intimidation and harassment. ⁽⁴⁸⁹⁾ In July, UNHCR also registered IDP families fleeing from Logar to Kabul. ⁽⁴⁹⁰⁾

⁽⁴⁷⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Airstrike hits Logar school, 2 killed, 4 injured, 31 May 2015.

⁽⁴⁷⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 8 Afghan soldiers killed in US airstrike, 20 July 2015.

⁽⁴⁷⁸⁾ Obaid, A., The empty streets of Mohammad Agha. Logar's struggle against the Taleban, 15 December 2014.

⁽⁴⁷⁹⁾ Obaid, A., The empty streets of Mohammad Agha. Logar's struggle against the Taleban, 15 December 2014.

⁽⁴⁸⁰⁾ International organisation, e-mail, 26 October 2014.

⁽⁴⁸¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Schoolteacher shot dead in Logar capital, 11 June 2015; Tolonews, Two students, one teacher killed in Logar missile attack, 31 May 2015.

⁽⁴⁸²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 12 girls schools in Logar closed after Taliban's threats, 27 June 2015.

⁽⁴⁸³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban force girls' school to close, Logar, 13 August 2015.

⁽⁴⁸⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, School principal shot dead, 3 others wounded in Logar, 3 August 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, 3 students dead in Logar security incidents, 27 August 2015.

⁽⁴⁸⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 3 students dead in Logar security incidents, 27 August 2015.

⁽⁴⁸⁶⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan, Annual Report 2014, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, February 2015, p. 24.

⁽⁴⁸⁷⁾ UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, November 2014; UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, December 2014; UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, February 2015.

⁽⁴⁸⁸⁾ UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, November 2014.

⁽⁴⁸⁹⁾ UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, February 2015.

⁽⁴⁹⁰⁾ UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, July 2015.

Actors in the conflict

According to a source in Kabul, Logar's position on the 'insurgents' highway' from Pakistan to Kabul results in a higher than average ratio of foreign fighters. ⁽⁴⁹¹⁾ AAN's Obaid Ali describes the presence of foreign fighters, Pakistani Taliban, Chechens and Arabs as an 'aggravating factor'. 'This lack of local roots among the fighters coming and going likely contributes to the cruelty of attacks on civilians.' ⁽⁴⁹²⁾

According to local officials, quoted by AAN's Ali: ⁽⁴⁹³⁾

The Taliban aim to rule the districts of Azra, Khoshi, Baraki Barak and Muhammad Agha. These areas border neighbouring provinces with high insurgent activity; controlling them opens up easy supply and back-up routes. For example, the Taliban in Azra district call in support from the Taliban front in Hesarak district of Nangarhar province; the Taliban in Baraki Barak enjoy support from their 'brothers' in Sayedabad district of Maidan-Wardak province. Another goal of the insurgents could be to connect their Logar fronts with the insurgents in Northern Waziristan, Pakistan. According to local journalists, the Taliban's networks in Logar, Ghazni, Maidan Wardak and Paktia gain direct support from Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan in Waziristan. The best route for connecting these groups leads through the districts of Azra and Muhammad Agha, which border Pakistan.

According to an article by the Institute for War and Peace Reporting, Taliban control of the province was in 2013 already so complete that even public servants turn to the Taliban courts, believing they were swifter and more honest than state judiciary. ⁽⁴⁹⁴⁾ AAN's Ali described the situation in Mohammad Agha: ⁽⁴⁹⁵⁾

The Taliban regularly pin documents detailing their rules and edicts to mosque walls; these mostly call on people not to support the government. At night, they deliver letters to people's door steps warning residents to stop working for government institutions or they will be killed. [...] In some villages, families left behind their houses and headed to Kabul. [...] Local insurgents have also imposed a curfew on everyone in Mohammad Agha, except themselves, from six in the evening until morning prayers.

The provincial shadow governor is Mullah Adam Khan Kochi, affiliated to the Haqqani Network. ⁽⁴⁹⁶⁾ According to a statement issued by the Taliban in August 2015, the Logar 'In-charge' is mawlawi Rahmatullah. ⁽⁴⁹⁷⁾ The shadow district governor of Mohammad Agha is Qari Borhan. According to Obaid Ali, he rules unhindered over some places located only four to nine kilometres from the district centre. ⁽⁴⁹⁸⁾

According to the Institute for Study of War, Logar houses a big support base for Hezb-e Islami and Taliban forces loyal to Haqqani and the late Mullah Omar. ⁽⁴⁹⁹⁾ According to Ali, Logar was mainly controlled by Hezb-e Islami Afghanistan led by Gulbuddin Hekmatar (HIA) during the civil war in the '80s and '90s. ⁽⁵⁰⁰⁾

In January 2015, officials claimed Islamic State (IS) developed activities in the districts of Charkh, Kharwar, Khoshi and Mohammad Agha. This was reportedly confirmed by the Ministry of Interior. Contrary to developments in other parts of the country, IS fighters were mainly locals. Taliban commanders reportedly organised a popular uprising against IS, but their commanders were arrested in Pakistan. ⁽⁵⁰¹⁾

One month later, officials claimed IS fighters had burned a shrine in Charkh, entered local houses to destroy TVs and killed a local Taliban commander. Officials also mentioned IS had a training camp in Logar. Repeating that the IS fighters were former local Taliban, he also accused them of extortion. ⁽⁵⁰²⁾ According to the Long War Journal these

⁽⁴⁹¹⁾ International organisation, e-mail, 15 September 2015.

⁽⁴⁹²⁾ Obaid, A., The empty streets of Mohammad Agha. Logar's struggle against the Taliban, 15 December 2014.

⁽⁴⁹³⁾ Obaid, A., The empty streets of Mohammad Agha. Logar's struggle against the Taliban, 15 December 2014.

⁽⁴⁹⁴⁾ IWPR, Taliban justice dominant in Logar province, 2 August 2013.

⁽⁴⁹⁵⁾ Obaid, A., The empty streets of Mohammad Agha. Logar's struggle against the Taliban, 15 December 2014.

⁽⁴⁹⁶⁾ UN Security Council, Letter dated 18 August 2015 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council, 26 August 2015, p. 21.

⁽⁴⁹⁷⁾ Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Pledges of allegiance to the new Amir take place throughout Afghanistan, 9 August 2015.

⁽⁴⁹⁸⁾ Obaid, A., The empty streets of Mohammad Agha. Logar's struggle against the Taliban, 15 December 2014.

⁽⁴⁹⁹⁾ ISW, Regional Command East. Logar, n.d.

⁽⁵⁰⁰⁾ Obaid, A., The empty streets of Mohammad Agha. Logar's struggle against the Taliban, 15 December 2014.

⁽⁵⁰¹⁾ Afghanistan Times, IS emerges in Logar, official reports, 18 January 2015; Khaama Press, Pakistan arrest Afghan Taliban who oppose IS, 17 January 2015.

⁽⁵⁰²⁾ Tolonews, Daesh affiliates burn shrine, loot houses in Logar, 22 February 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Fighters kill Taliban commander, warn TV viewers, 2 February 2015.

people were led by Sa'ad Emarati. ⁽⁵⁰³⁾ According to AAN analyst Borhan Osman, Sa'ad Emarati is 'commander of the – self-proclaimed and previously unheard of – Sa'ad bin Abi Waqas Front, is a former Taliban commander who was expelled by the movement for unauthorised kidnapping and ransom-taking in 2013'. ⁽⁵⁰⁴⁾ In April 2015, photos appeared online of their training camp, called Ustad Yasir. ⁽⁵⁰⁵⁾ On 17 June 2015 the Long War Journal announced Sa'ad Emarati's death. He had reportedly defected back to the Taliban during May 2015, leading to his beheading by his former IS comrades. ⁽⁵⁰⁶⁾ In August 2015, NDS said they raided a house belonging to the group of Emarati, confiscating weapons and explosives. In the gun battle that ensued, two insurgents were killed. ⁽⁵⁰⁷⁾ Yet, end of August 2015, another shrine was blown up in Chakh district by the group of insurgent commander Maulvi Shoab. ⁽⁵⁰⁸⁾

Since 2014, there has been a reduced US presence in the province. ⁽⁵⁰⁹⁾ In several incidents, mentioned above, airstrikes by IMF caused civilian casualties.

According to AAN's Ali '600 Afghan Local Police (ALP) and 1,200 Afghan National Police ensure the safety of Logar's districts. [...] In some districts, like Kharwar and Azra, the ANP only manages to ensure security for the government offices in the district centres. Suicide attacks continue to diminish the number of ALP in districts. [...] On 10 November, a suicide attacker detonated his explosives in front of the provincial police headquarter, killing commander Sabz Ali, Logar's ALP chief, along with seven soldiers.' ⁽⁵¹⁰⁾ According to a source in Kabul, 'Afghan Local Police (ALP) *tashkeel* have been allocated to Pul-e-Alam (200 men), Mohammad Agha (200 men), Baraki Barak (150 men) and Azra (300 men). In Pul-e-Alam and Baraki Barak, a majority of the ALP was recruited among the shia, Dari speaking minority, creating tensions with the sunni Pashtun majority.' ⁽⁵¹¹⁾

Complicating the situation even further, in some districts, such as Baraki Barak, Charkh and Pul-e Alam, locals staged public uprisings against the Taliban. The first one was organised by local businessman Sayed Farhad Akbari in Kolangar, north of Pul-e Alam. According to AAN, he recruited 300 local men and pushed the Taliban out of the area, before himself being jailed for the killing of Logar's governor Arsala Jamal. ⁽⁵¹²⁾ In March 2015, gunmen tried to kill Akbari in Pul-e Alam. He survived what he claimed was the fifth attack on his life. ⁽⁵¹³⁾ In August 2015, Akbari was arrested in his home in Pul-e Alam by the national intelligence service NDS. ⁽⁵¹⁴⁾ According to a source in Kabul, the 'popular uprisings' in Pul-e Alam and Mohammad Agha – one of which has been since dismantled – have been controversial for the same reasons as the ALP *Tashkeel*: shia-dominated militias in sunni Pashtun communities. ⁽⁵¹⁵⁾

⁽⁵⁰³⁾ LWJ, Mapping the emergence of IS in Afghanistan, 5 March 2015.

⁽⁵⁰⁴⁾ Osman, B., The Shadows of Islamic State in Afghanistan: What threat does it hold?, 12 February 2015.

⁽⁵⁰⁵⁾ Roggio B., Islamic State promotes training camp in Eastern Afghanistan, 28 April 2015.

⁽⁵⁰⁶⁾ Roggio B., Islamic State's Khorasan province beheads former shura member who defected back to the Taliban, 17 June 2015.

⁽⁵⁰⁷⁾ Khaama Press, NDS prevent Daesh attacks in Logar, two terrorists killed in clash, 4 August 2014.

⁽⁵⁰⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Insurgents blow up shrine in Logar, Saleh, 24 August 2015.

⁽⁵⁰⁹⁾ International organisation, e-mail, 15 September 2015.

⁽⁵¹⁰⁾ Obaid, A., The empty streets of Mohammad Agha. Logar's struggle against the Taleban, 15 December 2014.

⁽⁵¹¹⁾ International organisation, e-mail, 15 September 2015.

⁽⁵¹²⁾ Obaid, A., The empty streets of Mohammad Agha. Logar's struggle against the Taleban, 15 December 2014.

⁽⁵¹³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Logar uprising leader again survives life attempt, 16 March 2015.

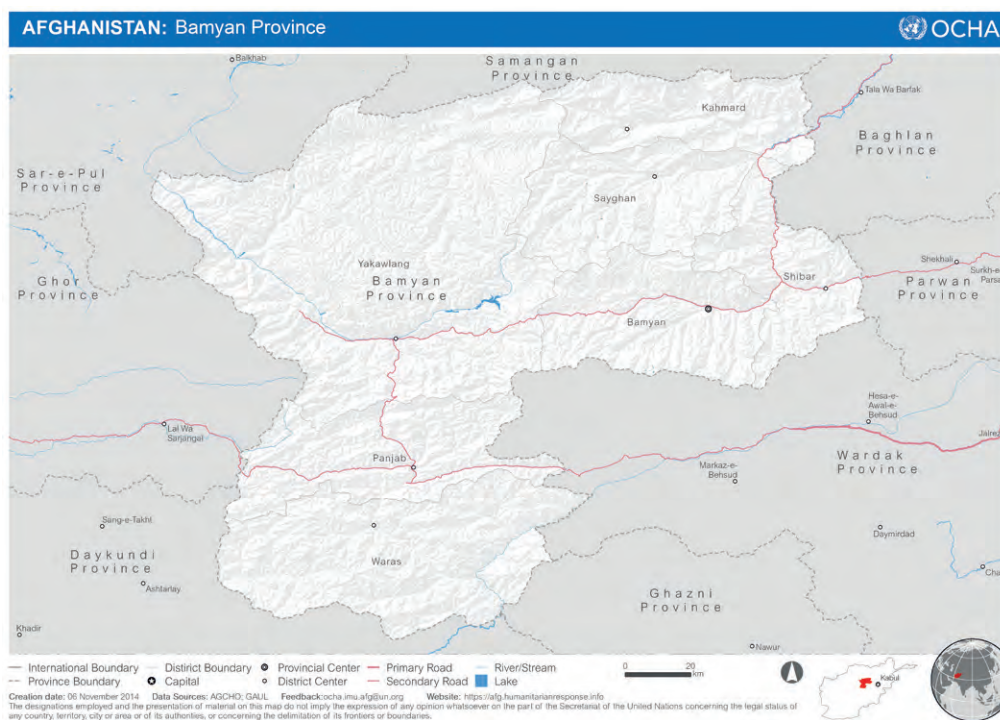
⁽⁵¹⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Intelligence agents detain Logar uprising group leader, 23 August 2015.

⁽⁵¹⁵⁾ International organisation, e-mail, 15 September 2015.

2.2 Central Highlands

2.2.1 Bamyan

General description of the Province



The rural economy depends on agriculture and livestock and the international community has provided support since 2002, which led to improvements regarding food, security and livelihood. The main cash crop in the province of Bamyan is potato. ⁽⁵¹⁶⁾

Bamyan is mountain-locked and reachable from Kabul through a long route. ⁽⁵¹⁷⁾ In April 2015, the Kabul-Bamyan highway, which was closed for months due to heavy snowfall, reopened for vehicular traffic. This route is one of the two main routes connecting Bamyan with Kabul via central Maidan Wardak. The pass is 60 kilometres nearer to the capital than the route via central Parwan province. ⁽⁵¹⁸⁾ According to the Afghan Analyst Network (AAN), there is a Kabul-Bamyan connection by air as of December 2012, with flights three days a week. Before that, only a few flights by the UN and NGOs were available. ⁽⁵¹⁹⁾

Description of the violence

Bamyan, besides being home to the Hazara minority, is also known as the country's safest region, and regarded one of the most liberal. ⁽⁵²⁰⁾ Few incidents have been reported. ⁽⁵²¹⁾ Nevertheless, according to security officials, growing instability is threatening the province, as it borders some of the most volatile provinces. ⁽⁵²²⁾ One area of concern is the Shikari valley, which borders the Tala-wa-Barfak area in Baghlan province. According to an anonymous

⁽⁵¹⁶⁾ International organisation, e-mail, 15 September 2015.

⁽⁵¹⁷⁾ Foschini, F., A Giant Arch, a Secret Garden, a Dragon and Myriads of Mud-Coloured Frogs: Our summer travel tips for Bamyan Province, 4 July 2014.

⁽⁵¹⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Hajigak Pass reopens for traffic, 26 April 2015.

⁽⁵¹⁹⁾ Foschini, F., A Giant Arch, a Secret Garden, a Dragon and Myriads of Mud-Coloured Frogs: Our summer travel tips for Bamyan Province, 4 July 2014.

⁽⁵²⁰⁾ Guardian (The), Afghanistan's female marathon runner defies danger to go the distance, 28 October 2015; Khaama Press, Ex-Jihadi commander with suspected ties ISIS arrested in Bamyan, 1 June 2015; Tolonews, TOLONews' April Roundup Notes Sharp Spike In Civilian Casualties, 5 May 2015.

⁽⁵²¹⁾ Tolonews, TOLONews' April Roundup Notes Sharp Spike In Civilian Casualties, 5 May 2015.

⁽⁵²²⁾ Khaama Press, Ex-Jihadi commander with suspected ties ISIS arrested in Bamyan, 1 June 2015; Tolonews, Nearly 700 Attacks Occurred in January: TOLONews Security Report, 11 February 2015; Tolonews, TOLONews' April Roundup Notes Sharp Spike In Civilian Casualties, 5 May 2015; UNAMA, News Update, Religious, community leaders in Bamyan share efforts on insecurity, 6 May 2015.

source, the number of civilian casualties in 2014 increased compared to 2013. ⁽⁵²³⁾ In May of 2015, approximately 25 important religious scholars and community leaders from the provinces of Bamyan and Baghlan decided in a meeting to establish a joint committee in order to coordinate and share efforts to tackle security shortcomings in the region. Additionally, a member of the Provincial High Peace Council informed the gathering that, with the help of religious and community leaders, more than 100 individuals of five different groups had joined the peace process. The member also stated that community leaders assisted in resolving disputes at community level, which overall has had a significant impact on security in the region. ⁽⁵²⁴⁾

From 1 January to 31 August 2015, Bamyan province counted 29 security incidents. Table 8 provides an overview of the nature of the security incidents: ⁽⁵²⁵⁾

Violence targeting individuals	6
Armed confrontations and airstrikes	13
Explosions	1
Security enforcement	5
Non-conflict related incidents	2
Other incidents	2
Total security incidents	29

Table 8: Security incidents by type, Bamyan (Jan - Aug 2015)

The map in figure 10 presents the number of security incidents per district in Bamyan province. ⁽⁵²⁶⁾

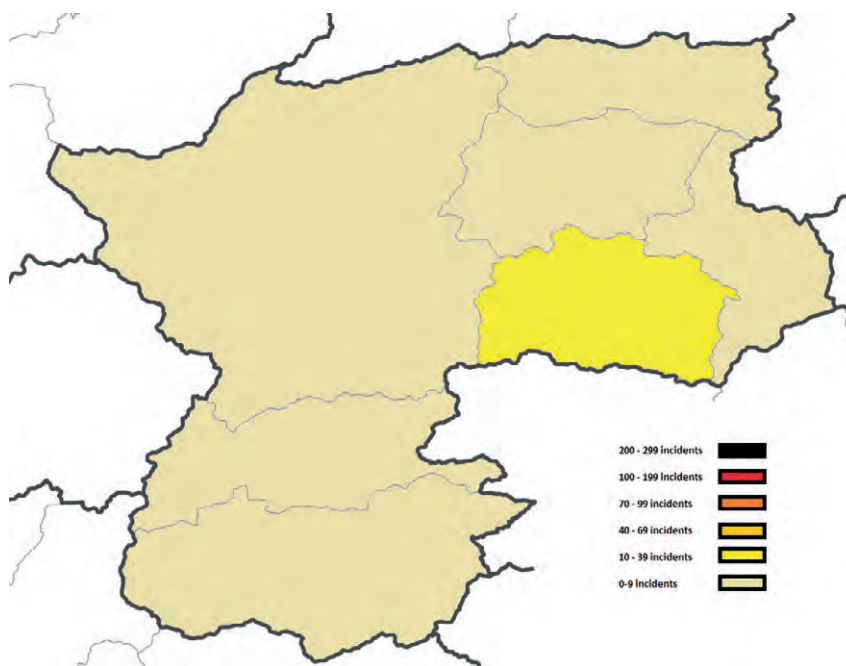


Figure 10: Bamyan, security incidents (Jan - Aug 2015)

Based on Tolonews' monthly security report, Bamyan, among other provinces, recorded no security incidents in the first month of 2015. ⁽⁵²⁷⁾ In April 2015, a group of militants attacked a police checkpoint in the district of Shaibar; two policemen were wounded. ⁽⁵²⁸⁾ According to local officials, also in April 2015, a number of armed insurgents attacked a post of the Afghan National Police (ANP) in the district of Shaibar. The security forces were able to control the situation. However, at least four soldiers were wounded in the incident. ⁽⁵²⁹⁾

⁽⁵²³⁾ International organisation, e-mail, 15 September 2015.

⁽⁵²⁴⁾ UNAMA, News Update, Religious, community leaders in Bamyan share efforts on insecurity, 6 May 2015.

⁽⁵²⁵⁾ For more information on the source of the data and the methodology, see [introduction](#).

⁽⁵²⁶⁾ For more information on the source and the methodology of the maps, see [introduction](#).

⁽⁵²⁷⁾ Tolonews, Nearly 700 Attacks Occurred in January: TOLONews Security Report, 11 February 2015.

⁽⁵²⁸⁾ UNAMA, Arman-e-Milli Daily, Insecurity engulfing Bamyan, 15 April 2015.

⁽⁵²⁹⁾ Tolonews, Insurgents Attack Police Post in Bamyan, 14 April 2015.

In June 2015, the district chief of Shaibar district in Bamyan barely escaped a Taliban ambush on his way from the city to his office. The militants opened fire on him and fired five rocket propelled grenades. The district chief and his guards were not hurt in the incident; however, one of his vehicles was completely destroyed. ⁽⁵³⁰⁾

Displacement

According to UNHCR, there are no IDPs recorded in or out of Bamyan from December 2014 to August 2015. ⁽⁵³¹⁾

Actors in the conflict

Increasing insurgent activities were reported from 2010-11 in the province of Bamyan, where, after the transition, the Afghan police force was reportedly ill-equipped. Local police had only a few small arms and unarmoured vehicles. The Afghan National Army had no presence in what was before a very quiet province, but witnessed a spillover from better armed insurgent groups in neighbouring provinces. ⁽⁵³²⁾

In February 2015, a local commander, accused of harassing civilians in the Waras district of central Bamyan province, joined the peace process. The local police chief stated that the Bamyan Commander Sarhang Wafa had surrendered along with 12 of his supporters and 15 weapons. He stated that ‘Bamyan residents will now live in peace’. ⁽⁵³³⁾ At the end of May 2015, Ibrahim Fakoori, a former jihadi commander with links to IS was arrested with some of his militiamen in an operation in the district of Waras. The commander reportedly received 30,000 USD a month from abroad. ⁽⁵³⁴⁾ Another report stated that a commander named Ibrahim Shokhak, linked to the Taliban and IS, was arrested in May 2015. ⁽⁵³⁵⁾

The Taliban’s establishment in the province is illustrated by their exploitation of the Kahmard mine in Bamyan since 2013. After the official closure of the mine, the Taliban extracted coal from the mine which provided it with a stable source of income of reportedly more than 3,000 USD per day. The closure of mines in Bamyan in 2013 left approximately 4,000 young men unemployed and several of them have since joined the insurgent’s ranks. ⁽⁵³⁶⁾

⁽⁵³⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, District chief escapes unhurt in Taliban’s ambush, 27 June 2015.

⁽⁵³¹⁾ UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, December 2014; UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, January 2015; UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, February 2015; UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, March 2015; UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, April 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan: Conflict-Induced IDPs by Province of Displacement Profiled from January to May 2015 [map], 31 May 2015; UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, June 2015; UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, July 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, August 2015.

⁽⁵³²⁾ Daily Outlook Afghanistan, Insurgency Begins to Grow in Bamyan, 4 September 2011; LWJ, Insurgency encroaching on central Afghanistan, 12 November 2012; Dawn, Afghan insurgents target safest province Bamiyan, 29 May 2012.

⁽⁵³³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Irresponsible commander in Bamyan joins peace drive, 5 February 2015.

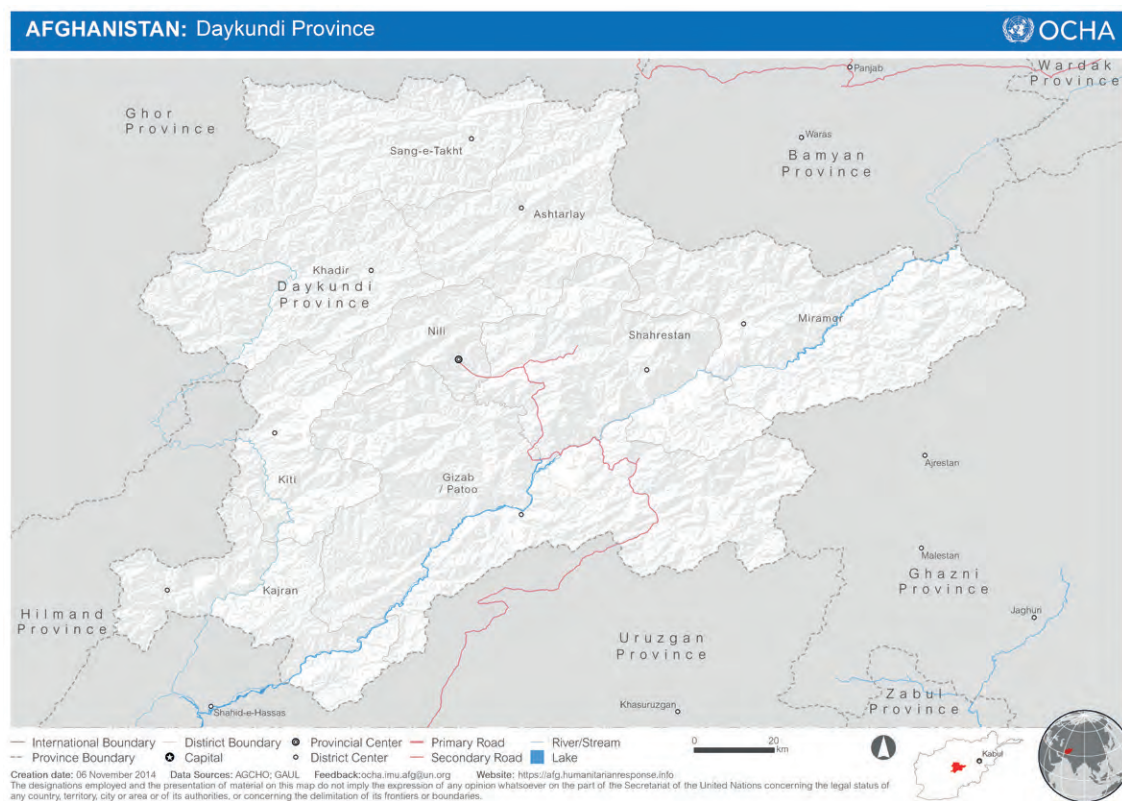
⁽⁵³⁴⁾ Khaama Press, Ex-Jihadi commander with suspected ties ISIS arrested in Bamyan, 1 June 2015.

⁽⁵³⁵⁾ Tolonews, Insurgent Kingpin Captured In Bamiyan, 31 May 2015.

⁽⁵³⁶⁾ Afghanistan Today, Taliban making thousands of dollars every day from ‘closed’ mines in Bamiyan and Wardak, 15 July 2015.

2.2.2 Daikundi (Dai Kundi)

General description of the Province



Daikundi consists of the following districts: Ashtarlay, Kajran, Khadir, Kiti, Miramor, Nili, Sang-e Takht and Shahrestan. ⁽⁵³⁷⁾ Regarding the establishment of the province of Daikundi, sources differ: According to Pajhwok Afghan News, Daikundi was once a district of Uruzgan province and was given the status of a separate province in 2003. ⁽⁵³⁸⁾ However, according to the Dutch embassy in Kabul, Daikundi originated from the province of Uruzgan in March of 2004. Additionally, it was stated that the exact borders of the districts and the province are not clear. ⁽⁵³⁹⁾ Moreover, the district of Gizab is disputed. According to AAN, Gizab is formally still part of Daikundi province, despite the fact that in 2006 it was temporarily placed under the authority of the province of Uruzgan, a decision that still stands, even though at that time there was no government presence there. ⁽⁵⁴⁰⁾

The mountainous province Daikundi is 460-kilometres to the west of Kabul and has some flat areas too. The province is surrounded by Uruzgan province to its southwest, Bamyan province to the east, Ghor province to the north, Ghazni province to the south and Helmand province to the northwest. ⁽⁵⁴¹⁾ The province has hot as well as cold seasons. Due to heavy snowfall in the winter, the roads remain blocked for months, cutting the communication of the province with rest of the country. ⁽⁵⁴²⁾ Mainly Hazara live in Daikundi. ⁽⁵⁴³⁾ UN OCHA estimates the population for 2015 to be 424,339 for the province. ⁽⁵⁴⁴⁾

In June of 2015, the second female governor in Afghanistan, Masooma Muradi, was appointed to the province of Daikundi. ⁽⁵⁴⁵⁾

⁽⁵³⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Daikundi province background profile, n.d.

⁽⁵³⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Mineral resources of Daikundi province, 1 February 2014.

⁽⁵³⁹⁾ Royal Netherlands Embassy in Kabul (The), Context Analysis / URUZGAN Province, August 2006.

⁽⁵⁴⁰⁾ Van Bijlert, M., Trouble in Gizab; the fight everyone chose to ignore, Afghanistan Analysts Network, 31 October 2011.

⁽⁵⁴¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Daikundi province background profile, n.d.

⁽⁵⁴²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Daikundi province background profile, n.d.

⁽⁵⁴³⁾ Die Zeit, Bei den Hazara von Daikundi, 5 January 2014.

⁽⁵⁴⁴⁾ UNOCHA, AFGHANISTAN: Population Estimate for 2015, 26 August 2015.

⁽⁵⁴⁵⁾ Khaama Press, President Ghani appoints female governor for Daikundi province, 5 June 2015; International organisation, e-mail, 15 September 2015.

The main food crops in the province are wheat, maize, almonds, apples and apricots. However, production of these crops is decreasing and limited to a small number of farmers who own their farming land. ⁽⁵⁴⁶⁾

Description of the violence

The province of Daikundi is regarded as a relatively safe province. ⁽⁵⁴⁷⁾ Nonetheless, the district of Kajran is regarded as an unstable district since it also borders the province of Helmand. ⁽⁵⁴⁸⁾ Daikundi is among three provinces where no foreign soldiers, until 31 December 2014, had been killed for 13 years. ⁽⁵⁴⁹⁾ Contradictory reports exist regarding the security situation in the province of Daikundi. According to residents of the district of Kajran, the district was on the brink of falling under Taliban control. A member of the provincial council stated that seven villages including Gharma, Menara and Chobzar had already fallen under the Taliban's control, with security forces having been deployed to the area, which, according to the source, apparently was not sufficient. However, a security official stated that Kajran was under the control of the government. ⁽⁵⁵⁰⁾

Locals reported road insecurity in the province, more specifically IEDs installed by insurgents and armed robbery on the main roads in Daykundi. ⁽⁵⁵¹⁾

From 1 January to 31 August 2015, Daykundi province counted 70 security incidents. Table 9 provides an overview of the nature of the security incidents: ⁽⁵⁵²⁾

Violence targeting individuals	10
Armed confrontations	31
Explosions	13
Security enforcement	10
Non-conflict related incidents	6
Total security incidents	70

Table 9: Security incidents by type, Daykundi (Jan - Aug 2015)

The map in figure 11 presents the number of security incidents per district in Daykundi province. ⁽⁵⁵³⁾

In March, May and June of 2015 security operations were conducted in Daikundi. In these security operations insurgents were killed or injured, and sometimes detained, as well as weapons seized and mines defused. ⁽⁵⁵⁴⁾

Examples of security incidents include: In February 2015, on two separate occasions, members of the Hazara minority were stopped in their vehicles in the districts of Kajran by masked gunmen. The passengers were questioned about their religious beliefs and later 55 of them were abducted and taken to unknown locations. Official sources accused the Taliban while witnesses suggest a possible IS involvement. ⁽⁵⁵⁵⁾ In March 2015, 23 passengers travelling from the area of Kajran in Daikundi were abducted along with the drivers by unidentified men. ⁽⁵⁵⁶⁾ Also in March 2015, a roadside explosion in the area of Tangi Kajran wounded the police chief of Kajran district. In a separate incident, a policeman was killed during an attack by insurgents on a checkpoint in the vicinity. ⁽⁵⁵⁷⁾

⁽⁵⁴⁶⁾ International organisation, e-mail, 15 September 2015.

⁽⁵⁴⁷⁾ Tolonews, TOLONews' April Roundup Notes Sharp Spike In Civilian Casualties, 5 May 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Kajran district may fall to Taliban, residents warn, 25 March 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Daikundi security forces professionally improved: officials, 30 March 2015.

⁽⁵⁴⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Kajran district may fall to Taliban, residents warn, 25 March 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Daikundi security forces professionally improved: officials, 30 March 2015.

⁽⁵⁴⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 75 foreign troops fell in 2014, 31 December 2014.

⁽⁵⁵⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Kajran district may fall to Taliban, residents warn, 25 March 2015.

⁽⁵⁵¹⁾ Kabul Times (The), Increased insecurity in Kabul-Daikundi highway, concerning, 16 January 2015.

⁽⁵⁵²⁾ For more information on the source of the data and the methodology, see [introduction](#).

⁽⁵⁵³⁾ For more information on the source and the methodology of the maps, see [introduction](#).

⁽⁵⁵⁴⁾ Tolonews, 29 Insurgents Killed In Military Operations, 25 March 2015; Tolonews, MoD Leads Offensive in 16 Provinces, 30 May 2015; Tolonews, 110 Insurgents Killed in Afghan Military Operations, 11 June 2015.

⁽⁵⁵⁵⁾ Edinburgh International, Afghanistan Weekly Security Report, 26 February 2015.

⁽⁵⁵⁶⁾ Ariana News, 23 Afghan civilians abducted in Daikundi, 26 March 2015.

⁽⁵⁵⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, District police chief wounded in Daikundi blast, 17 March 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Daikundi security forces professionally improved: officials, 30 March 2015.

In June 2015, the Taliban reported that a woman was killed and two others injured in a mortar shelling by ANSF in Ajristan district. ⁽⁵⁵⁸⁾

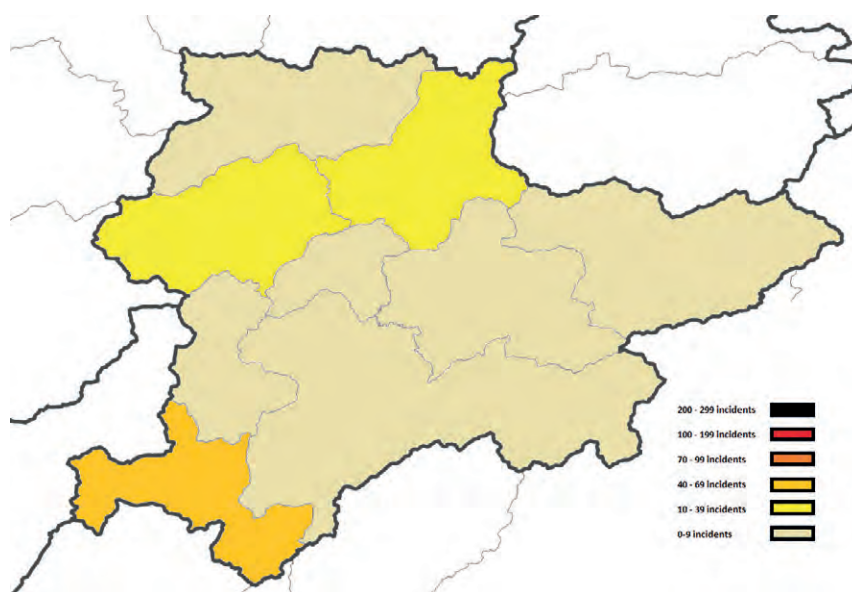


Figure 11: Daykundi, security incidents (Jan - Aug 2015)

Displacement

According to UNHCR, there are no IDPs recorded in or out of Daikundi from December 2014 until August of 2015. ⁽⁵⁵⁹⁾

Actors in the conflict

Insurgent groups have been reported ‘maneuvring and terrifying’ residents in areas bordering Helmand and Uruzgan. Checkpoints in these areas have come under insurgent attacks. Local security officials were advised to provide more weapons to security forces so they could fight the insurgents. ⁽⁵⁶⁰⁾ The Taliban has infiltrated state institutions, even in Daykundi and have good intelligence-gathering skills. The group distributed night letters to peoples’ homes in Daykundi warning them not to contribute to community projects and warning truckers not to work with the government. ⁽⁵⁶¹⁾ In 2013, the Taliban commander for Daykundi province, Mulla Sulaiman Aagha, explained how they established groups in all parts of Daykundi and increasingly reached out to the population and got support, even from the shias. ⁽⁵⁶²⁾ According to a source, a great number of schools are closed due to the Taliban’s presence as it ideologically opposes the education of girls. ⁽⁵⁶³⁾

The local population in Daykundi complained about the presence of illegal armed groups in the province, extortion, kidnapping of girls and armed robbery by them. ⁽⁵⁶⁴⁾

ALP units were established in Daykundi. ⁽⁵⁶⁵⁾ Afghan National Army (ANA) troops were reportedly deployed in 2015 to the district of Kajran. ⁽⁵⁶⁶⁾

⁽⁵⁵⁸⁾ Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, War crimes of Foreign invaders and their local mercenary forces, June 2015.

⁽⁵⁵⁹⁾ UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, December 2014; UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, January 2015; UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, February 2015; UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, March 2015; UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, April 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan: Conflict-Induced IDPs by Province of Displacement Profiled from January to May 2015, 31 May 2015; UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, June 2015; UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update, July 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, August 2015.

⁽⁵⁶⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Daikundi security, stability top priority: PC, 31 May 2015; Afghanistan, Ministry of Counter-Narcotics, Established Fruit Orchards in Daikundi Benefited All Districts of the Province, n.d.

⁽⁵⁶¹⁾ LA Times, Afghan Taliban intelligence network embraces the new, 13 april 2011.

⁽⁵⁶²⁾ Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Symptoms of great change in the Shi’ite populated areas, 29 march 2013.

⁽⁵⁶³⁾ International organisation, e-mail, 15 September 2015.

⁽⁵⁶⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Daikundi security, stability top priority: PC, 31 May 2015; Tolonews, Daykundi Resident’s Protest over Irresponsible Armed Men, 8 April 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Daikundi residents protest against Mubaligh brothers, 31 March 2015.

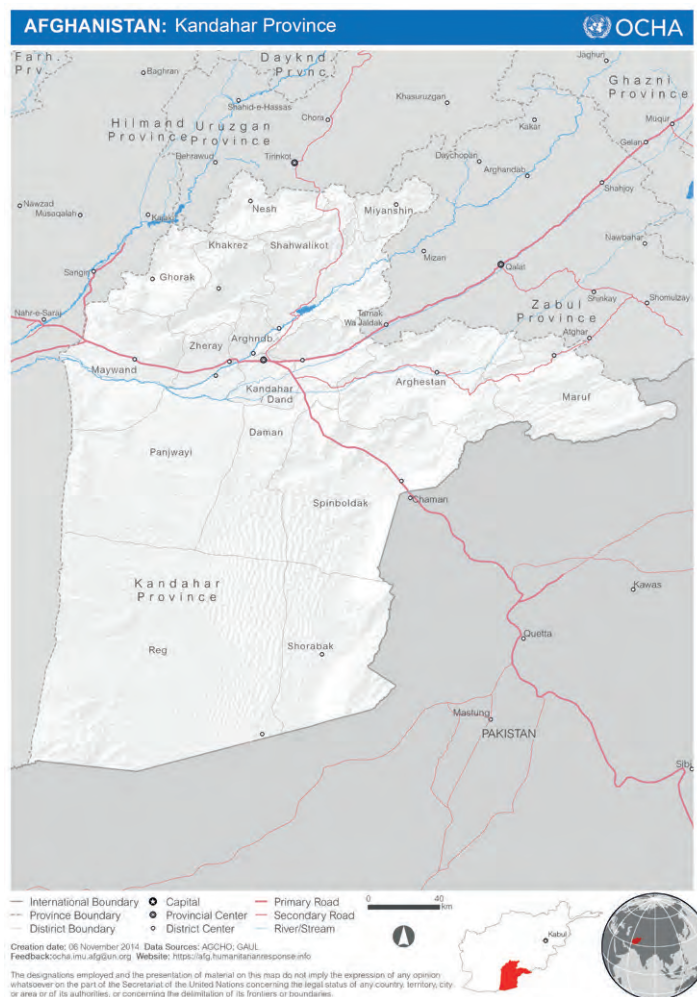
⁽⁵⁶⁵⁾ USIP, Counterinsurgency, local militias, and statebuilding in Afghanistan, 2014; CAPS, Daikundi, Kunduz clashes claim 6 lives, 21 July 2013.

⁽⁵⁶⁶⁾ Sada-e Azadi, Daikundi security forces professionally improved: officials, 31 March 2015.

2.3 South

2.3.1 Kandahar

General description of the Province



The southern province of Kandahar consists of extensive flat deserts and mountainous areas. Kandahar neighbors the following provinces: in the north Uruzgan, in the east Zabol, and Helmand is located to its west. ⁽⁵⁶⁷⁾ Kandahar province borders Pakistan and insurgents are known to travel with ease across the fluid border. ⁽⁵⁶⁸⁾ The province shares a border in the south with Baluchistan and the Durand Line. Kandahar has 18 districts, which include the provincial capital, Kandahar City. ⁽⁵⁶⁹⁾ The province Kandahar consists of the following districts: Arghistan, Arghandab, Daman, Ghorak, Kandahar/Dand, Khakrez, Maruf, Maywand, Miyanshin, Nesh, Panjwayi, Reg, Shahwalikot, Shorabak, Spinboldak, Zheray. There are several ethnic groups in Kandahar, such as Pashtoons, Baloch, Tajik, Hindus, and Hazara.

⁽⁵⁶⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Background Profile of Kandahar Province, n.d.

⁽⁵⁶⁸⁾ Tolonews, Kandahar Suicide Bombers Killed by Security Forces, 12 March 2014.

⁽⁵⁶⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Background Profile of Kandahar Province, n.d.

The province of Kandahar is known as a commercial hub of the country. ⁽⁵⁷⁰⁾ UN OCHA estimates the population for 2015 to be at 1,226,593. ⁽⁵⁷¹⁾

The Kabul-Kandahar highway is one of the most important highways in Afghanistan. Thousands of Afghans commute daily to more than 10 provinces for personal and commercial purposes. In recent years this highway has become a hotbed of insurgent violence and organised crime. ⁽⁵⁷²⁾

Description of the violence

Kandahar is among the most volatile provinces in southern Afghanistan, where anti-government armed militant groups are operating and frequently carry out insurgency activities. ⁽⁵⁷³⁾ Kandahar traditionally accounts for a large share of the security incidents recorded nationwide. ⁽⁵⁷⁴⁾ Military operations, insecurity and clashes between AGEs and ANSF are common in Kandahar. ⁽⁵⁷⁵⁾

From 1 January to 31 August 2015, Kandahar province counted 1,734 security incidents. Table 10 provides an overview of the nature of the security incidents: ⁽⁵⁷⁶⁾

Violence targeting individuals	109
Armed confrontations and airstrikes	782
Explosions	251
Security enforcement	565
Non-conflict related incidents	22
Other violent incidents	5
Total security incidents	1,734

Table 10: Security incidents by type, Kandahar (Jan - Aug 2015)

The map in figure 12 presents the number of security incidents per district in Kandahar province. ⁽⁵⁷⁷⁾

Examples of security incidents in the province of Kandahar include: In November 2014, a suicide bomber on a motorcycle attempting to target the third police district detonated his explosives before reaching his target. No other casualties were reported. ⁽⁵⁷⁸⁾ The deputy of the provincial governor of Kandahar province was gunned down during a class at the University of Kandahar. No group claimed responsibility. ⁽⁵⁷⁹⁾

In December 2014, six people, including two police officers, were killed in a suicide attack targeting the Maywand police headquarters. Five civilians and one police officer were wounded in the attack. According to sources, five attackers were involved in the incident and four of them were killed by the security forces. ⁽⁵⁸⁰⁾

In January 2015, at least two people, including a child, were wounded during a bomb explosion in the city of Kandahar. No group claimed responsibility for the incident. ⁽⁵⁸¹⁾

In February 2015, three civilians and a policeman were killed in a complex suicide attack in the district of Spin Boldak. Eight other people were injured. The suicide attackers were killed by security forces. ⁽⁵⁸²⁾ Still in February, six police

⁽⁵⁷⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Background Profile of Kandahar Province, n.d.

⁽⁵⁷¹⁾ UNOCHA, AFGHANISTAN: Population Estimate for 2015, 26 August 2015.

⁽⁵⁷²⁾ Tolonews, ANP Officers Kidnapped on Kabul-Kandahar Highway, 17 April 2014.

⁽⁵⁷³⁾ Khaama Press, Suicide car bomb attack on Kandahar intelligence compound thwarted, 11 September 2015; UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 1 September 2015.

⁽⁵⁷⁴⁾ Tolonews, 88 percent increase in civilian casualties: TOLONews, 5 April 2015; Tolonews, Civilian deaths drop in May amid high insurgent casualties: Report, 6 June 2015.

⁽⁵⁷⁵⁾ UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, June 2015; UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, March 2015; UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, February 2015; UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, January 2015.

⁽⁵⁷⁶⁾ For more information on the source of the data and the methodology, see [introduction](#).

⁽⁵⁷⁷⁾ For more information on the source and the methodology of the maps, see [introduction](#).

⁽⁵⁷⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Would-be bomber blown up in Kandahar, 1 November 2014.

⁽⁵⁷⁹⁾ RFE/RL, Afghan deputy governor shot dead, 3 November 2014.

⁽⁵⁸⁰⁾ Tolonews, Six killed in suicide attack in Kandahar, 8 December 2014.

⁽⁵⁸¹⁾ Tolonews, Kandahar explosion injures two civilians, 18 January 2015.

⁽⁵⁸²⁾ Tolonews, Kandahar suicide attack kills four, 19 February 2015.

officers were killed in an attack in the district of Maywand. The police arrived while the militants were detonating a mine and the attackers opened fire on them. An unknown number of insurgents were killed as well. ⁽⁵⁸³⁾

In April 2015, a member of the NDS was shot by an unidentified assailant in Kandahar city. The attacker escaped and no group claimed responsibility for the attack. ⁽⁵⁸⁴⁾ Also in April, three people were killed and an additional 17 were wounded in an explosion in the provincial capital. No group claimed responsibility for the attack. ⁽⁵⁸⁵⁾

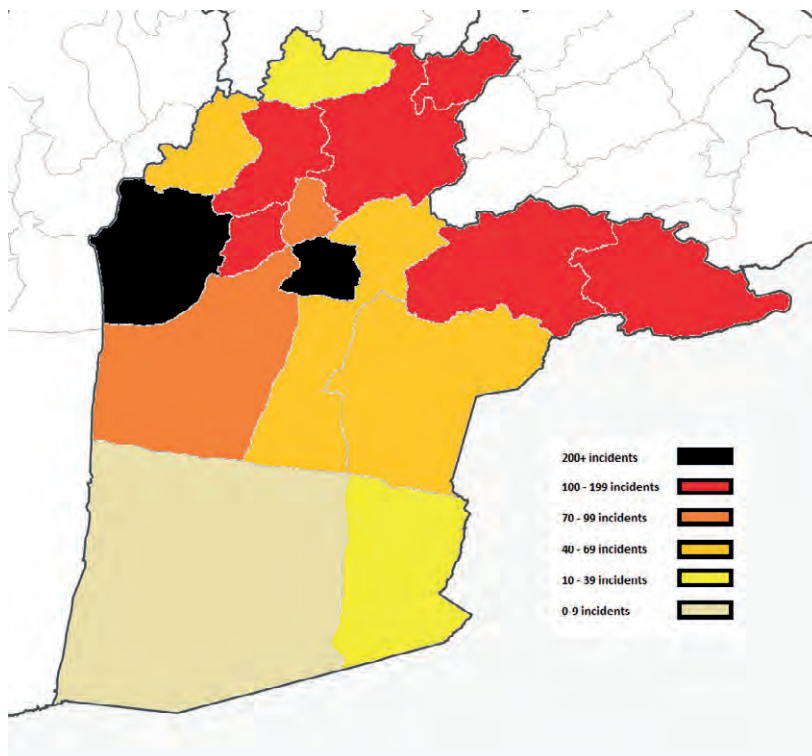


Figure 12: Kandahar, security incidents (Jan - Aug 2015)

In May 2015, three policemen were killed during an insider-attack ⁽⁵⁸⁶⁾ in the Shaheedan area of Maywand district. The culprits escaped with weapons and ammunition. ⁽⁵⁸⁷⁾ Afghan security forces also clashed with Taliban insurgents in the city of Kandahar after the insurgents had stormed a residence, a hostel that houses trainee teachers. ⁽⁵⁸⁸⁾

In June 2015, 45 Taliban militants were killed and an additional 40 militants were injured during an airstrike by the ANSF in the district of Shorabak. According to sources, Taliban fighters were gathered in the Badi Tapa area and planning an attack when they were hit by airstrikes. ⁽⁵⁸⁹⁾ Also in June, a roadside bomb in the district of Khakrez killed a woman and injured three people. ⁽⁵⁹⁰⁾ Two members of the ALP killed five of their own colleagues in the district of Khakrez. The gunmen fled with weapons and ammunition after the attack. The incident took place one month after another attack in which also two men dressed as police shot and wounded more than seven police officers in the district of Maywand. ⁽⁵⁹¹⁾ Still in June, unknown assailants attacked a police checkpoint in the city of Kandahar and clashed with security forces. The number of victims was unclear; however, according to an official source, three policemen were injured and a woman was killed during the attack. ⁽⁵⁹²⁾ Additionally, a suicide bomber detonated his explosives near a police vehicle, wounding two border police officers and five civilians in the provincial capital. ⁽⁵⁹³⁾

⁽⁵⁸³⁾ Tolonews, Six policemen killed in Taliban attack in Kandahar, 17 February 2015.

⁽⁵⁸⁴⁾ Tolonews, NDS member gunned down in Kandahar, 30 April 2015.

⁽⁵⁸⁵⁾ RFE/RL, Explosion in Southern Afghanistan kills three, 21 April 2015.

⁽⁵⁸⁶⁾ An attack conducted by a member of the same security force, in this case ANP.

⁽⁵⁸⁷⁾ Khaama Press, Three policemen martyred in Kandahar "insider attack", 25 May.

⁽⁵⁸⁸⁾ RFE/RL, Afghan security forces in standoff with Taliban in Kandahar, 26 May 2015.

⁽⁵⁸⁹⁾ Ariana News, Afghan airstrikes kill 45 Taliban, wounded 40 – Official, 27 May 2015.

⁽⁵⁹⁰⁾ RFE/RL, Four killed by roadside bomb in Afghanistan, 14 June 2015.

⁽⁵⁹¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 5 ALP men killed in Kandahar insider attack, 8 June 2015.

⁽⁵⁹²⁾ Tolonews, Unknown gunmen attack police post in Kandahar, 26 May 2015.

⁽⁵⁹³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 7 wounded in Kandahar suicide attack, 18 May 2015.

In July 2015, an explosion at a police checkpoint in the city of Kandahar killed three people, including a police officer. Thirteen civilians were also killed. According to an official source, the explosion might have been caused by a suicide bomber. No group claimed responsibility. ⁽⁵⁹⁴⁾ Two police officers died during an attack in the province of Kandahar. Also in July 2015, a police officer and his brother were gunned down by an unidentified man in Kandahar. ⁽⁵⁹⁵⁾

Displacement

UNHCR did not document any IDPs originating from or to Kandahar in December 2014. ⁽⁵⁹⁶⁾ In January 2015, about 150 families or 1,066 individuals were registered as IDPs in Kandahar city. The IDPs originated from the districts of Khakrez and Ghorak in Kandahar, as well as the districts of Sangin and Kajaki from Helmand province. ⁽⁵⁹⁷⁾ In February 2015, a few spillover movements from the province of Helmand into the district of Maywand were reported, without UNHCR citing any numbers. ⁽⁵⁹⁸⁾ According to UNHCR, in March 2015, 93 families or 697 individuals were displaced from the districts of Kandahar city, Maywand and Panjwayi. The IDPs originated from Kandahar province, specifically the districts of Ghorak, Khakriz and Maiwand, as well as from the district of Gizab in Daikundi province. ⁽⁵⁹⁹⁾ UNHCR did not document any IDPs originating from or to Kandahar from April to May 2015. ⁽⁶⁰⁰⁾ In June 2015, however, 210 families or 1,653 individuals were profiled as new conflict-induced IDPs. Of these 21% originated from the district of Ghorak and the rest mainly from northern Helmand. ⁽⁶⁰¹⁾ UNHCR did not document any IDPs originating from or to Kandahar from July to August 2015. ⁽⁶⁰²⁾

Military operations, insecurity and clashes between AGEs and ANSF were repeatedly cited as the main reason for displacement. ⁽⁶⁰³⁾

Actors in the conflict

Kandahar was the first city to be captured by the Taliban in 1994 and the place of residence of its leader Mullah Omar. ⁽⁶⁰⁴⁾ It was the birthplace of the Taliban's insurgency ⁽⁶⁰⁵⁾ and is the focus of the Taliban's efforts as regaining control over Kandahar city has been one of their most important goals since 2001. ⁽⁶⁰⁶⁾

In 2015, the Taliban leadership included persons from Kandahar province. Mulla Abu Ahmad is the head of the financial commission. ⁽⁶⁰⁷⁾ The new Taliban leader Mansour used to be the Taliban commander for the province on Kandahar. ⁽⁶⁰⁸⁾ In 2014, Dr. Abdul Wasi' Azzam was in charge of the province, but he was killed in April. ⁽⁶⁰⁹⁾ Another former Taliban provincial commander for Kandahar is Mullah Muhammadzai. Mawlawi Abdul Ali Jihadyar was named in 2015 as Taliban head of Shahwalikot and Miyanisheen districts. ⁽⁶¹⁰⁾

⁽⁵⁹⁴⁾ RFE/RL, Deadly bomb blast hits Afghan police checkpoint, 6 July 2015.

⁽⁵⁹⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 police officers killed; elder's house attacked, 16 July 2015.

⁽⁵⁹⁶⁾ UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, December 2014; UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, April 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan: Conflict-Induced IDPs by Province of Displacement Profiled from January to May 2015, 31 May 2015; UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, July 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, August 2015.

⁽⁵⁹⁷⁾ UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, January 2015.

⁽⁵⁹⁸⁾ UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update, February 2015.

⁽⁵⁹⁹⁾ UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update, March 2015.

⁽⁶⁰⁰⁾ UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, December 2014; UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, April 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan: Conflict-Induced IDPs by Province of Displacement Profiled from January to May 2015, 31 May 2015; UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, July 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, August 2015.

⁽⁶⁰¹⁾ UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, June 2015.

⁽⁶⁰²⁾ UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, December 2014; UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, April 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan: Conflict-Induced IDPs by Province of Displacement Profiled from January to May 2015, 31 May 2015; UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, July 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, August 2015.

⁽⁶⁰³⁾ UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, June 2015; UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, March 2015; UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, February 2015; UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, January 2015.

⁽⁶⁰⁴⁾ Barfield, T., Afghanistan – A cultural and political history, 2010, pp. 258-260.

⁽⁶⁰⁵⁾ Reuters, Kandahar, cradle of Afghan insurgency, torn by tribal rivalry ahead of vote, 28 March 2014.

⁽⁶⁰⁶⁾ ISW, The Taliban's campaign for Kandahar, December 2009.

⁽⁶⁰⁷⁾ Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, An interview with the head of 'Financial Commission' of the Islamic Emirate, 7 June 2014.

⁽⁶⁰⁸⁾ Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, A detailed interview of Zabihullah Mujahid with the Daily Asharq Al-Awsat about the recent developments, September 2015.

⁽⁶⁰⁹⁾ Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Message of condolence of Leadership Council of Islamic Emirate regarding the martyrdom of two Jihadi officials, 22 April 2014.

⁽⁶¹⁰⁾ Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Pledges of allegiance to new Amir take place throughout Afghanistan, 9 August 2015.

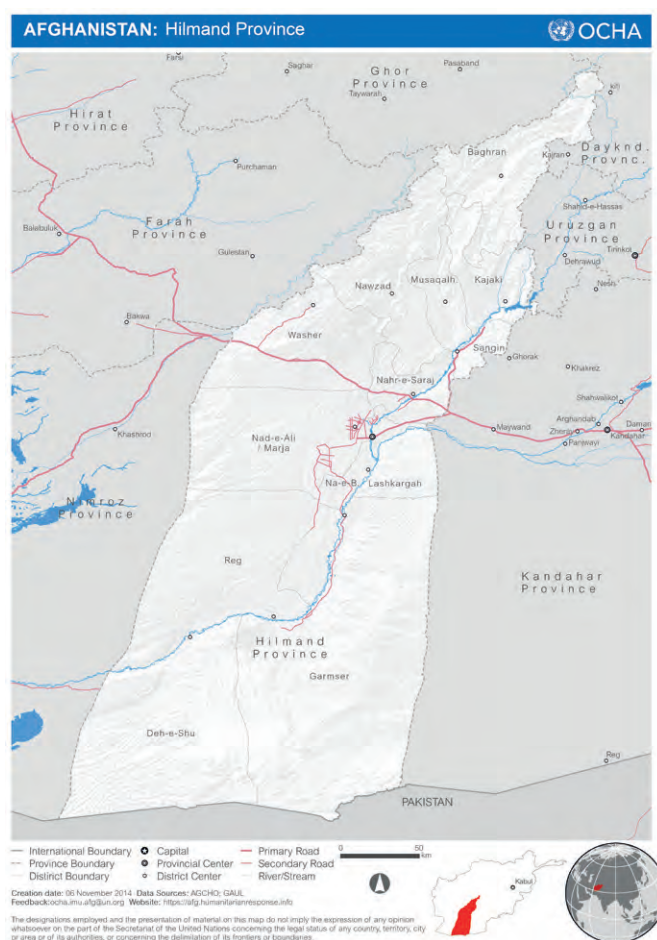
In December 2014, the local population of 10 villages in the district of Maywand showed their disapproval of the Taliban and its attacks and further decided to protect their areas themselves. ⁽⁶¹¹⁾

In 2014 and 2015, the Taliban claimed to have seized the districts of Registan and Ghorak in Kandahar province. ⁽⁶¹²⁾ The former district was reportedly captured with an important role in the fighting played by the Baluch insurgent group *Junood al Fida*, loyal to both the Taliban and al Qaeda. The group's leader is Abdul Hafeez. ⁽⁶¹³⁾ It reportedly operated in the districts of Shorabak and Reg. It was also reported that al Qaeda had training camps in the south of Kandahar, which came under attack from the US in October 2015. ⁽⁶¹⁴⁾

Kandahar's ANP chief is General Abdul Raziq. ⁽⁶¹⁵⁾

2.3.2 Helmand

General description of the Province



Helmand is Afghanistan's largest province with about 60,000 square kilometres. ⁽⁶¹⁶⁾ Helmand shares a border in the east with the southern province of Kandahar, in the north with Uruzgan, while the provinces Daikundi and Ghor, Farah and Nimroz are located to the west. The province also shares a 162-kilometre border with the Durand Line in the east. ⁽⁶¹⁷⁾ The provincial capital of Helmand is Lashkargah. ⁽⁶¹⁸⁾ Helmand province consists of the following districts:

⁽⁶¹¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 10 Maiwand villages rise up against Taliban (Video), 30 December 2014.

⁽⁶¹²⁾ LWJ, Jihadist group loyal to Taliban, al Qaeda claims to have captured Afghan district, 3 October 2014; Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Ghorak district center liberated, October 2015.

⁽⁶¹³⁾ LWJ, Jihadist group loyal to Taliban, al Qaeda claims to have captured Afghan district, 3 October 2014.

⁽⁶¹⁴⁾ LWJ, US military strikes large al Qaeda training camps in southern Afghanistan, 13 October 2015.

⁽⁶¹⁵⁾ NY Times, Afghan Police Chief, Long a Taliban Target, Faces a New Emotion: Fear, 30 May 2015.

⁽⁶¹⁶⁾ Reuters, FACTBOX-Facts about Afghanistan's Helmand province, 18 July 2009.

⁽⁶¹⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Recognition of southern Helmand province, n.d.

⁽⁶¹⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Recognition of southern Helmand province, n.d.; Pajhwok Afghan News, Helmand's Administrative Units, n.d.

Baghran, Deh-e Shu, Garmser, Kajaki, Lashkargah, Musaqaalh, Nad-e Ali/Marfa, Nahr-e Saraj, Nawa-e Barakzaiy Nawzad, Reg, Sangin and Washer. ⁽⁶¹⁹⁾

The majority of Helmand's population originates from the ethnic group of Pashtuns, from which the Taliban movement draws most of its followers. ⁽⁶²⁰⁾ Nevertheless, small numbers of other ethnicities exist such as Balochis, Hazaras and Tajiks. ⁽⁶²¹⁾

The northern parts of Helmand province consist of the high mountains of the Hindu Kush and a vast wasteland in the south known as the 'Desert of Death'. ⁽⁶²²⁾ The weather of Helmand is mild in the winter while it becomes hot in the summer. ⁽⁶²³⁾ UN OCHA estimates the 2015 population to be 924,711 for the province of Helmand. ⁽⁶²⁴⁾ Virtually all its population lives along the Helmand River. ⁽⁶²⁵⁾ The Kabul-Herat highway runs through the province of Helmand. ⁽⁶²⁶⁾

Description of the violence

Helmand is among the most volatile provinces in southern Afghanistan where anti-government armed militant groups are operating and frequently carry out insurgency activities. ⁽⁶²⁷⁾

From 1 January to 31 August 2015, Helmand province counted 1,785 security incidents. Table 11 provides an overview of the nature of the security incidents: ⁽⁶²⁸⁾

Violence targeting individuals	52
Armed confrontations and airstrikes	1,197
Explosions	246
Security enforcement	282
Non-conflict related incidents	6
Other violent incidents	2
Total security incidents	1,785

Table 11: Security incidents by type, Helmand (Jan - Aug 2015)

The map in figure 13 presents the number of security incidents per district in Helmand province. ⁽⁶²⁹⁾

Several security operations led by the ANSF were conducted in the province to clear areas of insurgents. During these security operations many insurgents were killed and wounded or detained; arms and ammunitions were often seized. ⁽⁶³⁰⁾

More examples of security incidents in the province include: In November 2014, three policemen and 14 insurgents were killed in separate clashes within 24 hours. ⁽⁶³¹⁾ In another incident eight insurgents were killed during a clash with police in Musa Qala district of Helmand. ⁽⁶³²⁾ In December 2014, the Kabul Bank in Lashkargah was attacked by

⁽⁶¹⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Helmand's Administrative Units, n.d.

⁽⁶²⁰⁾ Reuters, FACTBOX-Facts about Afghanistan's Helmand province, 18 July 2009.

⁽⁶²¹⁾ ISW, Regional Command South, n.d.

⁽⁶²²⁾ Reuters, FACTBOX-Facts about Afghanistan's Helmand province, 18 July 2009.

⁽⁶²³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Recognition of southern Helmand province, n.d.

⁽⁶²⁴⁾ UNOCHA, AFGHANISTAN: Population Estimate for 2015, 26 August 2015.

⁽⁶²⁵⁾ Reuters, FACTBOX-Facts about Afghanistan's Helmand province, 18 July 2009.

⁽⁶²⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Recognition of southern Helmand province, n.d.

⁽⁶²⁷⁾ Reuters, Afghan forces regain control of a symbolic district in south, 1 September 2015; Khaama Press, Taliban take control of Nawzad district in Helmand province, 29 July 2015; UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 1 September 2015.

⁽⁶²⁸⁾ For more information on the source of the data and the methodology, see [introduction](#).

⁽⁶²⁹⁾ For more information on the source and the methodology of the maps, see [introduction](#).

⁽⁶³⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Explosives-laden car seized in Lashkargah, 2 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, 13 militants killed in Herat commando action, 16 December 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, 47 insurgents perish in new operations, 20 December 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, 20 Taliban eliminated in Paktika, Helmand clashes, 19 January 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, 13 insurgents eliminated in Helmand offensive: ANA, 1 February 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, 8 insurgents killed in Helmand, 3 detained in Wardak, 4 February 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Bullets, bombs seized in Lashkargah raid, 8 February 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Operation launched in Helmand to wipe out militants, 11 February 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Hundreds of rebels eliminated in Helmand offensive: MoI, 1 March 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Helmand police seize 3,200 tonnes of explosives, 7 March 2015; Tolonews, Waziri: Zulfiqar Operation Rids Helmand of Insurgents, 5 April 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, 29 rebels dead in Helmand clashes, 20 May 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, 3 rebels killed; weapons, explosives seized, 8 June 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, 7 militants killed in Helmand offensive, 2 July 2015.

⁽⁶³¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 14 rebels, 3 police killed in Helmand violence, 18 November 2014.

⁽⁶³²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Commanders among 12 rebels killed, 24 November 2014.

suicide bombers and at least 10 people were killed and another 15 were injured.⁽⁶³³⁾ In a series of military offensives in southern Helmand province 24 insurgents and two ANA soldiers were killed.⁽⁶³⁴⁾

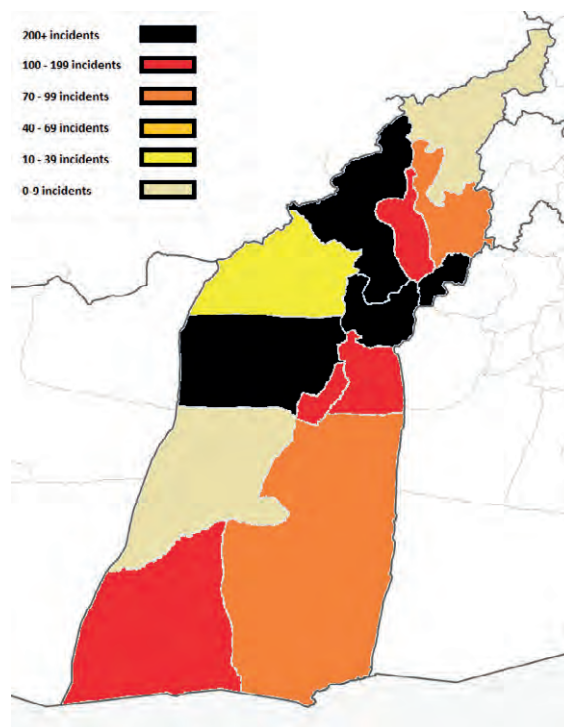


Figure 13: Helmand, security incidents (Jan - Aug 2015)

In January 2015, approximately 26 wedding guests were killed in Sangin district when a rocket-propelled grenade fired during fighting between Afghan forces and insurgents struck a house.⁽⁶³⁵⁾ In a separate incident three police officials were killed and eight others wounded in a suicide car bombing attack in the Dorahi area of Lashkargah in southern Helmand province.⁽⁶³⁶⁾

In February 2015, the ANSF launched a military operation from the Sangin district of the southern Helmand province and its bordering provinces to clear the area of insurgents. The operation was supported by commando forces, police special forces, special military forces and 13 helicopters for air support.⁽⁶³⁷⁾ In another incident three policemen were killed and five others wounded after a suicide bomber detonated his explosives-laden car near a police vehicle in the provincial capital.⁽⁶³⁸⁾

In March 2015, during a clearing operation in the Sangin district 33 rebels were killed and seven others wounded.⁽⁶³⁹⁾ In another incident, for which the Taliban claimed responsibility, seven policemen were given poisonous food before they were gunned down in Greshk district of southern Helmand province.⁽⁶⁴⁰⁾

In April 2015, the Afghan National Defense and security forces fought the Taliban in the northern regions of the province during the security operation 'Zolfiqar'.⁽⁶⁴¹⁾ Insurgents stormed a police station in the southern city of LashkarGar, wounding two officers and a civilian.⁽⁶⁴²⁾ In a separate incident a commander of a police checkpoint was killed and three others were wounded in a roadside bombing in the Sangin district of southern Helmand province.⁽⁶⁴³⁾

⁽⁶³³⁾ RFE/RL, At Least 10 Killed By Taliban Attack On Afghan Bank, 17 December 2014.

⁽⁶³⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 ANA soldiers among 26 dead in Helmand clashes, 27 December 2014.

⁽⁶³⁵⁾ Ariana News, 26 killed when rocket hits wedding party in Helmand, 1 January 2015.

⁽⁶³⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 3 killed, 8 hurt in suicide attack on police convoy, 18 January 2015.

⁽⁶³⁷⁾ Tolonews, ANSF Launch Massive Military Operation in Helmand, 19 February 2015.

⁽⁶³⁸⁾ Tolonews, 3 Police Killed in Helmand Suicide Attack, 3 February 2015.

⁽⁶³⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 36 insurgents dead in fresh bout of violence, 31 March 2015.

⁽⁶⁴⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 7 Helmand police poisoned, shot dead, 5 March 2015.

⁽⁶⁴¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban announce launch of spring offensive, 22 April 2015.

⁽⁶⁴²⁾ RFE/RL, Gunmen Storm Afghan Police Station, 20 April 2015.

⁽⁶⁴³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 8 police, scores of rebels dead in fresh violence, 23 April 2015.

In May 2015, approximately 30 insurgents were killed and 11 others wounded during a military attack on a Taliban training centre in Sangin district of Helmand province. ⁽⁶⁴⁴⁾ In a separate incident approximately 14 policemen and seven ANA soldiers were killed after intense fighting with the Taliban in the Nawzad district of Helmand province. ⁽⁶⁴⁵⁾ In May 2015, approximately 400 Taliban insurgents besieged Musa Qala district of southern Helmand province and residents were asked to leave the area for their own safety. ⁽⁶⁴⁶⁾

In June 2015, approximately 38 militants were killed and 10 others wounded in military operations in southern parts of the province. ⁽⁶⁴⁷⁾ In a separate incident in Kajaki district clashes were ongoing and 20 security force members were killed while 15 were captured by Taliban insurgents. ⁽⁶⁴⁸⁾ Armed insurgents stormed several police posts which resulted in heavy clashes with the ANP. In these clashes approximately 17 policemen were killed and reports suggest that 10 Taliban also died in the district of Musa Qal. ⁽⁶⁴⁹⁾

In July 2015, Nawzad district of Helmand province fell to the Taliban after intense fighting but it was recaptured by ANSF during an operation. ⁽⁶⁵⁰⁾ During the recapture operation approximately two Afghan security force members were killed and 31 others wounded; 50 Taliban insurgents were killed according to initial reports. ⁽⁶⁵¹⁾ A military operation was launched from the Musa Qala district to clear the area of anti-government insurgents. According to the Ministry of Defense at least 13 insurgents were killed while there were no civilian or military casualties. ⁽⁶⁵²⁾

In August 2015, the Taliban seized the district of Musa Qala for a few days. The insurgent fighters reportedly outnumbered the ANSF in the district centre, which had been under attack in 2014 and in May and June 2015. It was reported that the district of Baghran had been under sustained control of the Taliban for nearly a decade and they imposed their social rules on the population, such as a ban on music, instructions on dressing and appearance, a ban on girls education etc. Also in the district of Kajaki, the Taliban controls large parts of territory and in these areas the main highway was blocked from June to September 2015 due to fighting. According to the Afghanistan Analysts network, eight of Helmand's districts were under full or significant Taliban control in September 2015. ⁽⁶⁵³⁾ The district of Sangin has also been heavily contested. ⁽⁶⁵⁴⁾ A military operation was launched from Musa Qala district of the province to clear the area of anti-government insurgents. According to the Ministry of Defense at least 13 insurgents were killed while there were no civilian or military casualties. ⁽⁶⁵⁵⁾

Displacement

In January 2015, the number of profiled IDPs was 171 families or 1,330 individuals from Helmand. Between 25 and 28 January 2015, the Kandahar IDP Task Force (TF) coordinated an assessment in Lashkargah and Garish districts. Ninety-three families or 692 individuals were identified and profiled in Lashkargah, mainly originating from Marja and Nawzad districts. The displacement followed the intensification of the conflict in the area. In addition, 78 families or 638 individuals were identified and profiled in Garish district, displaced mainly from Nawzad. Families were hosted by communities or in rented houses, and minimal emergency shelter assistance was provided in extremely dire cases. ⁽⁶⁵⁶⁾

From 24 February to 4 March 2015, IDP TF members conducted a joint assessment in Lashkargah urban area and surrounding villages, and were able to find and profile some 304 families or 2,406 individuals displaced by the conflict. ⁽⁶⁵⁷⁾ In March 2015, the number of profiled IDPs amounts to 374 families or 2,938 individuals from

⁽⁶⁴⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 30 rebels eliminated in Helmand raid, 27 May 2015.

⁽⁶⁴⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 21 security personnel killed in Nawzad fight, 26 May 2015.

⁽⁶⁴⁶⁾ Tolonews, Taliban besiege Musa Kala district center, 19 May 2015.

⁽⁶⁴⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 38 Taliban eliminated in Helmand operations: Military, 19 June 2015.

⁽⁶⁴⁸⁾ Tolonews, About 20 Soldiers Killed in Helmand Clashes Over Past Four Days, 17 June 2015.

⁽⁶⁴⁹⁾ Tolonews, 17 Policemen Killed in Taliban Attack in Helmand, 13 June 2015.

⁽⁶⁵⁰⁾ Tolonews, Nawzad District in Helmand Recaptured By ANSF, 31 July 2015; Tolonews, Nawzad District of Helmand Collapses to the Taliban, 30 July 2015; LWJ, Taliban raise flag over captured district in Helmand province, 11 August 2015.

⁽⁶⁵¹⁾ Tolonews, Nawzad District in Helmand Recaptured By ANSF, 31 July 2015.

⁽⁶⁵²⁾ Tolonews, 13 Insurgents Killed in Helmand Operation, 29 July 2015.

⁽⁶⁵³⁾ Ruttig, T., The Second Fall of Musa Qala: How the Taleban are expanding territorial control, 3 September 2015; BBC, Taliban capture key Helmand district of Musa Qala, 26 August 2015; Guardian (The), Afghan forces retake Musa Qala from Taliban, 30 August 2015.

⁽⁶⁵⁴⁾ LWJ, Afghan government negotiating with the Taliban in Sangin, 15 August 2014; LWJ, Taliban takes another district in southern Afghanistan, 26 August 2015.

⁽⁶⁵⁵⁾ Tolonews, 13 Insurgents Killed in Helmand Operation, 29 July 2015.

⁽⁶⁵⁶⁾ UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, January 2015.

⁽⁶⁵⁷⁾ UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, February 2015.

Helmand. ⁽⁶⁵⁸⁾ In April 2015, an IDP Task Force (TF) joint assessment was conducted and resulted in the identification of 169 families or 1,290 individuals in Lashkargah urban and semi urban areas and 105 families or 942 individuals in Marja. Families were displaced in late March–early April. IDPs in Lashkargah originated from Sangin, Nawzad and Kajaki districts; IDPs in Marja were largely displaced from within the district. ⁽⁶⁵⁹⁾

In May 2015, the Kandahar IDP TF agreed to undertake new assessments in accessible areas in Lashkargah with regards to IDPs in that area. The assessment started on 10 May 2015 and within seven days 130 families or 997 individuals were verified. ⁽⁶⁶⁰⁾

In June 2015, 300 less IDPs were recorded for the reporting month due to the return of a group of IDPs from Lashkargah city to northern districts of Helmand, which led to their removal from the total number of IDPs recorded. ⁽⁶⁶¹⁾

For the month of July 2015 no specific number of IDPs originating from Helmand was reported by UNHCR. ⁽⁶⁶²⁾

In August 2015, 178 families originating from Greshk and 202 families from Lashkar Gah were profiled. The exact IDP number was given as 1,436 individuals. Displacement stemming from the districts of Nawzad, Musa Qala and Sangin occurred as a result of armed conflict. However, no exact figures were stated. ⁽⁶⁶³⁾

Actors in the conflict

Taliban militants are operating in a number of districts and frequently carry out insurgency attacks. ⁽⁶⁶⁴⁾ The Taliban has a strong presence in Helmand, and controls Baghran, MUSAQALH and Nawzad districts. ⁽⁶⁶⁵⁾ Furthermore, it has partial control over several others such as Kajaki district. ⁽⁶⁶⁶⁾

Haji Nasir was named Taliban commander for the district of Sangin. ⁽⁶⁶⁷⁾ Mullah Muhammad Dawud Muzzammil is the deputy Taliban commander in Helmand and Mullah Abdul Haq the Taliban intelligence chief. The Taliban has a *1300 Fighting Group* that was involved in the seizure of Nawzad District, headed by Haji Mullah Fazl Rahman Akhond. ⁽⁶⁶⁸⁾ The Taliban reportedly established training camps in the southern districts of Dishu and Khanishin, from where trained militants were sent into Helmand, Nimroz, Farah and other provinces. Baramcha, a border town in Dishu district was called a 'known haven for Taliban and al Qaeda and a main entry point for fighters coming from Baluchistan to move into Afghanistan'. ⁽⁶⁶⁹⁾ It was reported that the Taliban fighters in Helmand were providing shelter to al Qaeda insurgents fleeing military operations in Pakistan. ⁽⁶⁷⁰⁾ The establishment of al Qaeda training facilities in the town Baramcha was also reported. The branch of al Qaeda responsible for this is called AQIS, led by Asim Umar. ⁽⁶⁷¹⁾

In the south of Helmand, there is the sixth border police zone and its deputy commander in early 2014 was Col. Abdul Ahmad Ahmadi. ⁽⁶⁷²⁾

⁽⁶⁵⁸⁾ UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, March 2015.

⁽⁶⁵⁹⁾ UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, April 2015.

⁽⁶⁶⁰⁾ UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, April 2015.

⁽⁶⁶¹⁾ UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, June 2015.

⁽⁶⁶²⁾ UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, July 2015.

⁽⁶⁶³⁾ UNHCR, conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, August 2015.

⁽⁶⁶⁴⁾ Khaama Press, US conducts airstrikes as heavy clashes continue in Helmand, 28 August 2015.

⁽⁶⁶⁵⁾ Reuters, U.S. soldiers killed in Afghanistan, Taliban grab district, 26 August 2015; Reuters, Afghan forces retreat from strategic district in Helmand province, 18 August 2015.

⁽⁶⁶⁶⁾ Reuters, U.S. soldiers killed in Afghanistan, Taliban grab district, 26 August 2015.

⁽⁶⁶⁷⁾ Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, An interview with 'Haji Nasir', the in-charge of Sangin district about the recent operations, 2015.

⁽⁶⁶⁸⁾ Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Pledges of allegiance to new Amir take place throughout Afghanistan, 9 August 2015.

⁽⁶⁶⁹⁾ Roggio, B., Taliban establish training camps in southern Helmand, posted on: 12 February 2014.

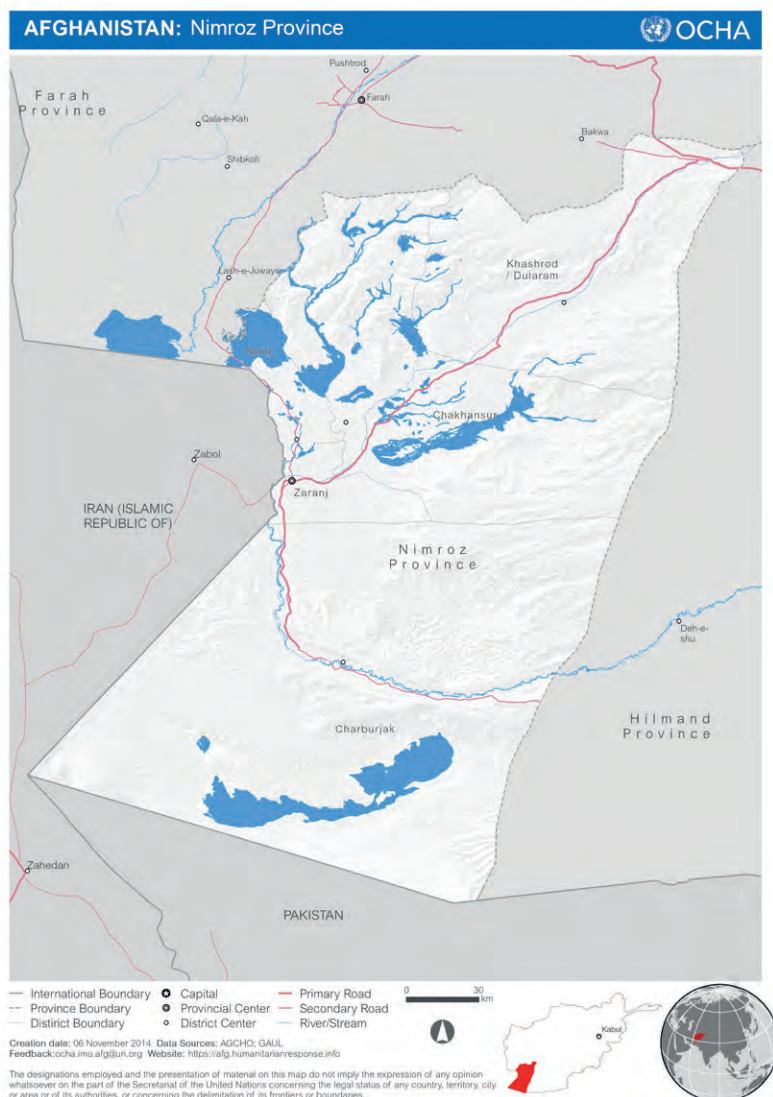
⁽⁶⁷⁰⁾ Dawn, After Mullah Omar: 'This is not the end of war', updated: 10 August 2015.

⁽⁶⁷¹⁾ Roggio, B. and Joscelyn, T., Al Qaeda operates in southern Helmand province, posted on: 24 October 2015.

⁽⁶⁷²⁾ Roggio, B., Taliban establish training camps in southern Helmand, posted on: 12 February 2014.

2.3.3 Nimroz

General description of the province



The province of Nimroz is located in the south and shares a border with the Islamic Republic of Iran to the west, and Pakistan to the south. The province of Helmand is located to its east and Farah to its north. ⁽⁶⁷³⁾ The province consists of the following districts: Chakhansur, Charburjak, Kang, Khashrod/ Dularam, Zaranj, including the provincial capital Zaranj. ⁽⁶⁷⁴⁾

UNOCHA estimated Nimroz's population for 2015 at 164,978. ⁽⁶⁷⁵⁾ The population is considered relatively small but is increasing due to returnees from Iran and migration from other less stable provinces. ⁽⁶⁷⁶⁾

The demography of the province is dominated by 61% Baloch, 27% Pashtun and the remaining from the Tajik ethnicity. Additionally, there are nomads in the province. ⁽⁶⁷⁷⁾ The province is a desert area, with significant water shortages for much of the year. ⁽⁶⁷⁸⁾

⁽⁶⁷³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Background profile of Nimroz, n.d.

⁽⁶⁷⁴⁾ UNOCHA, AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries, 25 September 2012.

⁽⁶⁷⁵⁾ UNOCHA, Afghanistan population estimate for 2015, 26 August 2015.

⁽⁶⁷⁶⁾ Relief International, DFID GTF Project CN-367Nimroz Province, Afghanistan, Final Evaluation, March 2013.

⁽⁶⁷⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Background profile of Nimroz, n.d.

⁽⁶⁷⁸⁾ Relief International, DFID GTF Project CN-367Nimroz Province, Afghanistan, Final Evaluation, March 2013; UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Population Statistics, 8 September 2014.

In 2013, Nimroz was, among other provinces, one of the most important opium cultivation provinces in the country. ⁽⁶⁷⁹⁾

Description of the violence

From 1 January to 31 August 2015, Nimroz province counted 142 security incidents. Table 12 provides an overview of the nature of them: ⁽⁶⁸⁰⁾

Violence targeting individuals	14
Armed confrontations and airstrikes	64
Explosions	32
Security enforcement	24
Non-conflict related incidents	8
Total security incidents	142

Table 12: Security incidents by type, Nimroz (Jan - Aug 2015)

The map in figure 14 presents the number of security incidents per district in Nimroz province. ⁽⁶⁸¹⁾

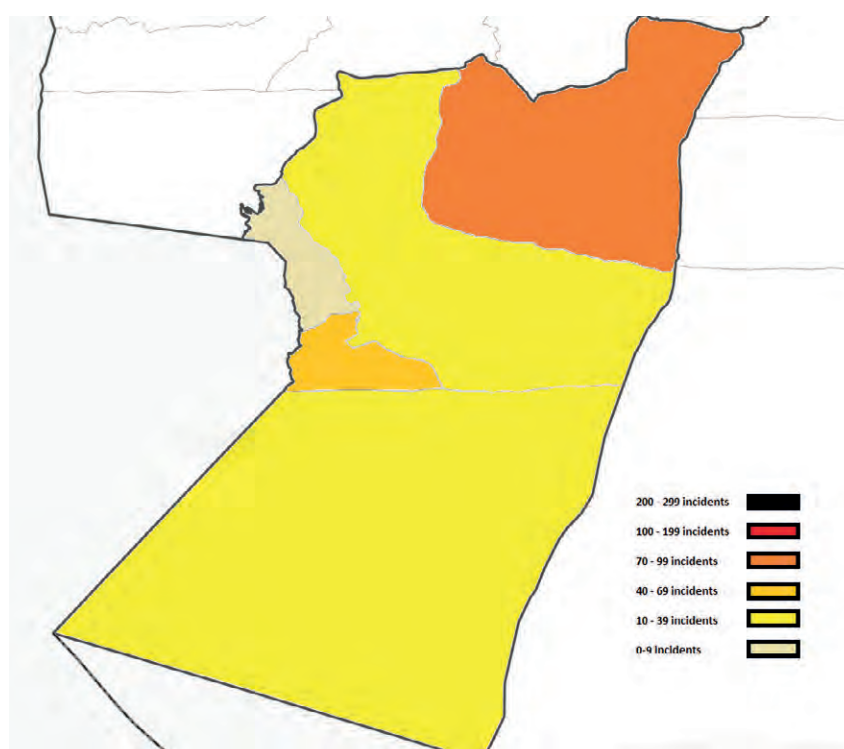


Figure 14: Nimroz, security incidents (Jan - Aug 2015)

The violent incidents and trends in the province of Nimroz include the following examples:

On 24 November 2014, two children were killed and a third one injured when a rocket exploded near a madrasa. They were playing with the unexploded device before it went off. ⁽⁶⁸²⁾

ANSF military operations, arrests and weapon caches were reported at the end of 2014 in Delaram and Khas Rod in Nimroz. ⁽⁶⁸³⁾

⁽⁶⁷⁹⁾ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 7 March 2014.

⁽⁶⁸⁰⁾ For more information on the source of the data and the methodology, see [introduction](#).

⁽⁶⁸¹⁾ For more information on the source and the methodology of the maps, see [introduction](#).

⁽⁶⁸²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 children dead in Nimroz rocket attack, 24 November 2014.

⁽⁶⁸³⁾ Tolonews, 7 Militants Killed in Separate Military Raids, 23 December 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, 10 perish in Jawzjan, Nimroz clashes, 17 December 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, Al Qaeda suspect captured in Kunduz, 13 November 2014.

On 1 January 2015, insurgents attacked a police patrol in the district of Delaram. Reportedly, three insurgents and two policemen were killed in the clash. ⁽⁶⁸⁴⁾ One month later, an NDS official was killed and three others wounded in a similar insurgent attack in the district of Chakhansur. ⁽⁶⁸⁵⁾

Also in 2015, military operations by the Afghan forces continued in Nimroz. ⁽⁶⁸⁶⁾

In 2015, at least 20 schools were closed by the Taliban, several others remained closed due to security fears and at least two were torched. The affected schools are located in the outskirts of Zaranj city and in the districts of Chahar Burjak and Khash Rod. ⁽⁶⁸⁷⁾

On 30 January 2015, according to officials, insurgents released 14 local hostages after taking written guarantees from them not to take part in welfare projects. ⁽⁶⁸⁸⁾

In February 2015, inhabitants of the Delaram district clashed with insurgents who wanted to take a civilian hostage. Four insurgents were killed and their bodies hanged in public. ⁽⁶⁸⁹⁾

UNAMA reported that on 22 April, in Khashrod district a civilian vehicle carrying seven civilians struck a pressure-plate IED, killing six civilians (including three boys, one girl, and one woman), and injuring one civilian. ⁽⁶⁹⁰⁾

In June 2015, a groups of six armed motorcyclists raided the house of a former provincial council member, Najibullah Naser, in Zaranj City. He escaped, but one of his bodyguards died in the attack. ⁽⁶⁹¹⁾ Also in June, Taliban gunmen killed a prayer leader who was secretary of the development council of the district Chakhansur. ⁽⁶⁹²⁾ In another Taliban attack in Delaram, three NDS personnel were killed. ⁽⁶⁹³⁾ In yet another attack, in Khash Rod, five ANA soldiers were killed by the Taliban. ⁽⁶⁹⁴⁾ The Taliban claimed to have killed an ANBP commander, Raes Beit Barak, with two of his guards in an ambush on the Herat-Kandahar highway. ⁽⁶⁹⁵⁾

In July 2015, the Taliban attacked the Kamal Khan Dam facility in Nimroz which led to a battle for several hours. It was the second attack on the facility in two weeks. ⁽⁶⁹⁶⁾

Throughout 2015, the Taliban killed several ANSF staff in attacks. Also insurgents were killed in clashes. ⁽⁶⁹⁷⁾

Displacement

Nimroz was not named in the UNHCR monthly IDP updates between November 2014 and August 2015. ⁽⁶⁹⁸⁾

⁽⁶⁸⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Police among 7 dead in Nimroz, Kunduz violence, 1 January 2015.

⁽⁶⁸⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, NDS officer killed; drug smuggling attempt foiled, 2 February 2015.

⁽⁶⁸⁶⁾ Tolonews, 19 Insurgents Killed in Afghan Forces Operations, 3 February 2015; Tolonews, Nine Insurgents Killed in Military Operations, 9 February 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, 3 rebels, 2 ANA soldiers dead in Nimroz offensive, 12 February 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 Afghans dead, 7 hurt in Iranian police fire, 12 February 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Scores of rebels perish in clearing operations: MoD, 28 July 2015.

⁽⁶⁸⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Closure of Nimroz schools deprives many students of education, 16 September 2015.

⁽⁶⁸⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Insurgents release 14 Nimroz hostages, 30 January 2015.

⁽⁶⁸⁹⁾ RFE/RL, 4 kidnappers killed, hanged in Nimroz, 5 February 2015.

⁽⁶⁹⁰⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan Midyear Report 2015, Protection of civilians in armed conflict, August 2015, p. 47; Pajhwok Afghan News, Nimroz blast, clash claim 10 lives, 22 April 2015.

⁽⁶⁹¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Ex-PC head in Nimroz survives rebel attack, 30 June 2015.

⁽⁶⁹²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Gunmen kill prayer leader in Nimroz, 23 June 2015.

⁽⁶⁹³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 3 NDS officials, district attorney killed, 11 June 2015.

⁽⁶⁹⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Security officials among 17 dead in clashes, 28 May 2015.

⁽⁶⁹⁵⁾ Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Commander and 2 gunmen killed in ambush, 10 June 2015.

⁽⁶⁹⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban attack Kamal Khan Dam in Nimroz, 15 July 2015.

⁽⁶⁹⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban's rocket strike leaves 3 policemen dead in Nimroz, 16 March 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Security officials among 17 dead in clashes, 28 May 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, 3 NDS officials, district attorney killed, 11 June 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban attack Kamal Khan Dam in Nimroz, 15 July 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Police among 7 dead in Nimroz, Kunduz violence, 1 January 2015.

⁽⁶⁹⁸⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, August 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, July 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan: Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update June 2015, June 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan - Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, May 2015, May 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan - Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, April 2015, April 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan - Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, 31 December 2014.

Actors in the conflict

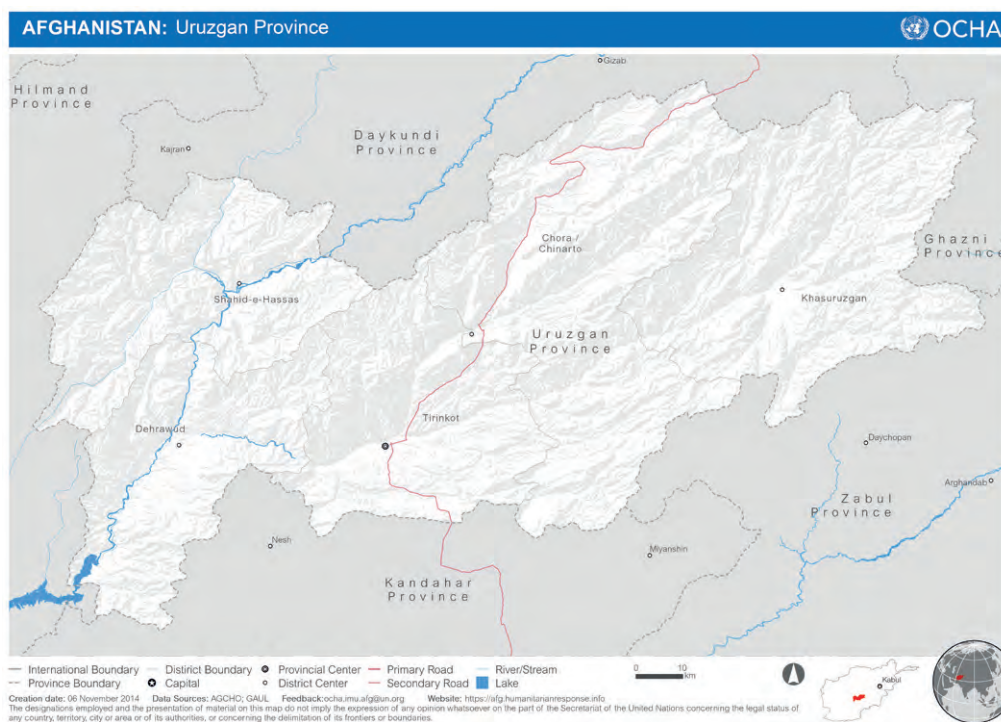
In the beginning of 2015, Brig. Gen. Qasim Janglbagh was named Nimroz police chief. ⁽⁶⁹⁹⁾ In a Pajhwok article on 1 January 2015, Col. Amanullah Khashrody was named police chief of Delaram district in Nimroz. ⁽⁷⁰⁰⁾ By the end of January, Col. Najibullah was named Delaram police chief. ⁽⁷⁰¹⁾

The Taliban commander for Nimroz is Mawlawi Abdul Aziz. He pledged allegiance to the new leader Mansoor. ⁽⁷⁰²⁾ Mawlawi Abdul Qayum Rohani is named as Taliban shadow governor for Nimroz. The Taliban reportedly has established a 'quick reaction force' of between 200 and 500 fighters which is operational in Farah, Nimroz and Herat. ⁽⁷⁰³⁾

2.3.4 Uruzgan

General description of the Province

The province of Uruzgan, also pronounced Rozgan, is surrounded by the provinces of Daikundi in the north, Zabul and Kandahar in the south, Helmand in the southwest and Ghazni in the east. ⁽⁷⁰⁴⁾ The province of Uruzgan consists of the districts Tirinkot, Shahid-e Hassas, Dehrawood, Chora/Chinarto, and Khas Uruzgan. Chinarto and Surab are sometimes also considered to be independent districts, but their status is yet to be officially recognised. ⁽⁷⁰⁵⁾ Shahid-e Hassas was regarded as district as well. ⁽⁷⁰⁶⁾ Regarding the district of Gizab, please see the [section on Daikundi](#). Uruzgan is rather neglected when it comes to education, health facilities and infrastructure. ⁽⁷⁰⁷⁾



⁽⁶⁹⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 15 university students rescued from being kidnapped, 28 January 2015.

⁽⁷⁰⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Police among 7 dead in Nimroz, Kunduz violence, 1 January 2015.

⁽⁷⁰¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Insurgents release 14 Nimroz hostages, 30 January 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 Afghans dead, 7 hurt in Iranian police fire, 12 February 2015.

⁽⁷⁰²⁾ Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Pledges of allegiance to new Amir take place throughout Afghanistan, 9 August 2015.

⁽⁷⁰³⁾ UN Security Council, Letter dated 18 August 2015 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council, 26 August 2015, pp. 9, 21.

⁽⁷⁰⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Brief introduction of Uruzgan province, n.d.

⁽⁷⁰⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Uruzgan administrative units, n.d.

⁽⁷⁰⁶⁾ UNOCHA, AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries, 25 September 2012; Pajhwok Afghan News, Uruzgan administrative units, n.d.

⁽⁷⁰⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Brief introduction of Uruzgan province, n.d.

About 72 percent of the province is mountainous while 21 percent is plain. UN OCHA estimates the population for 2015 to be 386,818 for the province of Uruzgan. ⁽⁷⁰⁸⁾ The main tribe in the province is Pashtun including its sub-tribes Popalzai, Achakzai, Noorzai, Barakzai, Alkozai and Durrani. Hazara and Kuchi tribes also live in the province. ⁽⁷⁰⁹⁾

Description of the violence

From 1 January to 31 August 2015, Uruzgan province counted 376 security incidents. Table 13 provides an overview of the nature of the security incidents: ⁽⁷¹⁰⁾

Violence targeting individuals	45
Armed confrontations and airstrikes	187
Explosions	108
Security enforcement	34
Non-conflict related incidents	2
Total security incidents	376

Table 13: Security incidents by type, Uruzgan (Jan - Aug 2015)

The map in figure 15 presents the number of security incidents per district in Uruzgan province. ⁽⁷¹¹⁾

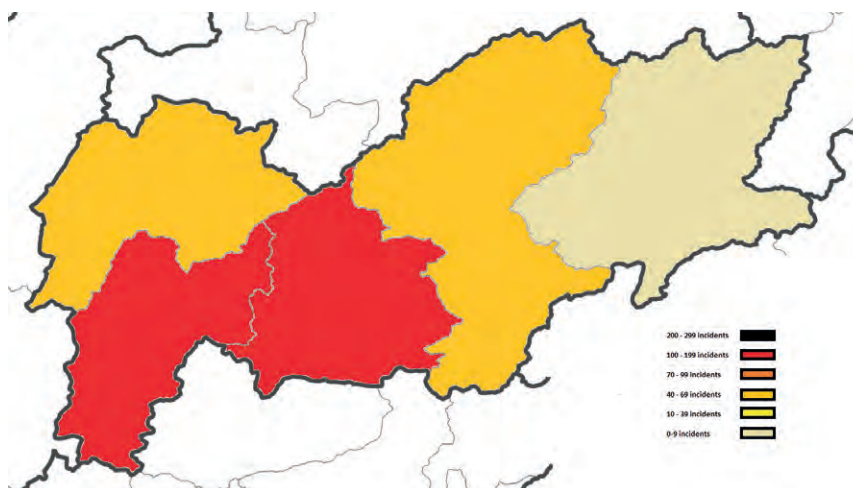


Figure 15: Uruzgan, security incidents (Jan - Aug 2015)

Khaama Press calls Uruzgan one of the relatively volatile provinces in which armed insurgent groups are actively operating and often carry out attacks. ⁽⁷¹²⁾ The minister of interior stated in a gathering in Tirinkot that efforts were being made to resolve issues regarding the security situation in the province to further meet the necessities of police, and provide essential training. ⁽⁷¹³⁾ In 2015, several security operations were conducted by the ANSF in the province of Uruzgan. During each operation, insurgents were arrested, killed and wounded. Weapons were also seized. ⁽⁷¹⁴⁾

Examples of security incidents include: Seven policemen and dozens of militants were killed in November of 2014 during clashes in the district of Dehrawud in the province of Uruzgan. According to local sources the clash erupted three days earlier in three different towns. Three policemen were injured. ⁽⁷¹⁵⁾

⁽⁷⁰⁸⁾ UNOCHA, AFGHANISTAN: Population Estimate for 2015, 26 August 2015.

⁽⁷⁰⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Brief introduction of Uruzgan province, n.d.

⁽⁷¹⁰⁾ For more information on the source of the data and the methodology, see [introduction](#).

⁽⁷¹¹⁾ For more information on the source and the methodology of the maps, see [introduction](#).

⁽⁷¹²⁾ Khaama Press, Taliban beheads religious cleric in Uruzgan province, 6 October 2015.

⁽⁷¹³⁾ Frontier Post (The), New police chief for Uruzgan introduced, 29 May 2015.

⁽⁷¹⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Khas Uruzgan road reopens after 3 months, 9 July 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Gigantic anti-rebels operation being launched in south, 9 July 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, 112 militants killed in a week in south, 1 July 2015; Tolonews, 62 Insurgents Killed in Afghan Operations, 17 June 2015; Tolonews, 110 Insurgents Killed in Afghan Military Operations, 11 June 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, 22 Taliban militants killed in Wardak, Uruzgan: Mol, 2 June 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, 130 insurgents eliminated in Uruzgan offensive, 22 May 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Over 80 insurgents, 11 army personnel killed: MoD, 30 March 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, 24 rebels dead in Uruzgan, Kandahar security operations, 15 February 2015.

⁽⁷¹⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Dozens reported dead in Uruzgan fighting, 5 November 2014.

In December 2014, unidentified gunmen shot a teacher in the Pitawi village of the district of Khas. ⁽⁷¹⁶⁾ Three employees of an NGO in the health sector were kidnapped by unidentified perpetrators. The police received the information about the abduction only 26 hours later as no one had filed a report. ⁽⁷¹⁷⁾ Increased efforts by tribal elders led to a release of the hostages within five days. ⁽⁷¹⁸⁾ Two separate bomb explosions in December 2014 caused the death of police personnel. One of the incidents took place in the district of Chinarto. Two police officers were killed in the blast. The second incident involved a roadside mine blast in the district of Dehrawud which killed a third police officer and wounded a civilian. The Taliban claimed responsibility for killing the third police officer. A commander of the Taliban was detained by the police for his role in terrorist activities. ⁽⁷¹⁹⁾ Four insurgents were caught trying to plant landmines in the provinces of Uruzgan and Khost. They were shot on the spot. The incident took place in the provincial capital. ⁽⁷²⁰⁾ Two women and a girl were killed during a bomb explosion in the capital of Uruzgan province. The bomb went off in the village of Sar Chuglo on the outskirts of Tirinkot. No further information about the incident was given. ⁽⁷²¹⁾

According to official sources, people were killed and wounded in January of 2015. In one incident in the area of Khar Karez the teenage son of a local elder was killed with an explosive device. In a roadside bombing in the vicinity of Tirinkot City, an unidentified number of people were killed. Five people, including two women, were wounded in the incident. ⁽⁷²²⁾ Three ANA soldiers were wounded in an explosion in the district of Khas Uruzgan. ⁽⁷²³⁾ Two policemen were gunned down by an unknown assailant in the provincial capital of Uruzgan. ⁽⁷²⁴⁾ A police vehicle hit a roadside mine, killing one policeman and wounding two others in the Shaplogh area of Tirinkot. ⁽⁷²⁵⁾ Three women were also killed in a road side explosion. The incident took place in the district of Chinartu. ⁽⁷²⁶⁾ An insurgent was killed in a roadside explosion in the provincial capital of Uruzgan. ⁽⁷²⁷⁾ Four insurgents, including their commander, were killed during an ambush by the ANA. An additional four insurgents were wounded. Weapons were seized by the ANA during the incident which took place in the district of Deh Rawud. ⁽⁷²⁸⁾

In February 2015, the director of hajj and religious affairs of Uruzgan was injured a second time within five months. A bomb detonated when the director's car passed a motorcycle in the first district of Tirinkot. ⁽⁷²⁹⁾ In a separate incident a religious scholar was killed by unknown assailants. According to an official source, the attackers cut the throat of the religious cleric in front of his house in the district of Chinarto. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack. ⁽⁷³⁰⁾ Ten people were killed and 37 injured during an explosion caused by a suicide bomber inside a hotel in Tirinkot city. Seven people were said to be in critical health condition. However, according to official police sources, the explosives of the bomber were detonated before he could reach his initial target, which was a senior police officer. ⁽⁷³¹⁾

Three employees of a development project died in March of 2015 during a landmine explosion. The incident took place in the area of Kori Manda on the outskirts of Dehrawud district. A third employee was injured in the incident. No group claimed responsibility for the attack. ⁽⁷³²⁾ In a separate incident, five employees of the NGO Save the Children were kidnapped in Surab, when travelling to their project. ⁽⁷³³⁾ The bullet-ridden bodies of these workers were found five weeks later. No group claimed responsibility. However, it was stated that the Taliban demanded a prisoner exchange for the workers. ⁽⁷³⁴⁾

⁽⁷¹⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Teacher, elder gunned down in Uruzgan, Nangarhar, 24 December 2014.

⁽⁷¹⁷⁾ Pajhwok afghan News, Uruzgan gunmen kidnap 3 health workers, 30 December 2014.

⁽⁷¹⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban set free NGO workers in Uruzgan, 2 January 2015.

⁽⁷¹⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 3 policemen dead in Uruzgan explosions, 20 December 2014.

⁽⁷²⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 4 planting bombs killed in Uruzgan, Khost, 8 December 2014.

⁽⁷²¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 3 of a family dead in Tirinkot blast, 7 December 2014.

⁽⁷²²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 5 dead in Uruzgan, Zabul violence, 2 January 2015.

⁽⁷²³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Policemen among 15 dead in security incidents, 7 January 2015.

⁽⁷²⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 3 police, many rebels killed in violence, 7 January 2015.

⁽⁷²⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Roadside bomb kills Uruzgan policeman, 8 January 2015.

⁽⁷²⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Mother killed along with 2 daughters in Uruzgan blast, 14 January 2015.

⁽⁷²⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Border police personnel among 5 found dead in Paktia, 14 January 2015.

⁽⁷²⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Militant commander among 4 killed in ANA ambush, 23 January 2015.

⁽⁷²⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Gunmen slash religious scholar's throat in Uruzgan, 12 February 2015.

⁽⁷³⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Gunmen slash religious scholar's throat in Uruzgan, 12 February 2015.

⁽⁷³¹⁾ Ariana News, Uruzgan Bombing Leaves 10 Dead, 37 Injured, 26 February 2015.

⁽⁷³²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 employees of a development project dead in blast, 1 March 2015.

⁽⁷³³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 5 'Save the Children' workers kidnapped, 3 March 2015.

⁽⁷³⁴⁾ Guardian (The), Afghanistan: bodies of five abducted aid workers found, 11 April 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, 5 kidnapped NGO workers killed, 10 April 2015; RFE/RL, Taliban Suffers 'Heavy Casualties' In Badakhshan, 10 April 2015.

In April 2015, an official of Kabul was shot by an unknown assailant in Tirinkot. ⁽⁷³⁵⁾

In May 2015, heavy clashes between Afghan security forces and insurgents erupted in several parts of Uruzgan, leaving 167 militants and 7 security force officers dead. Civilians were killed in the ongoing clashes as well. The insurgency has intensified its attacks on security checkpoints. ⁽⁷³⁶⁾ The governor of the Shaheed Hassas district was killed when his vehicle struck an IED. One of his bodyguards was also injured in the incident. No group claimed responsibility. ⁽⁷³⁷⁾

In June 2015, 16 people were wounded in two separate incidents in Uruzgan. The first explosion hit the vehicle of a police officer in the provincial capital, wounding a woman and three children. The police officer escaped unharmed. The second bomb also detonated in the Tirinkot district, leaving three police officers hurt, as well as one civilian. ⁽⁷³⁸⁾ Unknown assailants gunned down the director of education in the district of Chora. The attackers forced their way inside the mosque and shot the director as he was delivering the Tarawih prayers. No group claimed responsibility for the incident. ⁽⁷³⁹⁾

In July 2015, the Dehrawud district police chief was killed during ground engagements between the Taliban and the police, which lasted for several days. The exact number of additional victims, however, is unknown. ⁽⁷⁴⁰⁾ The Taliban has been suspected of hanging a tribal elder accused of working with the government. His son, who had also been kidnapped, was later released. The incident took place in the Khas Uruzgan district. ⁽⁷⁴¹⁾

In August 2015, targeted killings claimed the lives of several prominent officials, including the head of provincial council of Uruzgan. ⁽⁷⁴²⁾ Insurgents heavily attacked the Afghan police headquarters, and, according to reports, surrounded governmental buildings before reinforcements could arrive. ⁽⁷⁴³⁾ The ANSF heavily retaliated against the Taliban in Uruzgan, which led to a slowdown in attacks in Uruzgan, as well as the Dehrawud area in Helmand. ⁽⁷⁴⁴⁾

Displacement

According to UNHCR, no IDPs were reported in Uruzgan in December 2014. ⁽⁷⁴⁵⁾ In January of 2015, 69 families or 591 individuals were displaced from the district of Chanarto and the area of Garmaba in Trinkot to the provincial capital of Tirinkot. ⁽⁷⁴⁶⁾ According to UNHCR, no IDPs were reported in Uruzgan in February 2015. ⁽⁷⁴⁷⁾ Small-scale displacement took place in Uruzgan in March 2015, but no numbers were cited by UNHCR. ⁽⁷⁴⁸⁾ The district of Khas Uruzgan experienced displacement in April 2015. The IDPs, consisting of 79 families or 529 individuals, were displaced to the province of Ghazni. ⁽⁷⁴⁹⁾ In May 2015, no IDPs were recorded by UNHCR as relevant areas were not accessible. The northern part of Uruzgan was affected. ⁽⁷⁵⁰⁾ Small-scale displacement took place in Uruzgan June 2015, but no numbers were cited by UNHCR. ⁽⁷⁵¹⁾ According to UNHCR, no IDPs were reported in Uruzgan in July 2015. ⁽⁷⁵²⁾ In August 2015, Uruzgan was identified as having small-scale displacement. However, no specific numbers were stated. ⁽⁷⁵³⁾

⁽⁷³⁵⁾ Khaama Press, Kabul Bank official shot dead in Uruzgan, 26 April 2015.

⁽⁷³⁶⁾ Khaama Press, Afghan special forces conduct complex operation in Uruzgan province, 23 August 2015;

⁽⁷³⁷⁾ Tolonews, District Governor Killed in Uruzgan Roadside Mine Blast, 23 May 2015; RFE/RL, Roadside Bomb Kills Afghan District Chief, 23 May 2015.

⁽⁷³⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 16 people injured in Uruzgan explosions, 29 June 2015.

⁽⁷³⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, District edu director shot dead inside mosque, 30 June 2015.

⁽⁷⁴⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Dehrawud police chief killed in clash, 17 July 2015.

⁽⁷⁴¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Insurgents kidnap, hang Uruzgan tribal elder, 22 July 2015; Tolonews, Taliban Hang Tribal Elder in Uruzgan, 22 July 2015.

⁽⁷⁴²⁾ Telegraph (The), Afghan forces recapture district which fell to Taliban after withdrawal of British troops, 30 August 2015.

⁽⁷⁴³⁾ Triple Canopy, Afghanistan Weekly Security Report, 27 August 2015.

⁽⁷⁴⁴⁾ Triple Canopy, Afghanistan Weekly Security Report, 13 August 2015.

⁽⁷⁴⁵⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, December 2014; UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, February 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, July 2015.

⁽⁷⁴⁶⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, January 2015.

⁽⁷⁴⁷⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, December 2014; UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, February 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, July 2015.

⁽⁷⁴⁸⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, March 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, June 2015.

⁽⁷⁴⁹⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, April 2015.

⁽⁷⁵⁰⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan: Conflict-Induced IDPs by Province of Displacement Profiled from January to May 2015 [map], 31 May 2015;

⁽⁷⁵¹⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, March 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, June 2015.

⁽⁷⁵²⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, December 2014; UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, February 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, July 2015.

⁽⁷⁵³⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, August 2015.

Generally, the insecurity and the clashes between AGEs and ANSF were repeatedly cited as the main reason for displacement. ⁽⁷⁵⁴⁾

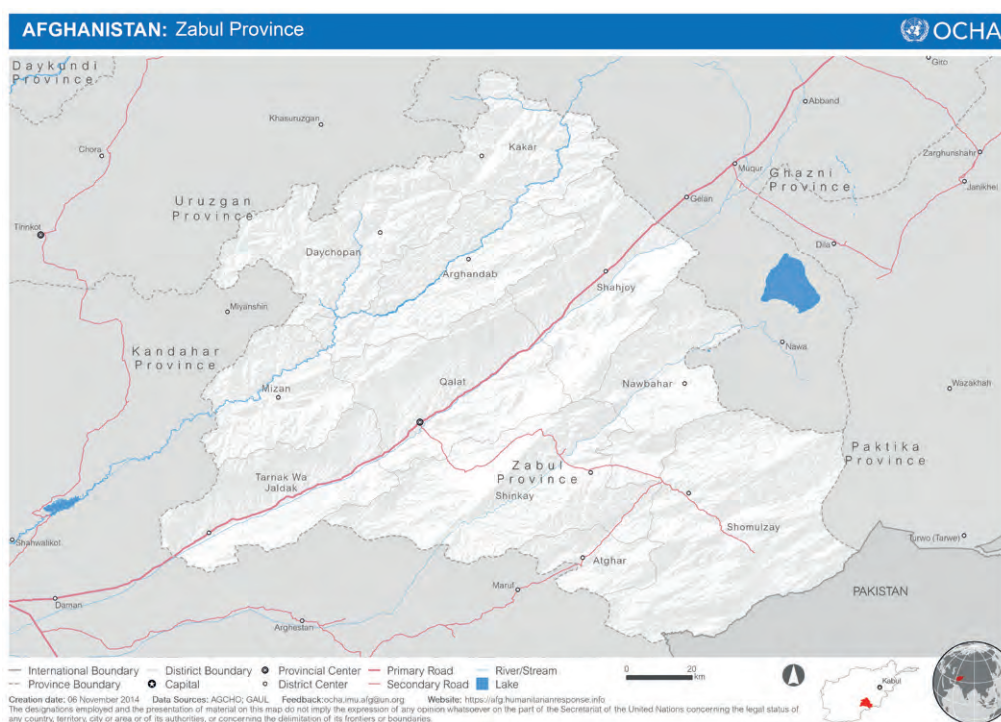
Actors in the conflict

Intense clashes between the Taliban and security forces were ongoing between November and August 2015. ⁽⁷⁵⁵⁾ In mid-May the Taliban intensified their attacks in Uruzgan. ⁽⁷⁵⁶⁾ This led to a fall of a dozen checkpoints to the Taliban in June 2015, ⁽⁷⁵⁷⁾ and several attacks on a number of others in May 2015. ⁽⁷⁵⁸⁾ In some instances Taliban fighters were killed and injured, ⁽⁷⁵⁹⁾ in other cases members of the ANSF, ⁽⁷⁶⁰⁾ governmental staff or civilians were injured or killed. ⁽⁷⁶¹⁾ In December 2014, Taliban insurgents blocked a main road in the province of Uruzgan as a response to security forces cutting of smuggling routes. ⁽⁷⁶²⁾

In January 2015, women of Uruzgan for the first time showed their support for the ANSF. In a gathering in the provincial capital the women, along with a greater number of men, paid their respects to the ANSF and their efforts in maintaining security. Several women offered flowers to the security personnel. ⁽⁷⁶³⁾

2.3.5 Zabul

General description of the province



⁽⁷⁵⁴⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, April 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan: Conflict-Induced IDPs by Province of Displacement Profiled from January to May 2015 [map], 31 May 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, January 2015.

⁽⁷⁵⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Uruzgan Taliban, security forces lock in intense clashes, 18 May 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan: Conflict-Induced IDPs by Province of Displacement Profiled from January to May 2015 [map], 31 May 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, January 2015.

⁽⁷⁵⁶⁾ IHS Jane's 360, Update: Taliban launch sustained attacks in Uruzgan province, 1 June 2015.

⁽⁷⁵⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban capture 12 police posts in Uruzgan, 7 June 2015.

⁽⁷⁵⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Uruzgan Taliban, security forces lock in intense clashes, 18 May 2015.

⁽⁷⁵⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Uruzgan Taliban, security forces lock in intense clashes, 18 May 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, 4 police killed, as many injured in Uruzgan firefight, 2 February 2015.

⁽⁷⁶⁰⁾ Sarnavesht Daily, 'High-level Government officials accused of killing powerful police chief', 28 March 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Thousands rally against police chief's assassination, 26 March 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Uruzgan police chief shot dead, not killed in blast: MP, 20 March 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Matiullah was not killed in suicide attack, say elders, 24 March 2015; Tolonews, Taliban Attack Kills 19 Police in Uruzgan, 29 May 2015.

⁽⁷⁶¹⁾ Khaama Press, Kabul Bank official shot dead in Uruzgan, 26 April 2015.

⁽⁷⁶²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban block Tirinkot-Gizab highway, 24 December 2014.

⁽⁷⁶³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Uruzgan women also swing behind Afghan forces, 22 January 2015.

The province of Zabul, also known as Zabalistan, is the native region of the Pashtun tribe. The provincial capital is Qalat. ⁽⁷⁶⁴⁾ The province is made up of the following districts: Afghar, Arghandab, Daychopan, Kakar, Mizan, Nawbahar, Qalat, Shahjoy, Shinkay, Shomulzay and Tarnak Wa Jaldak. ⁽⁷⁶⁵⁾ UNOCHA estimated Zabul's population for 2015 at 304,126. ⁽⁷⁶⁶⁾ The main income source in the province is agriculture. The people of Zabul are primarily associated with raising livestock and agriculture such as wheat and barley. Additionally, melon, watermelon, grapes, figs, almond and raspberries are the most produced products in the province. ⁽⁷⁶⁷⁾

Description of the violence

From 1 January to 31 August 2015, Zabul province counted 303 security incidents. Table 14 provides an overview of their nature: ⁽⁷⁶⁸⁾

Violence targeting individuals	19
Armed confrontations and airstrikes	155
Explosions	82
Security enforcement	43
Non-conflict related incidents	2
Other incidents	2
Total security incidents	303

Table 14: Security incidents by type, Zabul (Jan - Aug 2015)

The map in figure 16 presents the number of security incidents per district in Zabul province. ⁽⁷⁶⁹⁾

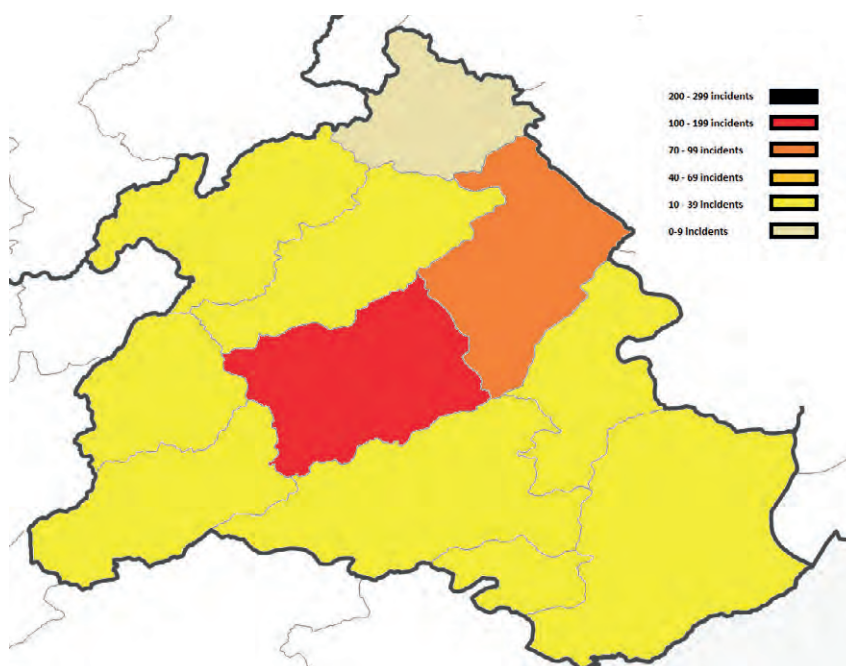


Figure 16: Zabul, security incidents (Jan - Aug 2015)

The violent incidents and trends in the province of Zabul included the following examples:

In February 2015, insurgents abducted a group of 30 Hazaras travelling from Iran, via Herat to Kabul. In March 2015, ANSF launched a military operation aimed at releasing them, in the districts of Arghandab and Kakar. By May 2015,

⁽⁷⁶⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Background profile of Zabul, n.d.

⁽⁷⁶⁵⁾ UNOCHA, AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries, 25 September 2012.

⁽⁷⁶⁶⁾ UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Population estimate for 2015, 26 August 2015.

⁽⁷⁶⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Background profile of Zabul, n.d.

⁽⁷⁶⁸⁾ For more information on the source of the data and the methodology, see [introduction](#).

⁽⁷⁶⁹⁾ For more information on the source and the methodology of the maps, see [introduction](#).

most of them were released in exchange for prisoners and three were executed (UNAMA received reliable but unconfirmed information on the executions).⁽⁷⁷⁰⁾

On 25 May 2015, a suicide vehicle-borne attack against the provincial council in Qalat injured 79 civilians, including 30 women and two children.⁽⁷⁷¹⁾ In June 2015, the district of Kakar fell under Taliban control. This was confirmed by the Afghan Ministry of Defence.⁽⁷⁷²⁾ UNAMA reported: 'On 1 June, an RC-IED targeting an ANP vehicle detonated late and killed four civilians traveling in another vehicle, in Qalat district of Zabul province.'⁽⁷⁷³⁾ Also in June, clashes were reported between ANSF and insurgents in the districts of Shahjoy and Atghar.⁽⁷⁷⁴⁾

In July 2015, an armed clash between insurgents and ANSF took place on the outskirts of Qalat, killing four insurgents.⁽⁷⁷⁵⁾ In July 2015, one civilian was killed and two injured when a rickshaw hit an IED.⁽⁷⁷⁶⁾ Also in July, a vehicle of demining personnel struck a landmine near a military base close to the city of Qalat. One deminer was killed and eight other staff wounded.⁽⁷⁷⁷⁾ On 12 July, a group of 25 Taliban fighters, including suicide bombers, raided an ANSF checkpoint. In the clash, according to the provincial police spokesman, 16 insurgents, two ANA soldiers, and two ANP were killed and three others injured. The Taliban claimed it killed 10 ANSF and lost three mujahideen in the assault. An Afghan security official wishing to remain anonymous confirmed the 10 casualties among ANSF.⁽⁷⁷⁸⁾ Afghan security forces launched large-scale operations in the Day Chopan district.⁽⁷⁷⁹⁾ Local inhabitants of the Mezana district interfered with a Taliban commander building a house for himself. The Taliban attacked the people, killing one and injuring four.⁽⁷⁸⁰⁾

In August 2015, the Zabul provincial council chief warned that 4 districts (Daichopan, Naw Bahar, Shamulzai and Atghar) could fall into Taliban hands if no additional security forces were deployed. It was explained that the districts centres were surrounded and the ANSF were outnumbered by the insurgents.⁽⁷⁸¹⁾

Displacement

In March 2015, UNHCR reported displacement due to an ANSF military operation, in the districts of Arghandab and Kakar.⁽⁷⁸²⁾ Otherwise, Zabul was not named in the UNHCR monthly IDP updates between November 2014 and August 2015.⁽⁷⁸³⁾

Actors in the conflict

Col. Ghulam Jilani Farahi was named provincial police chief of Zabul.⁽⁷⁸⁴⁾

In July 2015, heavy fighting was reported between IS and the Taliban in the district of Arghandab in Zabul with casualties on both sides.⁽⁷⁸⁵⁾

⁽⁷⁷⁰⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan Midyear Report 2015, Protection of civilians in armed conflict, August 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, February 2015, p. 4.

⁽⁷⁷¹⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan Midyear Report 2015, Protection of civilians in armed conflict, August 2015, pp. 16, 50; Bakhtar News Agency, 3 Killed, 43 Wounded In Zabul Suicide Attack, 26 May 2015.

⁽⁷⁷²⁾ NY Times (The), Taliban Attack Police Base in Afghanistan, Killing 17, 13 June 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, More districts to be purged of militants: MoD, 30 July 2015.

⁽⁷⁷³⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan Midyear Report 2015, Protection of civilians in armed conflict, August 2015, p. 64.

⁽⁷⁷⁴⁾ Bakhtar News Agency, Eight Armed Oppositions Kills, Wounded in Zabul, 2 June 2015.

⁽⁷⁷⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Civilian among 5 dead in Zabul gunbattle, blast, 25 July 2015.

⁽⁷⁷⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Civilian among 5 dead in Zabul gunbattle, blast, 25 July 2015.

⁽⁷⁷⁷⁾ Tolonews, Demining Worker Killed, 8 Wounded in Zabul Blast, 13 July 2015.

⁽⁷⁷⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 16 rebels, 4 security forces killed in Zabul, 12 July 2015.

⁽⁷⁷⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Afghan forces launch big anti-rebels offensive in Zabul, 11 July 2015.

⁽⁷⁸⁰⁾ Ariana News, Armed insurgents killed 1 civilian, injured 4 others in Zabul, 5 July 2015.

⁽⁷⁸¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Zabul districts in danger of falling to Taliban, 29 August 2015.

⁽⁷⁸²⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, February 2015, p. 4.

⁽⁷⁸³⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, August 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, July 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, June 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, May 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, April 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, December 2014.

⁽⁷⁸⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 women stabbed to death, 3 injured in Zabul attack, 28 July 2015.

⁽⁷⁸⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 7 dead, 8 hurt in groups' infighting in Zabul, 26 July 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, At least 2 dead as Daesh, Taliban rebels clash in Zabul, 25 July 2015.

According to an NDS statement, Mawlawi Faizullah was arrested in July 2015 in Zabul. He was member of the Taliban's military shura and accused of being in charge of suicide attacks, ambushes, offensive attacks, kidnapping and financial collections for Taliban militants in Zabul, Kandahar and Ghazni provinces. ⁽⁷⁸⁶⁾

In July 2015, ANSF encountered reportedly large numbers of 'foreign fighters' during an operation in the district of Day Chopan. A local tribal elder said that they were mostly Uzbek fighters who had fled from North Waziristan in Pakistan. ⁽⁷⁸⁷⁾

In Zabul, infighting between Taliban factions took place in August 2015. Mullah Mansour Dadullah, a Taliban commander from the Kakar tribe, who enjoys support in the districts of Kakar and Daychopan, has publicly refused to pledge allegiance to the new leader Mansoor. Dadullah's fighters are reportedly linked with IS individuals. Dadullah's network is called *Fidayi Mahaz*, or previously *Da Fidayano Mahaz* and *Dadullah Front*. Taliban leader Mansoor, who had fighters stationed in the district of Arghandab, sent some 600 fighters to Kakar district to battle Dadullah's forces which resulted in several fighters killed on both sides. The Taliban's shadow governor for Zabul is Mullah Nasrullah Matiullah. ⁽⁷⁸⁸⁾

⁽⁷⁸⁶⁾ Ariana News, NDS arrested key military member of Quetta Shura in Zabul, 12 July 2015.

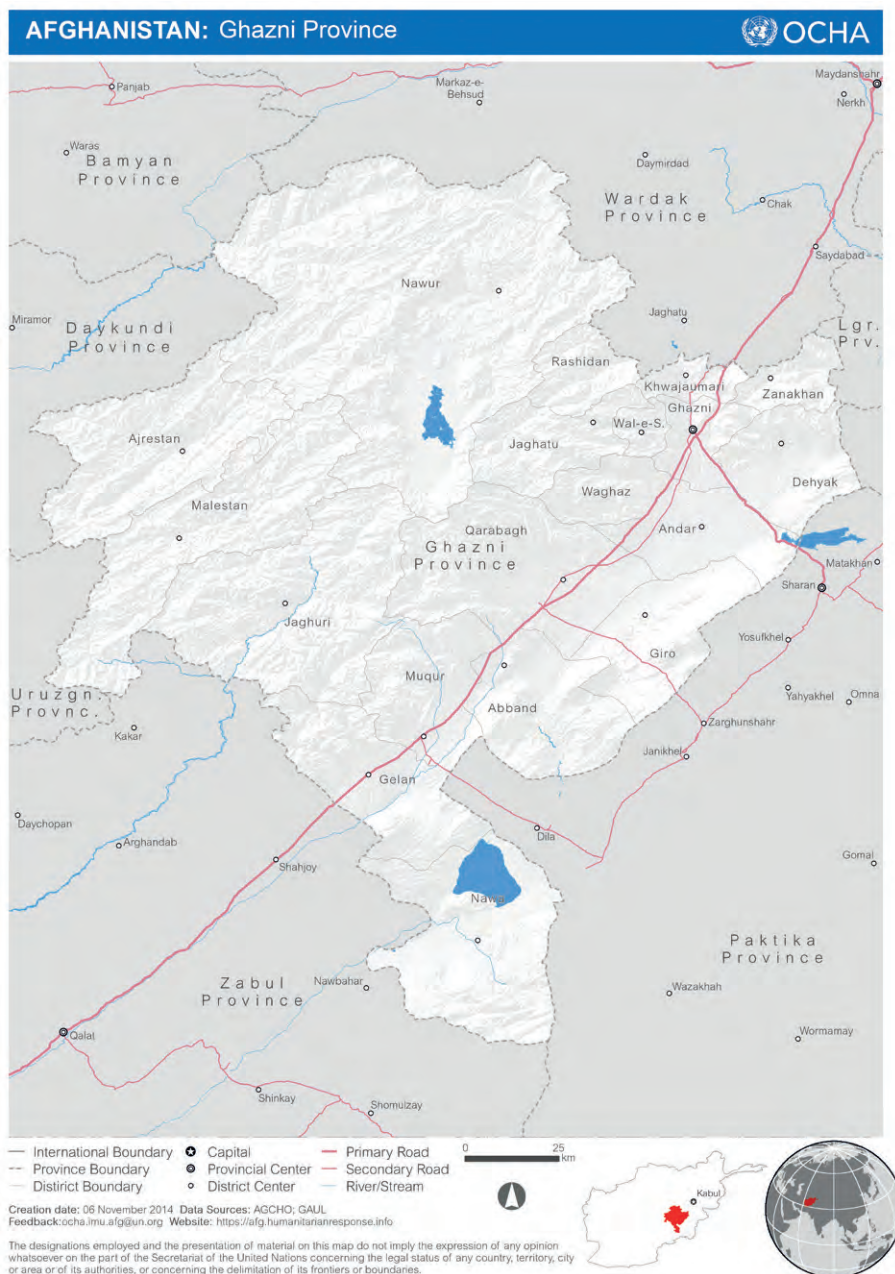
⁽⁷⁸⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Afghan forces launch big anti-rebels offensive in Zabul, 11 July 2015.

⁽⁷⁸⁸⁾ Khaama Press, Taliban infighting left five killed in Zabul, 30 August 2015; NY Times, Taliban's New Leader in Afghanistan Moves to Quash Dissent, 6 September 2015; UN Security Council, Letter dated 18 August 2015 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council, 26 August 2015, pp. 8, 21; Express Tribune (The), Succession row: Clerics set deadline for Taliban chief, 1 September 2015; Fars News Agency, 600 Fighters Arrive in Afghan Zabul Province to Fight Opponents of Taliban, 31 August 2015.

2.4 South-East

2.4.1 Ghazni

General description of the Province



According to Pajhwok, Ghazni is one of the most important and central provinces of Afghanistan. The Central Statistics Office (CSO) considers the province of Ghazni to be the second largest with regards to the density of population. ⁽⁷⁸⁹⁾ UN OCHA estimates the population for 2015 to be 1,228,831 for the province of Ghazni. ⁽⁷⁹⁰⁾

Ghazni consists of the following districts: Jaghuri, Malistan, Nawur, Ajristan, Andar, Qarabagh, Giro, Muqur, Waghaz, Gelan, Ab Band, Nawa, Dih Yak, Rashidan, Zana Khan, Khwaja Omari, Jaghatu and Ghazni centre. ⁽⁷⁹¹⁾ The old city and the Bala-e Hesar (castle) in the provincial capital are symbols of history; trade has grown steadily in the city since it is

⁽⁷⁸⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Background Profile of Ghazni, n.d.

⁽⁷⁹⁰⁾ UN OCHA, Afghanistan: Population estimate for 2015, 26 August 2015.

⁽⁷⁹¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Uruzgan administrative units, n.d.

the centre of four routes to various destinations. ⁽⁷⁹²⁾ The provincial capital Ghazni city is located 145 kilometres south of Kabul city on the Kabul-Kandahar highway. The provinces of (Maidan) Wardak and Bamyan are to its north, while the provinces of Paktia, Paktyka and Logar are east. The province of Zabul is in the south and west, while Uruzgan is bordering the province in the west. Ghazni is 32,797 square kilometres in area. ⁽⁷⁹³⁾

Description of the violence

Ghazni is considered a volatile province, where insurgents are operating in various districts and frequently carry out activities, resulting in high numbers of security incidents. ⁽⁷⁹⁴⁾

From 1 January to 31 August 2015, Ghazni province counted 1,046 security incidents. Table 15 provides an overview of the nature of the security incidents: ⁽⁷⁹⁵⁾

Violence targeting individuals	72
Armed confrontations and airstrikes	747
Explosions	120
Security enforcement	106
Other incidents	1
Total security incidents	1,046

Table 15: Security incidents by type, Ghazni (Jan - Aug 2015)

The map in figure 17 presents the number of security incidents per district in Ghazni province. ⁽⁷⁹⁶⁾

Several security operations led by ANA, ANP and the NDS were conducted in the province to clear areas from insurgents. Additionally, weapons and explosive materials were seized during the operations. ⁽⁷⁹⁷⁾ Examples of security incidents include:

In November 2014, three policemen were killed in a Taliban attack. ⁽⁷⁹⁸⁾ In December 2014, a female member of the Provincial Council in Ghazni, Zakya Rahimi, was attacked by motorcyclists in front of her home in Qala Shada on the outskirts of the city. ⁽⁷⁹⁹⁾

In January 2015, eleven locals and seven Taliban insurgents were killed during clashes between counter-insurgents and Taliban. The incident took place in the district of Andar when the Taliban insurgents attacked a checkpoint. ⁽⁸⁰⁰⁾

At least 10 people who were Hazara were abducted in the province of Ghazni in March 2015. They were travelling from the district of Jaghori to Ghazni city. Search operations were conducted by security forces to rescue the passengers. No group has claimed responsibility. ⁽⁸⁰¹⁾ Also in March, at least six children were killed and another 10 injured while

⁽⁷⁹²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Gazni Local Authorities, n.d.

⁽⁷⁹³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Background Profile of Ghazni, n.d.

⁽⁷⁹⁴⁾ Khaama Press, Taliban release abducted passengers in Ghazni province, 19 August 2015; UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, report of the Secretary General, A/70/359 – S/2015/684, 1 September 2015; Tolonews, 88 percent increase in civilian casualties: TOLONews, 5 April 2015.

⁽⁷⁹⁵⁾ For more information on the source of the data and the methodology, see [introduction](#).

⁽⁷⁹⁶⁾ For more information on the source and the methodology of the maps, see [introduction](#).

⁽⁷⁹⁷⁾ Tolonews, 27 insurgents killed in ANSF military operations, 2 June 2015; Tolonews, 21 Taliban insurgents killed in Afghan raids, 12 November 2014; Tolonews, 15 Taliban killed in ANSF raids, 16 November 2014; Tolonews, 38 Taliban insurgents killed in ANSF operation, 29 November 2014; Tolonews, 32 insurgents killed in ANA operations, 6 December 2014; Tolonews, 19 Taliban insurgents killed in ANSF operations, 14 December 2014; Tolonews, Andar operations ended with 9 insurgents killed, 24 December 2014; Tolonews, 44 insurgents killed in nationwide ANSF operations, 27 December 2014; Tolonews, 14 insurgents killed in nationwide ANSF raids, 13 January 2015; Tolonews, 27 insurgents killed in nationwide ANSF raids, 17 January 2015; Tolonews, 19 insurgents killed in Afghan Forces operations, 3 February 2015; Tolonews, Four insurgents killed in ANSF operation, 17 February 2015; Tolonews, 13 Taliban insurgents killed in Afghan operations, 28 February 2015; Tolonews, 14 Taliban insurgents killed in ANSF raids, 2 March 2015; Ariana News, 9 terrorists killed in joint operations around Afghanistan: Mol, 3 March 2015; Tolonews, 74 Taliban insurgents killed in Afghan operations, 10 March 2015; Tolonews, ANSF operations kill 11 insurgents, 19 March 2015; Tolonews, 14 insurgents killed in ANSF operations, 18 April 2015; Tolonews, 104 Taliban insurgents killed in nationwide ANSF operations, 25 April 2015; Tolonews, 57 Taliban insurgents killed in nationwide ANSF operations, 2 May 2015; Tolonews, 96 insurgents killed in ANSF military operations, 6 June 2015; Tolonews, 13 Taliban insurgents killed in ANSF operations, 23 March 2015; Tolonews, 29 insurgents killed in military operations, 25 March 2015; Tolonews, ANSF operations kill 10 Taliban insurgents, 29 March 2015; Tolonews, 17 killed in anti-insurgent operations, 30 March 2015; Tolonews, 51 Taliban insurgents killed in ANSF operations, 10 May 2015; Tolonews, 138 insurgents killed in joint security force operations, 16 May 2015; Tolonews, 110 insurgents killed in Afghan military operations, 11 June 2015; Ariana News, 30 insurgents killed in ANSF military operations, 26 July 2015;

⁽⁷⁹⁸⁾ Tolonews, Three policemen killed in Taliban attack in Ghazni, 23 November 2014.

⁽⁷⁹⁹⁾ UNAMA, Ghazni PC female hurt in militants attack, 27 December 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, Female PC member shot injured in Ghazni, 29 December 2014.

⁽⁸⁰⁰⁾ UNAMA, 11 locals and seven Taliban killed as a result of clashes in Ghazni (Pashto), 29 January 2015.

⁽⁸⁰¹⁾ Tolonews, 10 more Hazara passengers abducted in Ghazni, 15 March 2015.

playing cricket when a bomb exploded in the capital of Ghazni. ⁽⁸⁰²⁾ In another incident, a vehicle struck a roadside mine in the district of Andar and seven people were killed. Among the dead were women and children. ⁽⁸⁰³⁾ Taliban insurgents attacked the Afghan local police in the district of Dehyak. At least four police officials were killed in the clashes. The number of Taliban killed remains unknown. ⁽⁸⁰⁴⁾ Also in March 2015, the former district chief for the district of Qarabagh was shot dead by Taliban insurgents. The two attackers escaped on a motorcycle. ⁽⁸⁰⁵⁾ Four passengers were shot by Taliban insurgents in the district of Aband. Among the dead was the son of a member of the High Peace Council. According to a source, a group of masked shooters stopped and gunned the passengers down. ⁽⁸⁰⁶⁾

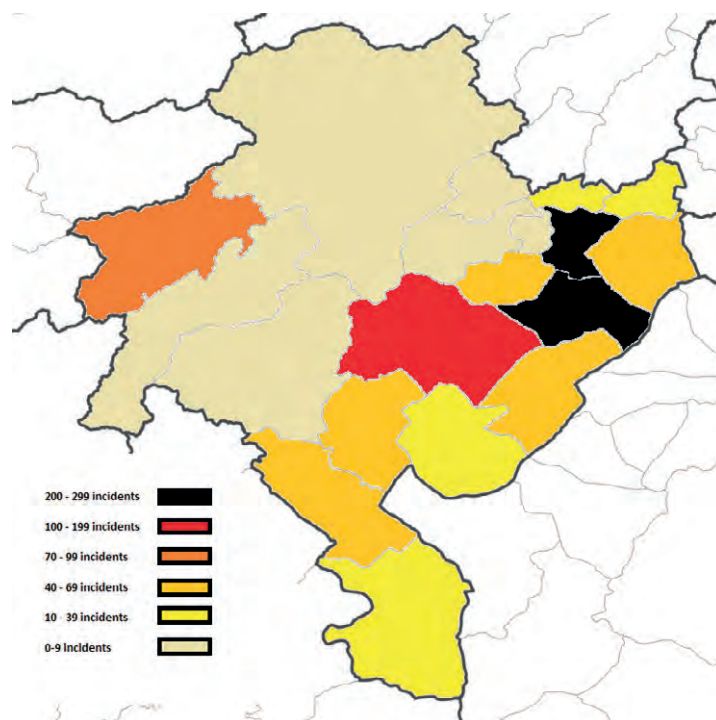


Figure 17: Ghazni, security incidents (Jan - Aug 2015)

In April 2015, militants attacked a former female provincial council member, Hamida Gulistani, in Ghazni city. The attackers shot the victim and escaped on a motorcycle. ⁽⁸⁰⁷⁾ At least 12 civilians were killed when a vehicle hit a roadside mine in the Khogyani area in the district of Qarabagh. ⁽⁸⁰⁸⁾ In April 2015, armed Taliban fighters attacked police forces of the first police district in the area of Nawabad in Ghazni city. The police forces escaped unhurt. ⁽⁸⁰⁹⁾ Two policemen were killed in an attack on a police post in the district of Andar when Taliban militants attacked two police posts and clashed with the security forces. The militants fled the scene and thus no information was given on the casualties on their side. A day later a policeman was injured in a mine blast in Ghazni city. The police were trying to defuse a mine that was placed near a bridge. ⁽⁸¹⁰⁾

In May 2015, two children were killed and four civilians were wounded when a vehicle hit a roadside mine in the district of Deh Yak. No group claimed responsibility for the incident. ⁽⁸¹¹⁾ Four civilians were killed during a separate roadside mine blast in the Abu Jan village in the district of Gelan. No group claimed responsibility for the incident. ⁽⁸¹²⁾

Seven civilians were killed in June 2015 when their vehicle hit a roadside bomb in the district of Andar. ⁽⁸¹³⁾

⁽⁸⁰²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, President condemns Wardak, Ghazni attacks, 25 March 2015.

⁽⁸⁰³⁾ Tolonews, 7 of a family killed in Ghazni IED blast, 31 March 2015.

⁽⁸⁰⁴⁾ Ariana News, Oppositions attack targets Afghan local police in Ghazni, 13 March 2015.

⁽⁸⁰⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Former Qarabagh district chief shot dead by militants, 14 March 2015.

⁽⁸⁰⁶⁾ UNAMA, Masked insurgents gun down four passengers in Ghazni, 24 March 2015.

⁽⁸⁰⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Former Ghazni PC member wounded in Taliban attack, 4 April 2015.

⁽⁸⁰⁸⁾ Tolonews, Roadside blast in Ghazni leaves 12 dead, 10 April 2015.

⁽⁸⁰⁹⁾ Ariana News, Taliban raided 1st PD in Ghazni province, 18 April 2015.

⁽⁸¹⁰⁾ Tolonews, Taliban insurgents attack police post kill two, 26 April 2015.

⁽⁸¹¹⁾ Tolonews, Blast in Ghazni kills two children, 7 May 2015.

⁽⁸¹²⁾ Tolonews, Four civilians killed in Ghazni roadside mine blast, 24 May 2015.

⁽⁸¹³⁾ RFE/RL, Taliban overruns Northeastern Afghan district, 6 June 2015.

In July 2015, a school in the area of Khashak was torched by an unidentified attacker. The Taliban denied involvement and stated that '[s]etting (...) fire or closing schools are against the group's policy'.⁽⁸¹⁴⁾ According to a high-ranking official, insurgents and Afghan security forces were engaged in heavy clashes in the district of Gelan in July 2015. Eighteen Taliban were killed and an additional 21 were injured in the clashes. One policeman was killed and three others were injured.⁽⁸¹⁵⁾

In August 2015, five vehicles were stopped in the districts of Qarabagh and Jaghuri and 17 passengers were abducted. According to a high-ranking official, tribal elders were negotiating with the insurgents to release the hostages.⁽⁸¹⁶⁾ Five days after the incident the Taliban released the passengers.⁽⁸¹⁷⁾

Displacement

According to UNHCR in December 2014, 502 families or 3,556 individuals were displaced from the districts of Nawur, Jaghatu, Qarabagh, Khwaja Omari, Dehyak and Giro to the provincial capital of Ghazni.⁽⁸¹⁸⁾

No IDPs were reported in Ghazni in the months of January and February 2015.⁽⁸¹⁹⁾ However, the monthly update from UNHCR in March 2015 stated that '*displacement occurred with repeated movements from December 2014 to March 2015*'. IDPs originated from the districts Surkh-e Parsa in the province of Parwan, Shahrstan in the province of Uruzgan, Chak in the province of Maidan Wardak and Andar in Ghazni. The number of IDPs in March was stated to be 321 families or 2,262 individuals.⁽⁸²⁰⁾

In April 2015, 412 families or 2,772 individuals were registered as IDPs in Ghazni province. The IDPs originated mainly from the districts Andar, Qarabagh, Deh Yak, Rashidan, Khugiani and Waghaz in Ghazni. Displaced people from other provinces were registered from the provinces of Maidan Wardak and its districts of Chak and Daimerdad, as well as the districts of Lal Sar Jangal in Ghor province and the district of Khas Uruzgan in the province of Uruzgan. The IDPs were mainly concentrated in the centre of the provincial capital Ghazni.⁽⁸²¹⁾

In May 2015, 560 families or 4,001 individuals were regarded in the Centre of Ghazni as conflict-induced IDPs. 63% of the IDPs originated from the province of Ghazni and its districts – Andar, Qarabagh, Dehyak, Rashidan, Abband, Gelan, Giro, Jaghatu, Nawa, Khwaja Omari and Zanakhan – while 21% percent of the IDPs stemmed from the province of Maidan Wardak. The remaining IDPs originated from the provinces of Logar, Paktia, Parwan and Khost.⁽⁸²²⁾

In June 2015, 210 families or 1,407 individuals were displaced to the Centre of Ghazni province. The majority originated from the districts of Andar, Waghaz, Abband, Gelan and Qarabagh. However, some IDPs came from the provinces of Maidan Wardak, Paktika and Logar.⁽⁸²³⁾

In July 2015, with the security situation slightly more stable, the IDP count was stated as 135 families or 882 individuals. The IDPs were mainly displaced from the districts of Abband, Qarabagh, Andar and Muqur, as well as other provinces such as Maidan Wardak.⁽⁸²⁴⁾

In August 2015, UNHCR reported for Ghazni small-scale displacement. However, no specific numbers were stated.⁽⁸²⁵⁾

⁽⁸¹⁴⁾ UNAMA, Unidentified gunmen torch school in Ghazni, 29 July 2015.

⁽⁸¹⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 23 insurgents dead in Takhar, Ghazni clashes, 11 July 2015.

⁽⁸¹⁶⁾ Tolonews, Insurgents Abduct 17 Passengers in Ghazni, 12 August 2015.

⁽⁸¹⁷⁾ Khaama Press, Taliban release abducted passengers in Ghazni province, 19 August 2015; IHS Jane's, Unidentified gunmen release 10 hostages in Afghanistan's Ghazni, 19 August 2015.

⁽⁸¹⁸⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, December 2014.

⁽⁸¹⁹⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, January 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, February 2015.

⁽⁸²⁰⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, March 2015.

⁽⁸²¹⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, April 2015.

⁽⁸²²⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan: Conflict-Induced IDPs by Province of Displacement Profiled from January to May 2015 [map], 31 May 2015.

⁽⁸²³⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, June 2015.

⁽⁸²⁴⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, July 2015.

⁽⁸²⁵⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, August 2015.

Displacement took place in separate groups and at different times. According to the reports covering the period from December 2014 to May 2015, ⁽⁸²⁶⁾ and the reports covering the period of June to July 2015, ⁽⁸²⁷⁾ the most cited reasons for displacement were security issues and the clashes between AGEs and ANSF. ⁽⁸²⁸⁾

Actors in the conflict

The major insurgent group active in Ghazni is the Taliban, with local elements of the Haqqani network operating under the Taliban umbrella. ⁽⁸²⁹⁾ Ghazni is an important gateway from the south-east to the capital Kabul. ⁽⁸³⁰⁾ Small elements of the Hezb-e Islami were reported, but not as active as they were in the past. ⁽⁸³¹⁾

The presence of foreign insurgent fighters in Ghazni province has been reported. They include Arabs, Pakistanis and Turks. ⁽⁸³²⁾ According to the Afghanistan Analysts Network, Taliban networks in Ghazni enjoy direct support from the Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan. ⁽⁸³³⁾

By early 2012, the district of Andar had been a Taliban stronghold for nearly a decade. It faced several IMF and ANA offensives in those years, but resisted them. By the time the withdrawal of international troops from the area had started, local protests and open resistance against the Taliban in Andar began. Local armed groups and militias fought the Taliban and were supported (money and arms) by the government and the US Special Operations. The fighting has been ongoing since then until 2015. Some militias engaged in this anti-Taliban uprising were in 2014 formalised into ALP units. ⁽⁸³⁴⁾

⁽⁸²⁶⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, December 2014; UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, March 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, April 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan: Conflict-Induced IDPs by Province of Displacement Profiled from January to May 2015 [map], 31 May 2015.

⁽⁸²⁷⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, June 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, July 2015.

⁽⁸²⁸⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, December 2014; UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, March 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, April 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan: Conflict-Induced IDPs by Province of Displacement Profiled from January to May 2015 [map], 31 May 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, June 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, July 2015.

⁽⁸²⁹⁾ Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - October 2015.

⁽⁸³⁰⁾ BBC, Taliban seize strategic Afghan district in Ghazni province, 26 September 2015.

⁽⁸³¹⁾ Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - October 2015.

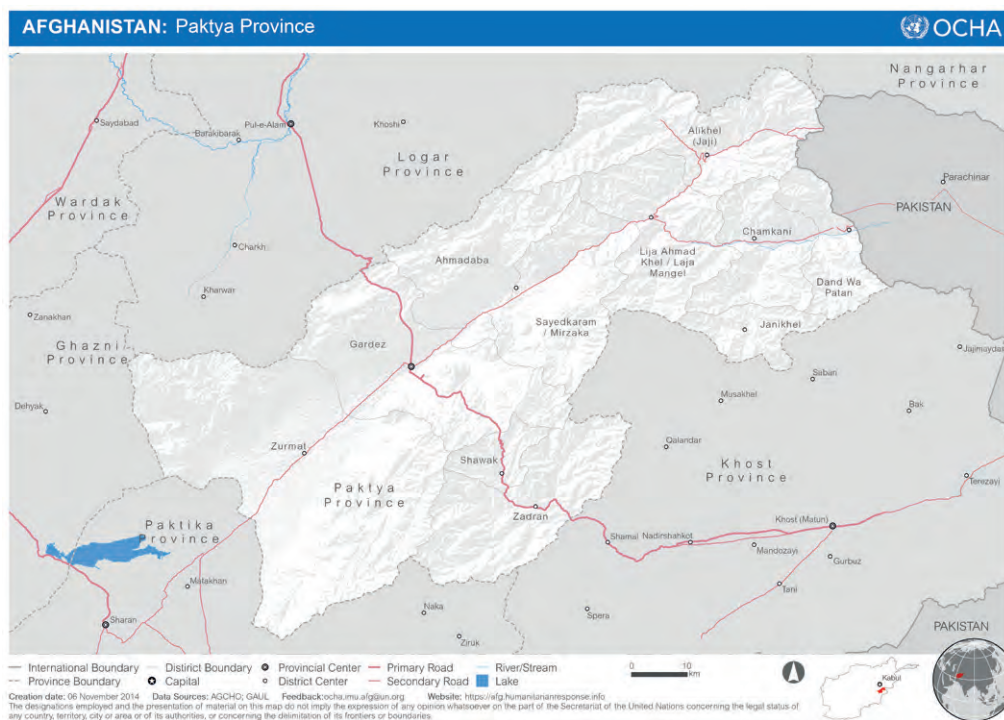
⁽⁸³²⁾ Tolonews, Signs of ISIS in Andar District of Ghazni, 26 September 2014; Osman, B., The Shadows of 'Islamic State' in Afghanistan: What threat does it hold?, 12 February 2015.

⁽⁸³³⁾ Obaid Ali, The Empty Streets of Mohammad Agha: Logar's struggle against the Taleban, 15 December 2015.

⁽⁸³⁴⁾ NY Times, Afghan Militia Leaders, Empowered by U.S. to Fight Taliban, Inspire Fear in Villages, 17 March 2015; Foschini, F., Classics of Conflict (2): Reviewing some of Afghanistan's most notorious hotspots, 9 July 2015; Habib, E., Killing Mullahs and Wedding Guests, Banning Last Rites: the worsening Andar conflict, 6 November 2015.

2.4.2 Paktya Province

General description of the Province



The province of Paktya is one of the mountainous provinces. ⁽⁸³⁵⁾ According to UNOCHA 551,987 people live there. ⁽⁸³⁶⁾ The province is 115 kilometres from the capital Kabul and consists of 11 districts, including the capital Gardez: ⁽⁸³⁷⁾ Ahmadabad, Ahmadkhel/Laja Mangel, Chamkani, Dand Wa Patan, Janikhel, Lija Alikhel/Jaji, Sayed Karam/Merzakh, Shawak, Zadran and Zurmat. ⁽⁸³⁸⁾

Description of the violence

From 1 January to 31 August 2015, Paktya province counted 405 security incidents. Table 16 provides an overview of the nature of the security incidents: ⁽⁸³⁹⁾

Violence targeting individuals	28
Armed confrontations and airstrikes	169
Explosions	102
Security enforcement	103
Non-conflict related incidents	3
Total security incidents	405

Table 16: Security incidents by type, Paktya (Jan - Aug 2015)

The map in figure 18 presents the number of security incidents per district in Paktya province. ⁽⁸⁴⁰⁾

⁽⁸³⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Background Profile of Paktia, n.d.

⁽⁸³⁶⁾ UNOCHA, Afghanistan population estimate for 2015, 26 August 2015.

⁽⁸³⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Paktia administrative units, n.d.

⁽⁸³⁸⁾ MRRD, Paktya Provincial Profile, n.d.; UNOCHA, Paktya Province - Reference Map [map], 9 February 2014.

⁽⁸³⁹⁾ For more information on the source of the data and the methodology, see [introduction](#).

⁽⁸⁴⁰⁾ For more information on the source and the methodology of the maps, see [introduction](#).

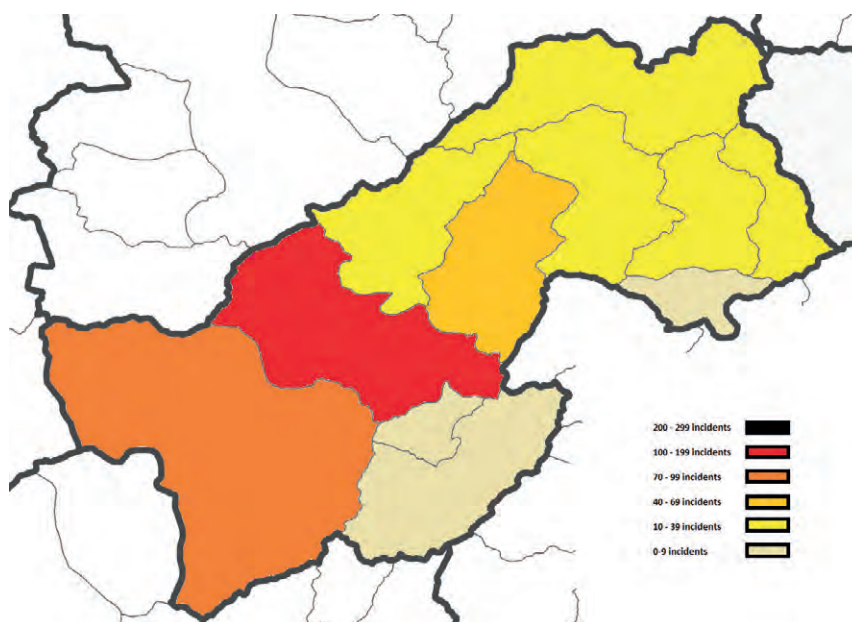


Figure 18: Paktya, security incidents (Jan - Aug 2015)

In May 2015, provincial council members and civil society activists declared in a joint statement that security problems were increasing in some southeastern districts because of ‘lack of coordination among security departments’ and because of the fact that ‘ANA troops were reluctant to take action against insurgents in remote parts of Paktya and only protected their bases and posts’.⁽⁸⁴¹⁾ Police posts are targeted by car suicide bombings (Zurmat district)⁽⁸⁴²⁾ and police patrols hit by roadside mines (Ahmadkhel district)⁽⁸⁴³⁾ or bomb attacks (city of Gardez).⁽⁸⁴⁴⁾

On the one hand, civilians can be indirect victims of clashes between Afghan security forces and insurgents when missiles and rockets are used (Zurmat⁽⁸⁴⁵⁾ and Ahmad Khel⁽⁸⁴⁶⁾ districts). On the other hand, they are directly targeted by mass kidnappings especially on main roads (27 people abducted in Sayed Karam district in May 2015⁽⁸⁴⁷⁾, 19 deminers kidnapped in Gardez district in April 2015⁽⁸⁴⁸⁾); elders are also abduction targets (Zurmat district).⁽⁸⁴⁹⁾ According to Khaama press ‘Kidnappings which take place mainly on highways have become more common in Afghanistan besides growing insurgency by the Taliban militants and insurgents belonging to the other militant groups. The kidnappings have sparked fears among the people who are travelling on highways.’⁽⁸⁵⁰⁾

In April 2015, IDPs from Sayed Karam district reported to UNHCR that acts of intimidations were carried out by AGEs in their district such as attempts to force local residents to join the insurgency, obligation for local resident to pay a tax and to provide food.⁽⁸⁵¹⁾

Displacement

In January 2015, the UNHCR recorded 159 families (152 displaced from March to December 2014 and 7 displaced in January) displaced to Gardez city, Sayed Karam and Ahmabad districts of Paktya because of harassment and intimidation by AGEs against the civilians.⁽⁸⁵²⁾ The same reasons were alleged by the 201 IDPs from Sayed Karam,

⁽⁸⁴¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Insecurity grips some remote Paktia towns, 7 May 2015.

⁽⁸⁴²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 3 civilians killed in Zurmat attack, 8 July 2015.

⁽⁸⁴³⁾ Tolonews, Three ALP killed in Paktia roadside mine blast, 6 April 2015.

⁽⁸⁴⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 3 police among 9 dead in security incidents, 28 December 2014.

⁽⁸⁴⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 3 civilians killed in Zurmat attack, 8 July 2015.

⁽⁸⁴⁶⁾ Tolonews, Two civilians killed in Paktia missile attack, 13 April 2015.

⁽⁸⁴⁷⁾ Tolonews, Taliban abduct 27 people in Paktia, 16 May 2015.

⁽⁸⁴⁸⁾ Tolonews, Unknown gunmen abduct 19 deminers in Paktia, 20 April 2015.

⁽⁸⁴⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban kill two tribal elders, 15 November 2014.

⁽⁸⁵⁰⁾ Khaama Press, Afghan intelligence rescues 19 de-miners abducted by Haqqani network, 21 April 2015.

⁽⁸⁵¹⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, April 2015, p. 4.

⁽⁸⁵²⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, February 2015, p. 4.

Jaji and Ahmadabad assessed in Gardez city in April 2015. ⁽⁸⁵³⁾ In July 2015, 750 families were displaced to Chamkani district because of confrontations between AGEs and ANSF which caused looting of properties. ⁽⁸⁵⁴⁾

Actors in the conflict

According to the Institute for the Study of War, the Haqqanis maintain considerable support inside Pakistan's tribal areas. The Haqqanis provide men and material to bolster their terrorist campaign from there into the provinces of Khost, Paktika and Paktya onwards into the provinces adjacent to Kabul. ⁽⁸⁵⁵⁾

Several clearing operations led by the ANSF were conducted in the province between November 2014 and July 2015 against insurgents. During these security operations many insurgents were killed and wounded; arms and ammunitions were often seized. ⁽⁸⁵⁶⁾ In July 2015, it took the ANA 2 weeks to clear the district of Chamkani of insurgents but the Taliban was still strongly present in a neighbouring district, Janikhel. ⁽⁸⁵⁷⁾ In May 2015, 37 insurgents were killed in ANSF operations in three districts: Sayed Karam, Zurmat and Janikhel. ⁽⁸⁵⁸⁾

According to Afghan officials, Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence are involved in ground battles in Chamkani district ⁽⁸⁵⁹⁾ and Pakistani Taliban are present in this province. ⁽⁸⁶⁰⁾ Notorious commanders of other insurgent movements were identified in Paktya: Abu Khalil Al-Sudani, an al Qaeda commander ⁽⁸⁶¹⁾ was killed and Qari Amanullah, second in command for IS for Paktya, Ghazni and other provinces, was arrested. ⁽⁸⁶²⁾

⁽⁸⁵³⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, April 2015, p. 4.

⁽⁸⁵⁴⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, June 2015, p. 5-6.

⁽⁸⁵⁵⁾ Dressler, J., The Haqqani Network: A Strategic Threat, March 2012.

⁽⁸⁵⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Scores of rebels perish in clearing operations: MoD, 28 July 2015; Ariana News, 89 insurgents killed in Afghan military operations – Mol, 30 June 2015; Tolonews, 62 insurgents killed in Afghan operations, 17 June 2015; Tolonews, 110 insurgents killed in Afghan military operations, 11 June 2015; Tolonews, 13 insurgents killed in ANSF military operations, 7 June 2015; Tolonews, 32 insurgents killed in ANSF operations, 30 May 2015; Tolonews, 57 Taliban insurgents killed in nationwide ANSF operations, 2 May 2015; Tolonews, 13 Taliban insurgents killed in ANSF operations, 23 March 2015; Tolonews, 17 killed in anti-insurgent operations, 30 March 2015; Tolonews, 29 insurgents killed in Afghan military operations, 5 March 2015; Tolonews, 19 insurgents killed in Afghan Forces operations, 3 February 2015; Tolonews, 21 Taliban insurgents killed in Afghan raids, 12 November 2014.

⁽⁸⁵⁷⁾ Tolonews, Pakistan's ISI and military supporting insurgents in Paktia: Officials, 15 July 2015.

⁽⁸⁵⁸⁾ Tolonews, 37 insurgents killed in ANSF operations, 28 May 2015.

⁽⁸⁵⁹⁾ Tolonews, Pakistan's ISI and military supporting insurgents in Paktia: Officials, 15 July 2015.

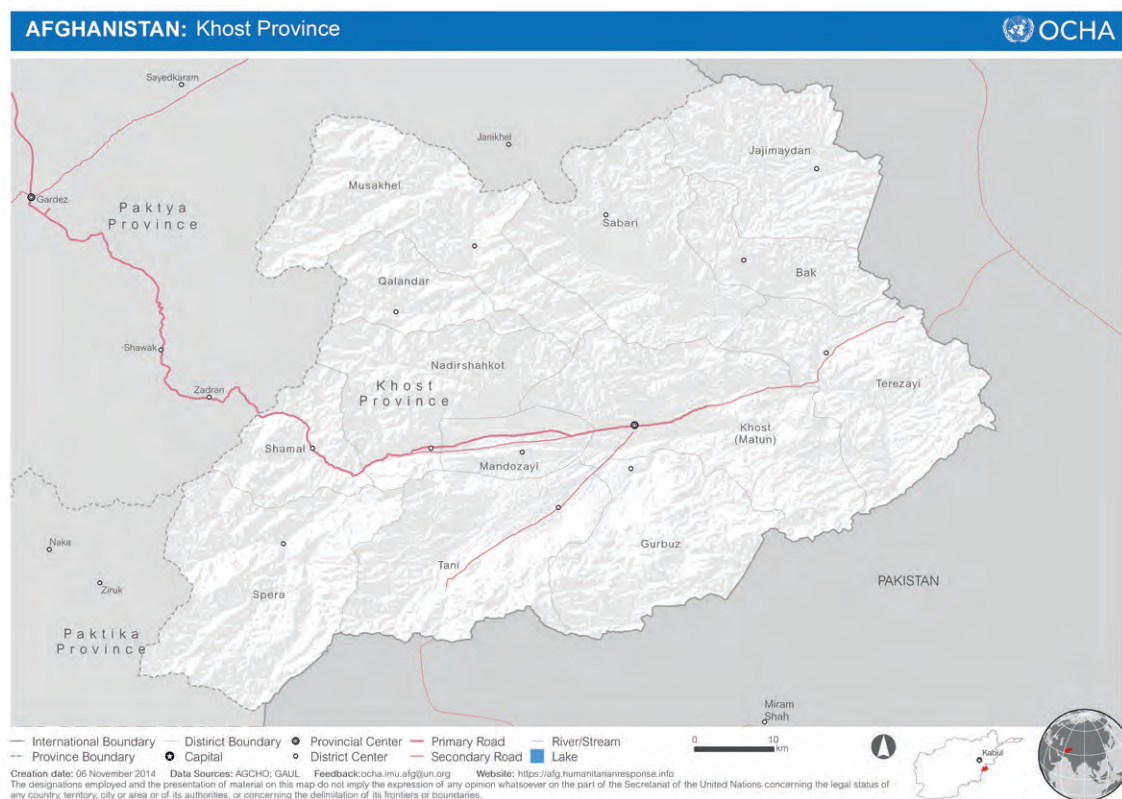
⁽⁸⁶⁰⁾ Tolonews, 37 insurgents killed in ANSF operations, 28 May 2015.

⁽⁸⁶¹⁾ Ariana News, Al-Qaeda commander killed in US airstrike in Paktia, 24 July 2015.

⁽⁸⁶²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Ruthless ISIS commander held in Paktia, 15 December 2014.

2.4.3 Khost Province

General description of the Province



The province of Khost is located in the southeast of Afghanistan and was formerly one of the biggest districts of Paktya province, and its current districts were subdistricts. ⁽⁸⁶³⁾ The province is made up of the following districts: Bak, Gurbuz, Jajimaydan, Khost (Matun), Mandozayi, Musakhel, Nadirshahkot, Qalandar, Sabari, Shamal, Spera, Tani, Terezayi. ⁽⁸⁶⁴⁾ Khost city, locally also known as Matun, is the capital of the province. The province has an estimated 574,582 inhabitants ⁽⁸⁶⁵⁾ and is entirely Pashtun. There are 15 tribes, of which Mangal and Zadran are the biggest. ⁽⁸⁶⁶⁾ The province has a 185-kilometre border with the tribal areas of North Waziristan and Kurram Agency in Pakistan. This long and porous border makes the province of great strategic importance as many insurgents have found a safe haven across the border in Pakistan. ⁽⁸⁶⁷⁾

In January 2014, a private domestic airline formally started flights between Kabul and Khost city, anticipating that the service would help resolve travellers' problems. ⁽⁸⁶⁸⁾

Description of the Violence

The weak government presence in many districts, active presence of Afghan and foreign insurgents, its strategic position and cross-border shelling have all made the province very volatile. Some of the worst incidents in terms of civilian casualties, perpetrated by both insurgents, ANSF and IMF, have taken place in Khost. ⁽⁸⁶⁹⁾

From 1 January to 31 August 2015, Khost province counted 610 security incidents. Table 17 provides an overview of the nature of the security incidents: ⁽⁸⁷⁰⁾

⁽⁸⁶³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Background Profile of Khost, n.d.

⁽⁸⁶⁴⁾ UNOCHA, AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries, 25 September 2012.

⁽⁸⁶⁵⁾ UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Population estimate for 2015, 26 August 2015.

⁽⁸⁶⁶⁾ Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - October 2015.

⁽⁸⁶⁷⁾ Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - October 2015.

⁽⁸⁶⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Kabul-Khost flights formally begin, 11 January 2014.

⁽⁸⁶⁹⁾ Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - October 2015.

⁽⁸⁷⁰⁾ For more information on the source of the data and the methodology, see [introduction](#).

Violence targeting individuals	15
Armed confrontations and airstrikes	189
Explosions	139
Security enforcement	266
Non-conflict related incidents	1
Total security incidents	610

Table 17: Security incidents by type, Khost (Jan - Aug 2015)

The map in figure 19 presents the number of security incidents per district in Khost province. ⁽⁸⁷¹⁾

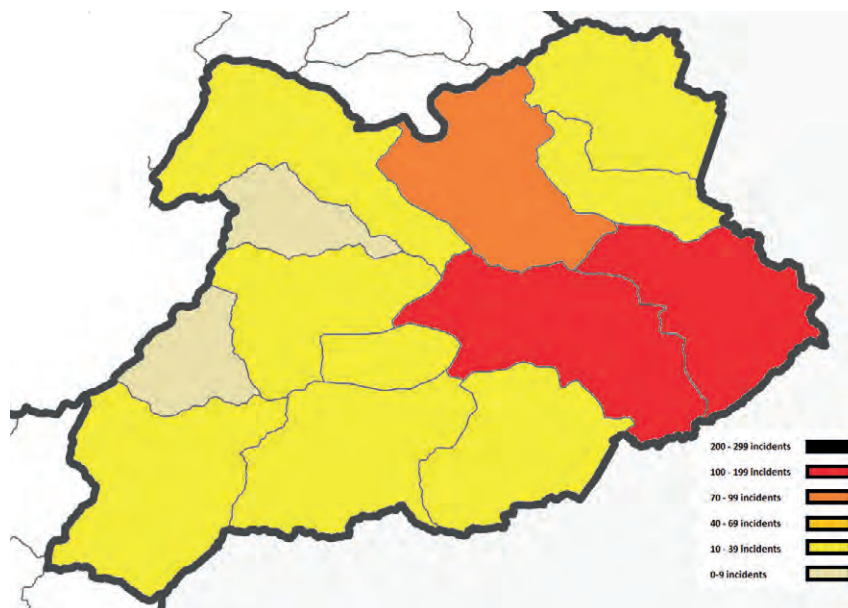


Figure 19: Khost, security incidents (Jan - Aug 2015)

According to Thomas Ruttig, remoter areas of Khost are underreported. ⁽⁸⁷²⁾ Most incidents reported in the press in this period happened in Khost city. According to a source in Kabul, Haqqani targets the city in order to send a message to the inhabitants of who is ruling the area. ⁽⁸⁷³⁾ Because of the high number of incidents, only those with the biggest impact on civilians are mentioned here.

A woman was killed in a civilian vehicle struck by a roadside bomb in Bak district in November 2014; 13 others were injured. ⁽⁸⁷⁴⁾ A blast on the market in Khost city in November 2014 wounded six civilians before the ANSF was able to defuse the explosives. ⁽⁸⁷⁵⁾ A complex attack on the police academy injured two civilians and three policemen in January 2015. ⁽⁸⁷⁶⁾ A few days later, a bomb targeted and killed an education officer of the police headquarters in Khost city. ⁽⁸⁷⁷⁾ An IED in the city of Khost killed a watchman and, according to eye-witnesses, also a child, while seriously injuring another child. ⁽⁸⁷⁸⁾ In a particularly deadly attack, early in April 2015, a suicide bomber detonated his explosives amid a protest rally in Khost city. At least 19 people died and 61 people were injured. ⁽⁸⁷⁹⁾ One week later, an IED on a bicycle exploded in front of a hospital and injured 16 people. ⁽⁸⁸⁰⁾ At the end of April 2015, a bomb exploded in front of the provincial council building in Khost city, injuring several policemen. A bomb targeting a police patrol killed two policemen and a child, while wounding five others, included three children, in Musakhel

⁽⁸⁷¹⁾ For more information on the source and the methodology of the maps, see [introduction](#).

⁽⁸⁷²⁾ Ruttig, T., *The Second Fall of Musa Qala: How the Taliban are expanding territorial control*, 3 September 2015.

⁽⁸⁷³⁾ Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - October 2015.

⁽⁸⁷⁴⁾ Tolonews, *Woman killed, 13 injured in Khost IED blast*, 18 November 2014.

⁽⁸⁷⁵⁾ Khaama Press, *Explosion reported in Khost city, casualties feared*, 23 November 2014.

⁽⁸⁷⁶⁾ Tolonews, *Attack on Khost police academy leaves 5 injured*, 7 January 2015.

⁽⁸⁷⁷⁾ Khaama Press, *Khost police HQs education officer killed*, 12 January 2015.

⁽⁸⁷⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *2 killed, 7 injured in Herat, Khost blast*, 22 March 2015; Khaama Press, *2 civilians killed in Khost explosion*, 22 March 2015.

⁽⁸⁷⁹⁾ UNAMA, *Afghanistan. Midyear Report 2015. Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*, August 2015, p. 40.

⁽⁸⁸⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Khost blast leaves 16 civilians wounded*, 9 April 2015.

district. ⁽⁸⁸¹⁾ On 1 May, another explosion targeted traffic police in Khost city, while a second bomb exploded when security services rushed to the scene. Two policemen and a civilian were wounded in the incident. ⁽⁸⁸²⁾ One week later, another bomb exploded during an annual poetry gathering in Khost city, injuring six policemen and three civilians. ⁽⁸⁸³⁾ Later in May, a bomb exploded in front of the grand mosque, wounding between four and five people, including two or three children. ⁽⁸⁸⁴⁾ Another bomb explosion near a mosque in Khost city in June 2015 killed one civilian and injured three others. ⁽⁸⁸⁵⁾ In July 2015, a VBIED exploded at a checkpoint near FOB Chapman, killing 27 civilians and six security personnel, wounding another 11 civilians and 12 security personnel. ⁽⁸⁸⁶⁾ In July 2015, a suicide bomber who tried to enter a mosque killed a policeman in Jajimaidan and a civilian and a bomb targeting the funeral of policeman killed another civilian and injured four more, including a child, in Alisher. ⁽⁸⁸⁷⁾ Later that month, a magnetic IED attached to the taxi of a former government official killed the target and wounded another civilian in Khost city. ⁽⁸⁸⁸⁾ In August 2015, five persons, including two shopkeepers and a woman and a child, were injured when a bomb went off in front of a shop in Khost. ⁽⁸⁸⁹⁾

In 2014, Khost saw 317 civilian casualties - 93 killed and 224 injured. Of these casualties, 82 were children and 19 were killed with 63 injured. ⁽⁸⁹⁰⁾

Instances of civilian victims of ground confrontations include an insurgent attack on a village whose residents helped ANSF in a clearing operation in December 2014. This led to three civilian deaths. Additionally, two people were killed and four others detained in a night raid. ⁽⁸⁹¹⁾

Victims of targeted killings in this reporting period include a cleric who spoke out against suicide bombings and in support of ANSF, targeted by explosives inside his loudspeaker in a mosque in January 2015; ⁽⁸⁹²⁾ a border police official abducted from his home and later murdered in May 2015; ⁽⁸⁹³⁾ a former jihadi commander shot in his car, together with his son and nephew in July 2015. ⁽⁸⁹⁴⁾

In a case of cross-border shelling in March 2015, 15 artillery shells landed on a village, destroying houses and killing five civilians and injuring several more. ⁽⁸⁹⁵⁾

Displacement

Despite its volatile character, UNHCR rarely reports about IDPs in or from Khost province. UNHCR profiled between 501 and 1,500 IDPs in the province between January and July 2015. ⁽⁸⁹⁶⁾ In May 2015, it profiled 154 families or 859 individuals: ⁽⁸⁹⁷⁾

Some of the families had been displaced since 2014 and had not yet been assessed. The main reasons reported for their displacement were armed conflict between AGEs and ANSF, inter-tribal disputes over ownership of land, general insecurity as well as intimidation and harassment by AGEs. Almost all the profiled families were living in rented houses and had largely access to potable clean water for drinking and washing purposes. No

⁽⁸⁸¹⁾ Khaama Press, Three policemen wounded in Khost terrorist action, 27 April 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, 7 injured in twin blasts near Khost PC office, 27 April 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, 3 killed, 5 wounded in Khost explosion, 28 April 2015.

⁽⁸⁸²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 3 wounded in twin blasts rock Khost city, 1 May 2015.

⁽⁸⁸³⁾ Khaama Press, Explosion heard in Khost city, 7 May 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Policemen among 9 injured in Khost blast, 7 May 2015.

⁽⁸⁸⁴⁾ Khaama Press, Two soldiers martyred, three suicide bombers killed in Maidan Wardak attack, 26 May 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Scores of rebels dead, wounded in Helmand fighting, 26 May 2015.

⁽⁸⁸⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 1 dead, 9 injured in Khost, Paktia blasts, 15 June 2015.

⁽⁸⁸⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Condemnations rise as 33 killed in Khost bombing, 13 July 2015.

⁽⁸⁸⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 killed in Khost suicide attack bomb blast, 17 July 2015.

⁽⁸⁸⁸⁾ Khaama Press, Explosion kills former government official in Khost, 27 July 2015.

⁽⁸⁸⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 6 civilians wounded in Khost explosion, 9 August 2015.

⁽⁸⁹⁰⁾ Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - October 2015.

⁽⁸⁹¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 3 civilians killed in new violence, 17 December 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, 4 civilians dead, 5 abducted in latest bout of violence, 16 April 2015.

⁽⁸⁹²⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan. Midyear Report 2015. Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, July 2015, p. 57.

⁽⁸⁹³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, ANA airstrikes leave several Taliban fighters dead, 30 May 2015.

⁽⁸⁹⁴⁾ Khaama Press, Former jihadi commander among three gunned down in Khost, 23 June 2015.

⁽⁸⁹⁵⁾ Tolonews, 5 killed as rockets hit civilians homes in Khost, 26 March 2015; Khaama Press, Rockets hit civilian homes in Khost leaving 5 killed, 2 injured, 26 March 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, 5 killed, 10 wounded in cross border shelling, 26 March 2015.

⁽⁸⁹⁶⁾ UNOCHA, Afghanistan : Conflict-Induced Displacement (January to July 2015), 16 September 2015.

⁽⁸⁹⁷⁾ UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, May 2015.

specific barriers were highlighted on access to education and health services or to local markets. Nonetheless, scarce resources and the eroding support of the hosting families remained a concern for the IDPs.

In June 2015, UNHCR profiled another 128 families or 860 individuals displaced in Khost. ⁽⁸⁹⁸⁾ Access to certain districts is very limited, which may also explain the low number of profiled IDPs in this province. ⁽⁸⁹⁹⁾

Apart from internal displacement, Khost is a destination province for displaced groups originating from Pakistan. Following military operations in mid-June 2014 in Pakistan's North Waziristan, families of Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Pakistani nationals alike began crossing into southeastern Afghanistan. Within the first 10 days, an estimated 10,000 families arrived in Khost and Paktika provinces. Families had left suddenly, with few belongings and settled spontaneously in Gulan Camp in Gurboz district of Khost province, or in host communities. As of December 2014, the number of displaced families crossing into Afghanistan in search of protection had almost increased fourfold, from approximately 10,000 families to more than 38,900 (291,800 individuals).

By 30 May 2015 there were 32,576 families with more than 205,000 individuals, with 23,006 families in Khost including 10,000 families in Gulan camp. ⁽⁹⁰⁰⁾ The border and population remains fluid with refugees crossing in and out of Afghanistan on a regular basis. As of 7 September 2015, UNHCR verified 36,206 families (224,087 individuals) with 24,670 families (164,796 individuals) in Khost. Approximately 10,500 families, or 29% of the total, are accommodated in Gulan camp, while 31% are living with host families straining the already limited resources of under-served communities. ⁽⁹⁰¹⁾ Khost district hosts 3,136 families; Spera: 3,055; Gurbuz, outside Gulan camp, 3,081 families; Tani 1,868; Terezayi: 1,500; Mandozayi: 944; Shamul: 321; Nadirshahkot: 223. ⁽⁹⁰²⁾

Actors in the conflict

According to UNAMA, there was no ALP program active in Khost in 2014. ⁽⁹⁰³⁾

The US Special Forces still run a Forward Operating Base (FOB) 'Chapman' just outside Khost city, from which they train and support the Khost Protection Force, a local force of between 4,500 and 5,500 people. ⁽⁹⁰⁴⁾ According to the New York Times, the Khost Protection Force is set up and trained by the CIA, but was recently handed over to the responsibility of the National Directorate for Security, NDS. ⁽⁹⁰⁵⁾

IMF regularly targets insurgents with UAV. ⁽⁹⁰⁶⁾ In one drone strike in June 2015, the burial of an insurgent commander was targeted and more than 30 people were killed. ⁽⁹⁰⁷⁾ Local officials claimed 15 civilians were also victim of this airstrike. ⁽⁹⁰⁸⁾

For more than a generation, the secluded highlands of Khost and Paktia have been Haqqani territory. ⁽⁹⁰⁹⁾ Hezb-e Islami also enjoys some influence in some parts of the province. ⁽⁹¹⁰⁾ The provincial shadow governor of Khost is Mawlawi Ahmad Jan, affiliated to the Haqqani network. ⁽⁹¹¹⁾ In a statement in August 2015, the Taliban said Mawlawi Ahmad Ali was in charge of the province. ⁽⁹¹²⁾ In January 2015, ANSF claimed to have killed a senior member of the Haqqani Network, Syed Amin, responsible for training suicide bombers. ⁽⁹¹³⁾

⁽⁸⁹⁸⁾ UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, June 2015.

⁽⁸⁹⁹⁾ Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - October 2015.

⁽⁹⁰⁰⁾ UNHCR, Khost & Paktika: 1 Year On Achievements & Gaps, August 2015.

⁽⁹⁰¹⁾ UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Cross-border Movement from Pakistan (as of 7 September 2015), 15 September 2015.

⁽⁹⁰²⁾ UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Cross-border Movement from Pakistan (as of 7 September 2015), 15 September 2015.

⁽⁹⁰³⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan. Annual Report 2014. Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, February 2015, p. 79.

⁽⁹⁰⁴⁾ Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - October 2015.

⁽⁹⁰⁵⁾ NY Times, 25 Killed in Suicide Bombing Outside U.S. Base in Afghanistan, 12 July 2015.

⁽⁹⁰⁶⁾ Khaama Press, Drome strike kills 7 Haqqani fighters, 4 January 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, TTP commander among 17 dead in drone strikes, 4 January 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, ANA airstrikes leave several Taliban fighters dead, 30 May 2015.

⁽⁹⁰⁷⁾ Khaama Press, Over 30 Taliban militants killed in US drone strike in Khost, 5 June 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Drone hits Taliban leaders burial ceremony, 34 killed, 5 June 2015; Tolonews, 34 Taliban insurgents killed in US drone strike in Khost, 6 June 2015.

⁽⁹⁰⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 15 civilians killed in yesterday drone strike in Khost, 6 June 2015.

⁽⁹⁰⁹⁾ NY Times, Afghan Militant Group Faces Unusual Discontent, 5 November 2013.

⁽⁹¹⁰⁾ Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - October 2015.

⁽⁹¹¹⁾ UN Security Council, Letter dated 18 August 2015 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council, 26 August 2015, p. 20.

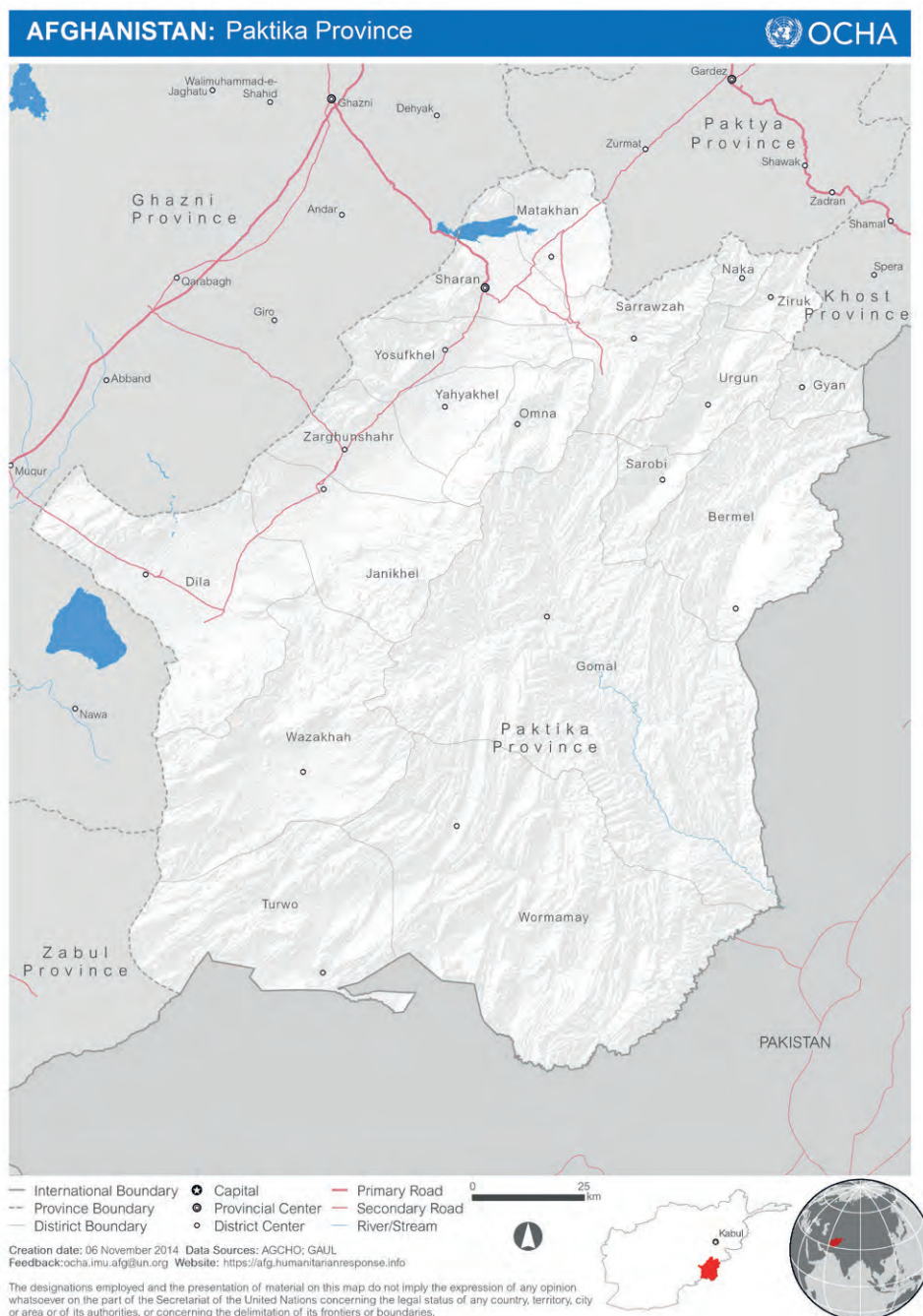
⁽⁹¹²⁾ Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Pledges of allegiance to the new Amir take place throughout Afghanistan, 9 August 2015.

⁽⁹¹³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Key Haqqani network member killed in Khost, 5 January 2015.

Another actor in Khost is the Pakistani military, which regularly fires artillery shells over the border. In one case, in December 2014, three helicopters from the Pakistani army conducted an aerial operation in Afghan territory, and dropped ordnance on three civilian homes in Gurbuz district. Although the operation did not kill or injure civilians, the bombing damaged three homes, three vehicles and killed two cows. Local sources reported to UNAMA that the homes targeted belonged to Pakistani refugees who had recently left the North Waziristan area of Pakistan due to Pakistan's military offensive in those areas. ⁽⁹¹⁴⁾

2.4.4 Paktika Province

General description of the Province



⁽⁹¹⁴⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan. Annual Report 2014. Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, February 2015, p. 25.

The province of Paktika shares borders in the north and north-west with the province of Ghazni. In the south and south-east it shares a 360-kilometre border with Pakistan. ⁽⁹¹⁵⁾ The province of Paktika shares a border with Pakistan's restive and volatile tribal areas and is 210 kilometres from the capital Kabul. ⁽⁹¹⁶⁾ The province consists of 19 districts: Bermel, Dila, Gomal, Gyan, Janikhel, Matakhan, Naka, Omna, Sarobi, Sarrawzah, Sharan, Turwo, Urgan, Wazakhah, Wormamay, Yahyakhel, Yosufkhel, Zarghunshahr and Ziruk. Sharana city is the provincial capital of the province. ⁽⁹¹⁷⁾ According to UNOCHA, 434,742 people live in the province ⁽⁹¹⁸⁾, 96% of them are Pashto speakers and Paktika has a Kuchi population. ⁽⁹¹⁹⁾

Description of the violence

From 1 January to 31 August 2015, Paktika province counted 515 security incidents. Table 18 provides an overview of the nature of the security incidents: ⁽⁹²⁰⁾

Violence targeting individuals	8
Armed confrontations and airstrikes	293
Explosions	94
Security enforcement	115
Non-conflict related incidents	2
Other incidents	3
Total security incidents	515

Table 18: Security incidents by type, Paktika (Jan - Aug 2015)

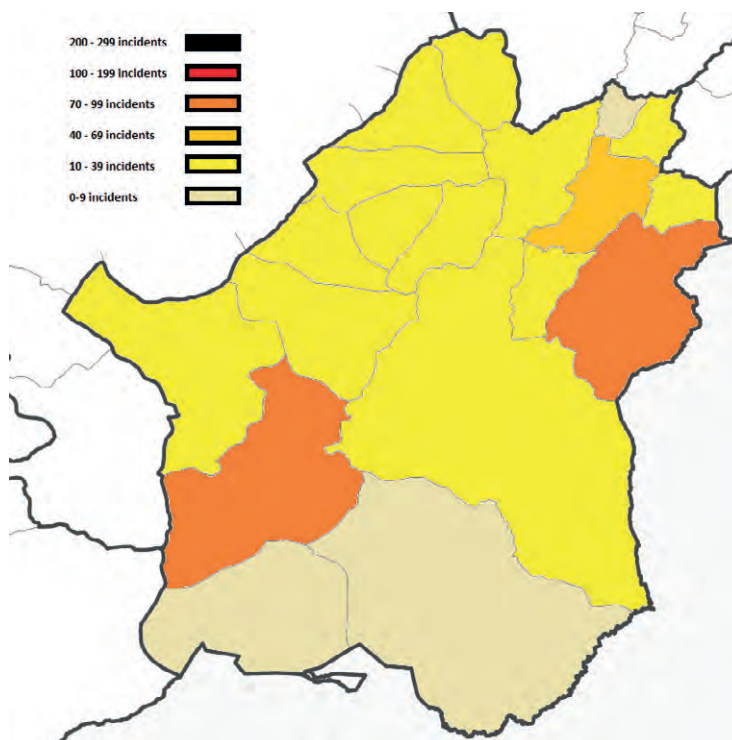


Figure 20: Paktika, security incidents (Jan - Aug 2015)

The map in figure 20 presents the number of security incidents per district in Paktika province. ⁽⁹²¹⁾

⁽⁹¹⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Background Profile of Paktia, n.d.

⁽⁹¹⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Background Profile of Paktia, n.d.

⁽⁹¹⁷⁾ MRRD, Paktika Provincial Profile, n.d.; UNOCHA, Paktika Province - Reference Map [map], 9 February 2014.

⁽⁹¹⁸⁾ UNOCHA, Afghanistan population estimate for 2015, 26 August 2015.

⁽⁹¹⁹⁾ MRRD, Paktika Provincial Profile, n.d., p. 2.

⁽⁹²⁰⁾ For more information on the source of the data and the methodology, see [introduction](#).

⁽⁹²¹⁾ For more information on the source and the methodology of the maps, see [introduction](#).

Attacks from insurgents using roadside bombs ⁽⁹²²⁾ or direct attacks ⁽⁹²³⁾ are mainly concentrated on police posts and on police vehicles. In January 2015, Paktika's governor escaped an attack at an ALP security post in Sharana. ⁽⁹²⁴⁾ In May 2015 dozens of insurgents attacked an ALP check post in Omna ⁽⁹²⁵⁾ and in June 2015 hundreds of armed insurgents stormed ALP posts still in Omna district ⁽⁹²⁶⁾ and also in Yosufkhel district. ⁽⁹²⁷⁾

In November 2014, a major attack was perpetrated by a suicide bomber during a volleyball match in an area between Yahyakhel and Yosufkhel districts which caused 62 deaths and more than 84 wounded. ⁽⁹²⁸⁾ Civilians suffered rocket attacks, such as from the Pakistani side, when, in July 2015, 16 missiles were fired on southern districts in one night; ⁽⁹²⁹⁾ from the Taliban side, such an attack killed a child and wounded three other persons in Ziruk district in April 2015. ⁽⁹³⁰⁾

Displacement

The UNHCR profiled between 81 and 300 IDPs from Paktika in July 2015. ⁽⁹³¹⁾

Actors in the conflict

In July 2015, Paktika's governor claimed that the security was good but admitted that 'militants sneaked into the province from Ghazni and Paktia, causing problems'. ⁽⁹³²⁾

ANSF leads clearing operations into some districts in order to counter insurgents: in Gomal district in July 2015 ⁽⁹³³⁾ and in the district of Matakhan in January 2015. ⁽⁹³⁴⁾

According to the Institute for the Study of War, the Haqqanis maintain considerable support inside Pakistan's tribal areas. The Haqqanis provide men and material to bolster their terrorist campaign from there into the provinces of Khost, Paktika and Paktya onwards into the provinces adjacent to Kabul. ⁽⁹³⁵⁾ This presence is confirmed by the fact that NDS declared that the Haqqani network was responsible for the abovementioned attack on a volleyball match in November 2014 in an area between Yahyakhel and Yosufkhel districts. ⁽⁹³⁶⁾ Moreover, some important Haqqani leaders were identified in this region: Abdullah Billal is considered to be the Haqqani governor for Paktika ⁽⁹³⁷⁾ and, in April 2015, a notorious Haqqani commander, Mullah Ramazan, was killed in the district of Bermel. ⁽⁹³⁸⁾

Foreign insurgents are also present in Paktika as Arab and Pakistani national insurgents were killed during an operation in Naka district ⁽⁹³⁹⁾ and during aerial strikes in Yosufkhel ⁽⁹⁴⁰⁾ and Gyan districts. ⁽⁹⁴¹⁾ Pakistani ID cards were found after clashes between insurgents and Afghan security forces in Matakhan district. ⁽⁹⁴²⁾ In this last district, Maulvi Bilal was identified as the Taliban's shadow district governor. ⁽⁹⁴³⁾ The Taliban's shadow district governor of

⁽⁹²²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, ALP commander for Mata Khan district killed in blast, 27 March 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Police commander among 8 injured in Paktika bombing, 17 March 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Janikhel police chief killed in roadside bombing, 18 February 2015.

⁽⁹²³⁾ Tolonews, Four police killed in Taliban attack in Paktika, 6 July 2015; Khaama Press, Four policemen martyred in insurgent attacks in Paktika, 19 May 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Half a dozen killed in Paktika clash, 18 May 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, 20 Taliban eliminated in Paktika, Helmand clashes, 19 January 2015.

⁽⁹²⁴⁾ Khaama Press, Paktika governor escaped unharmed from Taliban attack, 9 January 2015.

⁽⁹²⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 19 rebels dead in Paktika, Kandahar clashes, 21 May 2015.

⁽⁹²⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 22 militants killed in Paktika midnight clash, 13 June 2015.

⁽⁹²⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan news, 4 rebels eliminated in Paktika clash, 2 June 2015.

⁽⁹²⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Death toll from Paktika bombing rises to 62, 23 November 2014.

⁽⁹²⁹⁾ Tolonews, Pakistani Military Fires Rockets into Paktika, 27 July 2015.

⁽⁹³⁰⁾ Tolonews, 11-year-old boy killed in missile attack in Paktika, 16 April 2015.

⁽⁹³¹⁾ UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update July 2015, July 2015, p. 8.

⁽⁹³²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Paktika security relatively good, claims governor, 23 July 2015.

⁽⁹³³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Paktika fighting leaves 14 insurgents dead, 1 July 2015.

⁽⁹³⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, ANA troops among 6 dead in Paktika, Faryab, 26 January 2015.

⁽⁹³⁵⁾ Dressler, J., The Haqqani Network: A Strategic Threat, March 2012, p. 30.

⁽⁹³⁶⁾ Tolonews, Haqqani Network Behind Paktika Bombing that Killed 61: NDS, 24 November 2014.

⁽⁹³⁷⁾ Khaama Press, Over 500 KG of explosives seized in Paktika, 11 february 2015.

⁽⁹³⁸⁾ Tolonews, Haqqani Commander Among Six Insurgents Killed in Paktika Operation, 7 April 2015.

⁽⁹³⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 10 rebels, 4 police killed in Paktika incidents, 5 July 2015.

⁽⁹⁴⁰⁾ UNAMA, Press release, 13 June 2015.

⁽⁹⁴¹⁾ Khaama Press, NATO airstrike kills 18 Taliban insurgents in Paktika province, 4 January 2015.

⁽⁹⁴²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Suicide bomber, his handler held in Jalalabad, 27 April 2015.

⁽⁹⁴³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban's district chief killed in Paktika offensive, 6 June 2015.

Sarrazwah, Masoom aka Abas, was killed during a special operation. ⁽⁹⁴⁴⁾ Sardar is the shadow district governor of Gyan district ⁽⁹⁴⁵⁾ and Bilal Fateh is the Taliban in charge of Paktika. ⁽⁹⁴⁶⁾

2.5 East

2.5.1 Laghman

General description of the province



Laghman province (capital Mehtarlam) consists of 5 districts: Alingar, Alishang, Dawlatshah, Mehtarlam/Bad Pash and Qarghayi ⁽⁹⁴⁷⁾ and is predominantly mountainous or semi-mountainous. The province is connected with Kabul and Nangarhar via a main road crossing the district of Qarghayi. According to UNOCHA, 445,588 people live in the province. ⁽⁹⁴⁸⁾ The main ethnic groups are Pashtuns, Tajiks and Gujjars. About 58% of the population speaks Pashto while others communicate in Dari. ⁽⁹⁴⁹⁾

⁽⁹⁴⁴⁾ Khaama Press, Taliban shadow district chief killed in Paktika province, 4 February 2015.

⁽⁹⁴⁵⁾ Khaama Press, Three key members of Haqani network arrested in Paktika, 30 March 2015.

⁽⁹⁴⁶⁾ Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Pledges of allegiance to new Amir take place throughout Afghanistan, 9 August 2015.

⁽⁹⁴⁷⁾ UNOCHA, Laghman Province - Reference Map [map], 9 February 2014; MRRD, Laghman Provincial Profile, n.d.

⁽⁹⁴⁸⁾ UNOCHA, Afghanistan population estimate for 2015, 26 August 2015.

⁽⁹⁴⁹⁾ MRRD, Laghman Provincial Profile, n.d.

Description of the violence

From 1 January to 31 August 2015, Laghman province counted 731 security incidents. Table 19 provides an overview of the nature of the security incidents: ⁽⁹⁵⁰⁾

Violence targeting individuals	25
Armed confrontations and airstrikes	537
Explosions	91
Security enforcement	77
Other incidents	1
Total security incidents	731

Table 19: Security incidents by type, Laghman (Jan - Aug 2015)

The map in figure 21 presents the number of security incidents per district in Laghman province. ⁽⁹⁵¹⁾

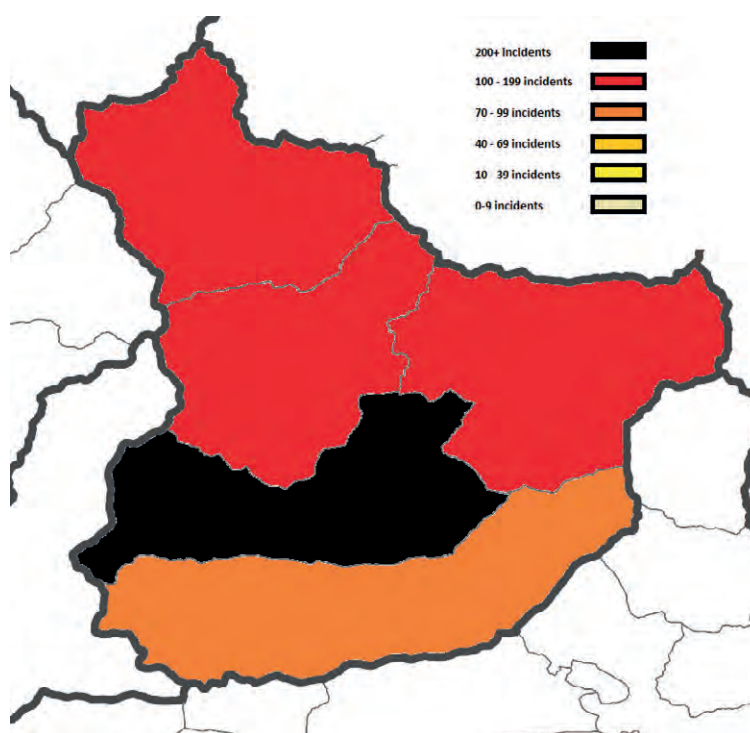


Figure 21: Laghman, security incidents (Jan – Aug 2015)

A local newspaper considers that ‘the highway between Kabul and Jalalabad is among the relatively peaceful highways in the country however the anti-government armed militants carry out insurgency activities on the highway, particularly during the evenings and late during the night time’. ⁽⁹⁵²⁾ Civilians are victims of kidnapping on this highway ⁽⁹⁵³⁾ and for that reason an operation was launched to secure it. Still ‘a resident of Laghman province, Samsor who works in Kabul, said he did not feel secure traveling the highway: Most of the people have shifted their houses to Kabul due to serious threats.’ ⁽⁹⁵⁴⁾

⁽⁹⁵⁰⁾ For more information on the source of the data and the methodology, see [introduction](#).

⁽⁹⁵¹⁾ For more information on the source and the methodology of the maps, see [introduction](#).

⁽⁹⁵²⁾ Khaama Press, Gunmen kidnap 10 passengers from Kabul-Jalalabad highway, 25 April 2015.

⁽⁹⁵³⁾ Khaama Press, Unidentified gunmen kidnap five passengers on Kabul-Jalalabad highway, 15 July 2015; Khaama Press, Gunmen release three abductees in Laghman, 29 April 2015.

⁽⁹⁵⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Operation begins to secure Kabul-Jalalabad highway, 15 September 2015.

Civilians are also deliberately targeted in direct fire attacks on the streets (Alingar district ⁽⁹⁵⁵⁾, Mehtarlam city ⁽⁹⁵⁶⁾). Insurgents also use suicide attacks and IED in public spaces such as funeral ceremonies (Mehtarlam district) ⁽⁹⁵⁷⁾, shops ⁽⁹⁵⁸⁾ or clinics (Alingar district) ⁽⁹⁵⁹⁾ or roadside bombs against civilians (Mehtarlam city ⁽⁹⁶⁰⁾ and Qarghayi district ⁽⁹⁶¹⁾) or policeman. ⁽⁹⁶²⁾

Moreover, rocket and missile attacks directed to government or foreign facilities in Alingar ⁽⁹⁶³⁾, Alishang ⁽⁹⁶⁴⁾ and Dawlatshah ⁽⁹⁶⁵⁾ districts caused civilians casualties and death.

Displacement

In January 2015, the UNHCR recorded between 1 and 100 IDPs from the province of Laghman ⁽⁹⁶⁶⁾ who moved to Parwan and Nangarhar mainly due to insurgency and counter-insurgency operations in Alingar and Alishang districts. ⁽⁹⁶⁷⁾ UNHCR's estimation of IDPs for this province from January to July 2015 is between 201 and 100. ⁽⁹⁶⁸⁾

Actors in the conflict

According to the International Crisis Group, in 2011, HIA predominates in the province and there are an estimated 23 small Taliban groups. ⁽⁹⁶⁹⁾ The Haqqani network, equally active in 2012, was plotting attacks in Laghman province and neighbouring Kabul, while providing assistance to veterans of the IMU and al Qaeda arriving from Nangarhar and moving north. ⁽⁹⁷⁰⁾ According to NDS, the Haqqani network is still active in this province in 2015. ⁽⁹⁷¹⁾ Moreover, according to the Institute for the study of war, 'the Taliban has maintained its traditionally high levels of influence in [...] Laghman'. ⁽⁹⁷²⁾ AAN confirms this presence: 'In Daulat Shah and Alisheng, Laghman, it has been reported that the Taleban might win by not losing, ie they are present without being challenged'. ⁽⁹⁷³⁾

Insurgents carried out attacks against representatives of ANA and ANP attacking private residences ⁽⁹⁷⁴⁾, storming police checkpoints ⁽⁹⁷⁵⁾, using roadside mines ⁽⁹⁷⁶⁾, IED ⁽⁹⁷⁷⁾ and plotting ambushes. ⁽⁹⁷⁸⁾ In November 2014, operations ⁽⁹⁷⁹⁾ and drone attacks ⁽⁹⁸⁰⁾ were led against the Taliban in Alingar district. Drone attacks ⁽⁹⁸¹⁾ and army offensives against insurgents were also used in Alishang district, such as the 'Khyber 31' operation in January 2015. ⁽⁹⁸²⁾ These operations led to the arrest and killing of some main Taliban leaders: Amin Jan Kochi (shadow

⁽⁹⁵⁵⁾ Tolonews, Three civilians killed in Laghman, 2 November 2014 ; Khaama Press, Unknown gunmen attack civilians in Laghman, 27 December 2014.

⁽⁹⁵⁶⁾ Khaama Press, Women among 13 killed, injured in separate incidents in Laghman, 2 November 2014.

⁽⁹⁵⁷⁾ Khaama Press, 7 people wounded in explosion in mosque, 31 January 2015.

⁽⁹⁵⁸⁾ Khaama Press, Tribal elder among 2 killed in Laghman explosion, 28 December 2014.

⁽⁹⁵⁹⁾ Khaama Press, Insurgents torched clinic in Laghman, 11 April 2015.

⁽⁹⁶⁰⁾ Khaama Press, Explosion kills four including policeman in Laghman, 29 January 2015.

⁽⁹⁶¹⁾ Tolonews, Civilian Killed in Laghman Roadside Mine Blast, 15 December 2014.

⁽⁹⁶²⁾ Khaama Press, Landmine explosion claimed two lives in Laghman, 27 June 2015.

⁽⁹⁶³⁾ Tolonews, Five Laghman civilians killed in missile attack, 25 April 2015.

⁽⁹⁶⁴⁾ Tolonews, Three civilians killed in Laghman, 2 November 2014.

⁽⁹⁶⁵⁾ Tolonews, Girl killed in Taliban missile attack in Laghman, 20 December 2014.

⁽⁹⁶⁶⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, January 2015, p. 5; UNHCR, Afghanistan Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, March 2015, p. 3.

⁽⁹⁶⁷⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, January 2015, pp. 2-3.

⁽⁹⁶⁸⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, July 2015, p. 8.

⁽⁹⁶⁹⁾ ICG, The Insurgency in Afghanistan's Heartland, 17 June 2011, p. 14.

⁽⁹⁷⁰⁾ Dressler, J., The Haqqani Network: A Strategic Threat, March 2012, p. 31.

⁽⁹⁷¹⁾ Khaama Press, Afghan intelligence foil suicide attack by Haqqani network in Laghman, 3 January 2015.

⁽⁹⁷²⁾ ISW, The taliban resurgent: threats to Afghanistan's security, March 2015, p. 17.

⁽⁹⁷³⁾ Rutting, T., The Second Fall of Musa Qala: How the Taleban are expanding territorial control, 3 September 2015.

⁽⁹⁷⁴⁾ Khaama Press, Three militants killed after attacking police officer's residence in Laghman, 22 May 2015.

⁽⁹⁷⁵⁾ Khaama Press, 2 policemen martyred, 10 insurgents killed in eastern Afghanistan, 7 February 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, 70 rebels dead in IS-Taliban clashes, drone strikes, 7 July 2015.

⁽⁹⁷⁶⁾ Tolonews, 2 soldiers killed in Laghman roadside mine blast, 19 January 2015.

⁽⁹⁷⁷⁾ Khaama Press, Insurgents killed in own explosion in Laghman, 25 december 2014.

⁽⁹⁷⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 5 ALP men, 6 rebels killed in Nangarhar, Laghman, 16 July 2015.

⁽⁹⁷⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 35 rebels killed in Laghman, Kunar clashes, 15 November 2014.

⁽⁹⁸⁰⁾ Khaama Press, Drone strike in Laghman leaves 3 Taliban insurgents dead, 26 November 2014.

⁽⁹⁸¹⁾ Tolonews, Four taliban insurgents killed in Laghman drone strike, 6 December 2014.

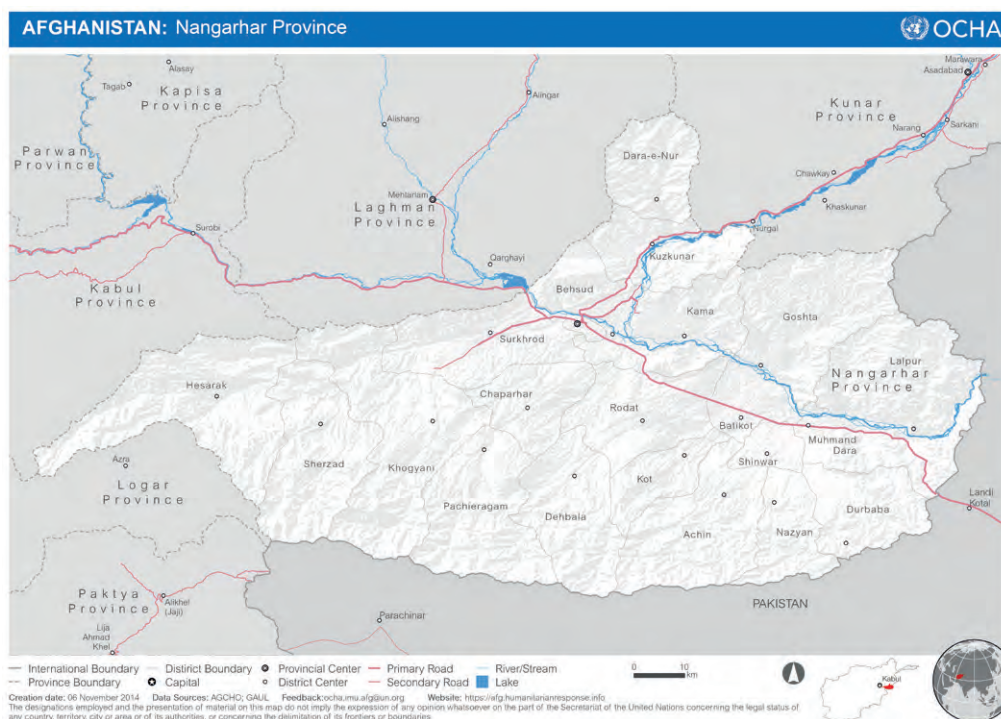
⁽⁹⁸²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Security personnel among 7 killed in fresh bout of violence, 12 January 2015; Khaama Press, Afghan Commandos operation successfully ended in Alishang of Laghman, 20 May 2015.

governor for the Laghman province);⁽⁹⁸³⁾ Idrees⁽⁹⁸⁴⁾, Mohammad Tahir (Alishang district);⁽⁹⁸⁵⁾ Noor Shah Chapaw, the so-called Taliban governor for Dawlatshah district and general commander for Dawlatshah, Alishang and Badpakh districts;⁽⁹⁸⁶⁾ Jamshid and Turab (Alingar district)⁽⁹⁸⁷⁾, Gul Khan (killed in Alingar district)⁽⁹⁸⁸⁾, Zahidullah (arrested in Alingar district).⁽⁹⁸⁹⁾

The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan reported in August 2015 that the Taliban Head of Laghman military division was Mullah Habib Rahman and that Deputy of Laghman in-charge was Mullah Muhammad Nazar.⁽⁹⁹⁰⁾

2.5.2 Nangarhar

General description of the province



Nangarhar province (capital Jalalabad) consists of 22 districts (Achin, Batikot, Behsud, Chaparhar, Dara-e-Nur, Dehbala (or Hasqa Mina⁽⁹⁹¹⁾), Durbaba, Goshta, Hesarak, Jalalabad, Kama, Khogyani, Kot, Kuzkunar, Lalpur, Muhmand Dara, Nazyan, Pachieragam, Rodat, Shinwar, Surkhrod, Sherzad⁽⁹⁹²⁾) and is mainly mountainous and semi-mountainous.⁽⁹⁹³⁾ Of the 1,517,388 inhabitants⁽⁹⁹⁴⁾, 90 % are Pashtuns while the remaining population is divided between Pachay, Tajiks, Gujjars and Kuchis.⁽⁹⁹⁵⁾ Jalalabad has an estimated population of 226,029.⁽⁹⁹⁶⁾

⁽⁹⁸³⁾ Khaama Press, Taliban shadow governor for Laghman killed with 12 others in NDS special operation, 14 July 2015.

⁽⁹⁸⁴⁾ Khaama Press, Afghan intelligence foil suicide attack by Haqqani network in Laghman, 3 January 2015.

⁽⁹⁸⁵⁾ Khaama Press, 2 policemen martyred, 10 insurgents killed in eastern Afghanistan, 7 February 2015.

⁽⁹⁸⁶⁾ Khaama Press, Senior Taliban commander among 10 killed in Laghman, 9 April 2015.

⁽⁹⁸⁷⁾ Khaama Press, Landmine planter killed, another wounded in own bomb blast in Laghman, 29 April 2015; Khaama Press, Insurgents torched clinic in Laghman, 11 April 2015.

⁽⁹⁸⁸⁾ Khaama Press, Afghan commandos kill Taliban commander in Laghman, 10 August 2015.

⁽⁹⁸⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 35 rebels killed in Laghman, Kunar clashes, 15 November 2014.

⁽⁹⁹⁰⁾ Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Pledges of allegiance to new Amir take place throughout Afghanistan, 9 August 2015.

⁽⁹⁹¹⁾ Afghan biographies, Haska Mina District Nangarhar Province, 12 November 2014.

⁽⁹⁹²⁾ UNOCHA, Afghanistan Administrative Divisions, 14 January 2014; MRRD, Nangarhar Provincial Profile, n.d., p. 1.

⁽⁹⁹³⁾ MRRD, Nangarhar Provincial Profile, n.d.

⁽⁹⁹⁴⁾ UNOCHA, Afghanistan population estimate for 2015, 26 August 2015.

⁽⁹⁹⁵⁾ MRRD, Nangarhar Provincial Profile, n.d.

⁽⁹⁹⁶⁾ UNOCHA, Afghanistan population estimate for 2015, 26 August 2015.

Description of the violence

From 1 January to 31 August 2015, Nangarhar province counted 1991 security incidents. Table 20 provides an overview of the nature of the security incidents: ⁽⁹⁹⁷⁾

Violence targeting individuals	189
Armed confrontations and airstrikes	1069
Explosions	254
Security enforcement	429
Non-conflict related incidents	44
Other incidents	6
Total security incidents	1991

Table 20: Security incidents by type, Nangarhar (Jan - Aug 2015)

The map in figure 22 presents the number of security incidents per district in Nangarhar province. ⁽⁹⁹⁸⁾

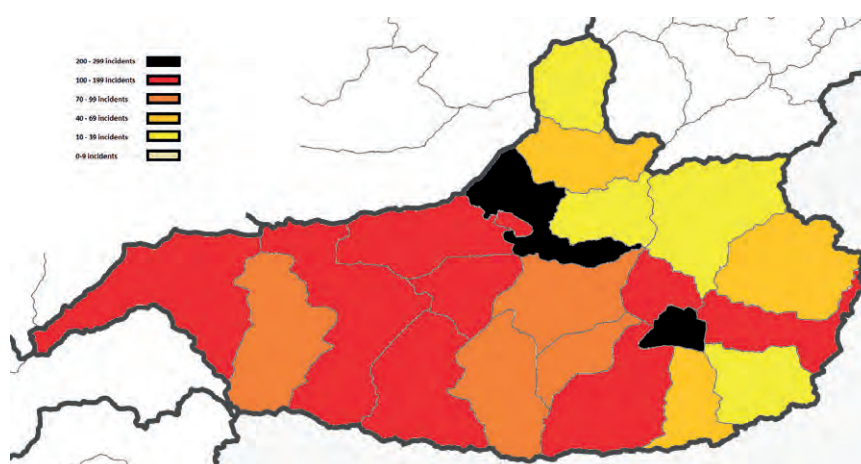


Figure 22: Nangarhar, security incidents (Jan - Aug 2015)

The provincial capital Jalalabad is not spared from violence. In June 2015 a coordinated attack against police headquarters and then the use of a bomb against the same building the following month caused indirect civilian casualties. ⁽⁹⁹⁹⁾ Moreover, bomb blasts in the capital's public spaces are frequent ⁽¹⁰⁰⁰⁾ and especially places frequented by civilians such as bazars ⁽¹⁰⁰¹⁾ and hotels. ⁽¹⁰⁰²⁾ In April 2015, a suicide attack at 8:00am near the Kabul Bank branch in Jalalabad caused at least 34 deaths and wounded more than 100 wounded. ⁽¹⁰⁰³⁾

Since 2012, the security situation has deteriorated with an increase of attacks against ANSF on the main Bati Kot highway while the trunk road Torkham-Jalalabad has also become a target. ⁽¹⁰⁰⁴⁾ According to the Long War Journal (LWJ), 'Nangarhar is a strategic province for both the Taliban and the Coalition. The province borders the Pakistani tribal agency of Khyber, and hosts the main supply route from Pakistan.' ⁽¹⁰⁰⁵⁾ Gunmen also attack civilians on the Kabul-Jalalabad highway. ⁽¹⁰⁰⁶⁾

⁽⁹⁹⁷⁾ For more information on the source of the data and the methodology, see [introduction](#).

⁽⁹⁹⁸⁾ For more information on the source and the methodology of the maps, see [introduction](#).

⁽⁹⁹⁹⁾ Tolonews, 2 Civilians, 2 Police Injured in Nangarhar Blast, 25 July 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Nangarhar police HQ onslaught ends as 5 attackers killed, 1 June 2015.

⁽¹⁰⁰⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 1 dead, female PC member among 6 hurt in blast, 10 February 2015; UNAMA, Press release, 29 January 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 dead, 8 hurt as twin blasts rock Jalalabad, 17 December 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, 4 civilians killed in Nangarhar incidents, 14 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁰¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 1 killed, 9 hurt in Jalalabad mortar strike, 11 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁰²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Bomb rips through Jalalabad hotel, 5 wounded, 26 January 2015.

⁽¹⁰⁰³⁾ McNally, L., Is the Islamic State Escalating in Afghanistan?, 27 April 2015; Tolonews, Daesh Claims Responsibility For Deadly Jalalabad Attack, 18 April 2015.

⁽¹⁰⁰⁴⁾ Mansfield, D., From Bad They Made It Worse, The concentration of opium poppy in areas of conflict in the provinces of Helmand and Nangarhar, May 2014, p. 12.

⁽¹⁰⁰⁵⁾ Roggio, B., Taliban claim suicide assault on Jalalabad police HQ, 20 March 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁰⁶⁾ Khaama Press, Nangarhar University teachers on strike over stolen salaries, 4 April 2015.

The Taliban attacked checkpoints ⁽¹⁰⁰⁷⁾ and security forces patrols. ⁽¹⁰⁰⁸⁾ Indirect civilian casualties were caused by ambushes on ANSF representants ⁽¹⁰⁰⁹⁾ and convoys ⁽¹⁰¹⁰⁾, rocket launches (Bati Kot district) ⁽¹⁰¹¹⁾, roadside bombs ⁽¹⁰¹²⁾ (Achin ⁽¹⁰¹³⁾ and Sherzad districts ⁽¹⁰¹⁴⁾) and explosions (Jalalabad). Civilians were also casualties ⁽¹⁰¹⁵⁾ of fights between insurgents and ANSF. ⁽¹⁰¹⁶⁾ This fighting prevented farmers from harvesting their crops. ⁽¹⁰¹⁷⁾

Since the spring of 2015 ⁽¹⁰¹⁸⁾, IS has been attacking the Taliban and there were several fierce battles in Dehbala ⁽¹⁰¹⁹⁾, Chapahar ⁽¹⁰²⁰⁾, Khogyani ⁽¹⁰²¹⁾, Nazyan ⁽¹⁰²²⁾, Achin ⁽¹⁰²³⁾, where tribal elders and at least 70 civilians were killed, ⁽¹⁰²⁴⁾ and in Kot. ⁽¹⁰²⁵⁾ In Muhmand Dara district, according to an article, 3 civilians were killed and homes set on fire during these battles. ⁽¹⁰²⁶⁾

In districts under IS control (Kot, Achin and Dehbala) the presence of IS fighters has an impact on civilians' day-to-day life: livestock and crops are seized, schools, Islamic madrassas and clinics are closed, electricity lines and cellphone towers are destroyed, families have to send half of their sons to fight with them and to clearly identify 'available women': widows and unmarried women. People accused of being Taliban supporters are executed and elders taken in hostage. ⁽¹⁰²⁷⁾

⁽¹⁰⁰⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Policemen among 10 dead in Nangarhar, Laghman clashes, 7 February 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, 18 rebels dead in Nangarhar, Ghazni offensives, 16 December 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, 3 rebels killed in Chaparhar clash, 15 December 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, 18 rebels killed in Nangarhar, Kunar, 18 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁰⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 5 rebels killed, 6 injured in Nangarhar skirmish, 6 January 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, 3 Taliban killed, 8 injured in clashes, 3 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁰⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Jalalabad bomb blast leaves 5 injured, 12 February 2015; Tolonews, Suicide Attack Targeting Foreign Troop Convoy Leaves 4 Dead, 12 Wounded in Jalalabad Friday, 10 April 2015.

⁽¹⁰¹⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Militants kill ALP commander in Nangarhar, 16 April 2015; Tolonews, Suicide Attack Targeting Foreign Troop Convoy Leaves 4 Dead, 12 Wounded in Jalalabad Friday, 10 April 2015.

⁽¹⁰¹¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 8 militants dead in Nangarhar search operation, 11 May 2015.

⁽¹⁰¹²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 6 rebels killed in Zabul; 5 passengers injured in Nangarhar, 17 March 2015.

⁽¹⁰¹³⁾ Tolonews, Eight Civilians Killed in Nangarhar Roadside Mine Blasts, 2 March 2015.

⁽¹⁰¹⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 3 children dead in blast; looming terror bid foiled, 14 March 2015.

⁽¹⁰¹⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Civilians killed in Ghanikhel operation, elders claim, 14 March 2015.

⁽¹⁰¹⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 10 rebels dead as anti-militants operations underway, 10 January 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Nine militants killed; woman commits suicide, 23 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, 5 killed, 100 netted in Chaparhar offensive, 4 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰¹⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Nangarhar drone strike kills 13 militants, 10 May 2015.

⁽¹⁰¹⁸⁾ Express Tribune (The), Neighbourhood watch: Afghan Taliban warn Baghdadi to stay out, 20 June 2015.

⁽¹⁰¹⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 11 militants dead in Daesh, Taliban fighting, 26 July 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Lull noticed in Daesh, Taliban fighting in Nangarhar, 9 July 2015.

⁽¹⁰²⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban-Daesh clashes spread to Chaparhar, 19 May 2015.

⁽¹⁰²¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 13 militants dead in Daesh-Taliban clash in Nangarhar: MoD, 28 June 2015.

⁽¹⁰²²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban- IS clash, drone strike kill 13 rebels, 6 July 2015.

⁽¹⁰²³⁾ Foschini, F., Classics of Conflict (2): Reviewing some of Afghanistan's most notorious hotspots, 9 July 2015.

⁽¹⁰²⁴⁾ UNAMA, Press release, 12 July 2015.

⁽¹⁰²⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban, Daesh clashes underway in Nangarhar, 17 May 2015.

⁽¹⁰²⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 14 dead as Taliban-IS clashes resume in Nangarhar, 14 July 2015.

⁽¹⁰²⁷⁾ Washington Post (The), The Islamic State is Making these Afghans Long for the Taliban, 13 October 2015; Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - October 2015.

In order to counter insurgents' attacks, numerous foreign drone and air strikes were used to eliminate them, especially in Lalpur ⁽¹⁰²⁸⁾, Dehbala ⁽¹⁰²⁹⁾, Batikot ⁽¹⁰³⁰⁾, Mumand Dara ⁽¹⁰³¹⁾, Khogyani ⁽¹⁰³²⁾, Chaparhar ⁽¹⁰³³⁾, Nazyan ⁽¹⁰³⁴⁾ Sherzad ⁽¹⁰³⁵⁾, Achin ⁽¹⁰³⁶⁾ and Durbaba ⁽¹⁰³⁷⁾ districts.

Civilians are specifically targeted when blasts and attacks are in public spaces such as schools ⁽¹⁰³⁸⁾ (Behsud ⁽¹⁰³⁹⁾, Muhmand Dara ⁽¹⁰⁴⁰⁾), mosques (Khogyani ⁽¹⁰⁴¹⁾, Rodat ⁽¹⁰⁴²⁾) and bazars (Batikot ⁽¹⁰⁴³⁾). Local press reported on the killing of tribal elders ⁽¹⁰⁴⁴⁾, government agents ⁽¹⁰⁴⁵⁾, religious scholars ⁽¹⁰⁴⁶⁾ and kidnappings and killings of civilians. ⁽¹⁰⁴⁷⁾

Displacement

In July 2015, because of the clashes between two rival non-State armed groups since first weeks of June, people fled from Kot and Achin districts; ⁽¹⁰⁴⁸⁾ 1,347 families (9,073 individuals) were profiled but, because of the daily departures, not all families could be registered up on their arrivals. ⁽¹⁰⁴⁹⁾ By comparison, in May 2015, 62 families' displacements from Nangarhar were profiled by UNHCR. ⁽¹⁰⁵⁰⁾

Actors in the conflict

In order to strengthen their presence, the insurgents take advantage of rivalries, tribal conflicts, land disputes ⁽¹⁰⁵¹⁾ as well as the resistance against the eradication of opium cultivation, which has increased by 400 % between 2012 and 2013. ⁽¹⁰⁵²⁾

⁽¹⁰²⁸⁾ Tolonews, Nangarhar Drone Strike Kills 20 Suspected Daesh Militants, 30 July 2015; Tolonews, 14 Taliban Insurgents Killed in US Drone Strike in Nangarhar, 1 July 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, 6 militants killed in Nangarhar, Kunar incidents, 10 June; Pajhwok Afghan News, Nangarhar drone strike kills 13 militants, 10 May 2015; Tolonews, Nangarhar Drone Strike Kills 7 Taliban, 14 March 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, 6 rebels dead in drone strike in Nangarhar, 8 January 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Drone strikes kill 4 rebels in Nangarhar, 24 December 2014.

⁽¹⁰²⁹⁾ Tolonews, Nangarhar Drone Strike Kills 20 Suspected Daesh Militants, 30 July 2015; Tolonews, 28 Taliban Insurgents Killed in US Drone Strike in Nangarhar, 15 July 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Drone strikes kill 17 rebels in Nangarhar, 5 June 2015.

⁽¹⁰³⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Offensive underway against IS in Nangarhar, 13 July 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, US drone strike in Nangarhar kills 7 rebels, 22 June 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, 18 rebels killed in Nangarhar, Kunar, 18 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰³¹⁾ Tolonews, Eight Taliban insurgents killed in Nangarhar drone strike, 20 June 2015; Tolonews, 17 Taliban insurgents killed in US drone attack in Nangarhar, 5 May 2015.

⁽¹⁰³²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 8 rebels dead in Nangarhar drone attack, 18 February 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Drone strikes kill 4 rebels in Nangarhar, 24 December 2014.

⁽¹⁰³³⁾ Tolonews, Drone Strike in Nangarhar Kills 3 Insurgents, 6 July 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Drone strikes kill 17 rebels in Nangarhar, 5 June 2015.

⁽¹⁰³⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Drone strikes in Nangarhar kill 45 rebels, 16 May 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, 18 more insurgents eliminated in Nangarhar clashes, 5 February 2015.

⁽¹⁰³⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 8 militants dead in Nangarhar drone strike, 1 December 2014.

⁽¹⁰³⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 70 rebels dead in IS-Taliban clashes, drone strikes, 7 July 2015.

⁽¹⁰³⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Drone strikes in Nangarhar kill 45 rebels, 16 May 2015.

⁽¹⁰³⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Girls' school blown up in Nangarhar, 13 July 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Girls' school blown up in Nangarhar, 29 January 2015.

⁽¹⁰³⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 9 students injured in Behsud school blast, 14 December 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁴⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Militants torch yet another school in Nangarhar, 9 February 2015.

⁽¹⁰⁴¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Casualties as bomb rocks Khogyani mosque, 28 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁴²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 killed in Nangarhar mosque shooting, 9 February 2015.

⁽¹⁰⁴³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 5 dead as rebels storm Batikot bazaar, 31 December 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁴⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Militants slit throat of Batikot district NSP chief, 20 June 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Unidentified gunmen kill 2 brothers in Nangarhar, 27 January 2015; UNAMA, Press release, 24 December 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁴⁵⁾ Tolonews, Ex-Provincial Council Leader Found Beheaded in Nangarhar, 25 July 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Militants slit throat of Batikot district NSP chief, 20 June 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Batikot district chief unhurt in bomb attack, 28 April 2015; Tolonews, Deputy Prosecutor Killed in Nangarhar Blast, 22 April 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Former Taliban members among 5 dead in violence, 6 April 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, High school teacher gunned down in Batikot, 1 April 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, 3 dead as bomber targets MP motorcade, 27 February 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Anti-corruption court Judge shot dead in Jalalabad, 10 January 2015.

⁽¹⁰⁴⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Ex-PC secretary shot dead in Nangarhar, 1 July 2015.

⁽¹⁰⁴⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Militants behead 4 civilians in Nangarhar, 9 December 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, 4 civilians killed in Nangarhar incidents, 14 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁴⁸⁾ Tolonews, Hundreds of Families Displaced After Taliban and Daesh Clash in Nangarhar, 15 June 2015.

⁽¹⁰⁴⁹⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, July 2015, p. 2.; UNHCR, Afghanistan: Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, June 2015, p. 4.

⁽¹⁰⁵⁰⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, April 2015, p. 2.

⁽¹⁰⁵¹⁾ Foschini, F., Classics of Conflict (2): Reviewing some of Afghanistan's most notorious hotspots, 9 July 2015.

⁽¹⁰⁵²⁾ Jackson, A., Politics and Governance in Afghanistan: the Case of Nangarhar Province, May 2014, p. 27.

In 2012, the Haqqani network was predominantly present in the districts of Hesarak, Sherzad, Chapahar and Jalalabad. ⁽¹⁰⁵³⁾ The porous nature of Afghanistan's southern border with the Pakistani Kurram Tribal Agency enabled the family-based Haqqani network in Nangarhar to use this province to facilitate infiltration and move IMU fighters towards Kabul and the North of Afghanistan. ⁽¹⁰⁵⁴⁾

The Taliban, as well as groups affiliated with Hezb-e Islami and the Pakistani Taliban, are also present in the district of Khogyani. ⁽¹⁰⁵⁵⁾ According to the Long War Journal, the Peshawar Regional Military Shura (one of the Taliban's four military councils) sponsors attacks in the province of Nangarhar and the Tora Bora Military Front, ⁽¹⁰⁵⁶⁾ led by Anwarul Haq Mujahid, also operates in this region. ⁽¹⁰⁵⁷⁾

Maulvi Mir Ahmad Gul, Taliban's shadow governor for Nangarhar was killed in Pakistan in June 2015. ⁽¹⁰⁵⁸⁾ The jihadi commander in Nangarhar and in-charge of Shinwar district is Mullah Faisal. ⁽¹⁰⁵⁹⁾

During drone strikes and ground operations Taliban's commanders were identified, arrested or killed: in Batkot district: commanders Khan Afzal, Hanifa and Dr Omar ⁽¹⁰⁶⁰⁾, commander Sparghay ⁽¹⁰⁶¹⁾, commander Shamsullah; ⁽¹⁰⁶²⁾ in Chaparhar district: commanders Nawab ⁽¹⁰⁶³⁾ and Moulvi Aziz; ⁽¹⁰⁶⁴⁾ In Dehbala district: commander Qari Rafiq ⁽¹⁰⁶⁵⁾, Aimal; ⁽¹⁰⁶⁶⁾ in Durbaba district: Abdul Qahar aka Haqyar as the Taliban shadow governor; ⁽¹⁰⁶⁷⁾ in Muhmand Dara district: Mullah Daoud; ⁽¹⁰⁶⁸⁾ in Sherzad district: Zaraqvi ⁽¹⁰⁶⁹⁾ and Noor Alam as the Taliban's chief for the district. ⁽¹⁰⁷⁰⁾

A large number of Pakistani militants were identified by the Afghan Army and were arrested (Durbaba and Batkot districts ⁽¹⁰⁷¹⁾). Tehrek-e Taliban ⁽¹⁰⁷²⁾ and Lashkar-e-Islam, banned in Pakistan, are active in this province, especially in Nyazan district ⁽¹⁰⁷³⁾, as was the Jamaat-ul-Ahrar whose commander, Maulana Shakeel Ahmed Haqqani, alias Qari Shakeel, was killed in Nangarhar. ⁽¹⁰⁷⁴⁾

IS is starting a strategy of trying to take control of Nangarhar province, but is facing stiff resistance. Main leaders who pledged allegiance to IS were reported killed in Achin district: Gull Zaman (vice-chief), Jahanyar (deputy of the latest) ⁽¹⁰⁷⁵⁾ and Hafiz Saeed Khan (ex leader of TTP and IS emir for 'Khorasan province'), whose death was denied by IS. ⁽¹⁰⁷⁶⁾ In Chaparhar district, IS commanders Ghulam Farooq and Mir Wais were also killed. ⁽¹⁰⁷⁷⁾

⁽¹⁰⁵³⁾ Mansfield, D., From Bad They Made It Worse, The concentration of opium poppy in areas of conflict in the provinces of Helmand and Nangarhar, May 2014, p. 12.

⁽¹⁰⁵⁴⁾ Dressler, J., The Haqqani Network: A Strategic Threat, March 2012, p. 30.

⁽¹⁰⁵⁵⁾ Mansfield, D., From Bad They Made It Worse, The concentration of opium poppy in areas of conflict in the provinces of Helmand and Nangarhar, May 2014, p. 13.

⁽¹⁰⁵⁶⁾ See glossary.

⁽¹⁰⁵⁷⁾ Roggio, B., Taliban claim suicide assault on Jalalabad police HQ, 20 March 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁵⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban's shadow governor gunned down in Peshawar, 13 June 2015.

⁽¹⁰⁵⁹⁾ Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Pledges of allegiance to new Amir take place throughout Afghanistan, 9 August 2015.

⁽¹⁰⁶⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, US drone strike in Nangarhar kills 7 rebels, 22 June 2015.

⁽¹⁰⁶¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 7 killed in Nangarhar drone strike, 9 June 2015.

⁽¹⁰⁶²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Nine militants killed; woman commits suicide, 23 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁶³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Dreaded commanders among 12 dead in drone strikes, 28 December 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁶⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Drone strikes kill 17 rebels in Nangarhar, 5 June 2015.

⁽¹⁰⁶⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 9 militants dead in Nangarhar drone strike, clashes, 8 July 2015.

⁽¹⁰⁶⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Schools closing Taliban leader killed, 17 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁶⁷⁾ Tolonews, NDS Arrests Taliban Shadow Governor for Nangarhar, 29 June 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban district chief among 6 held in Nangarhar, 28 June 2015.

⁽¹⁰⁶⁸⁾ Tolonews, 17 Taliban Insurgents Killed in US Drone Attack in Nangarhar, 5 May 2015.

⁽¹⁰⁶⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 8 militants dead in Nangarhar drone strike, 1 December 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁷⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 7 insurgents killed in Sherzad offensive, 30 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁷¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Pakistanis among 17 rebels held in Nangarhar, 20 April 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, NATO drone strike leaves 6 insurgents dead, 12 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁷²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, TTP faction head injured in Afghan-NATO raid, 9 February 2015.

⁽¹⁰⁷³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Pakistani militants eliminated in Nazyan drone strike, 24 March 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Fazlullah narrowly escapes drone strike, 25 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁷⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Jamaat-ul-Ahrar commander killed in Nangarhar, 13 March 2015.

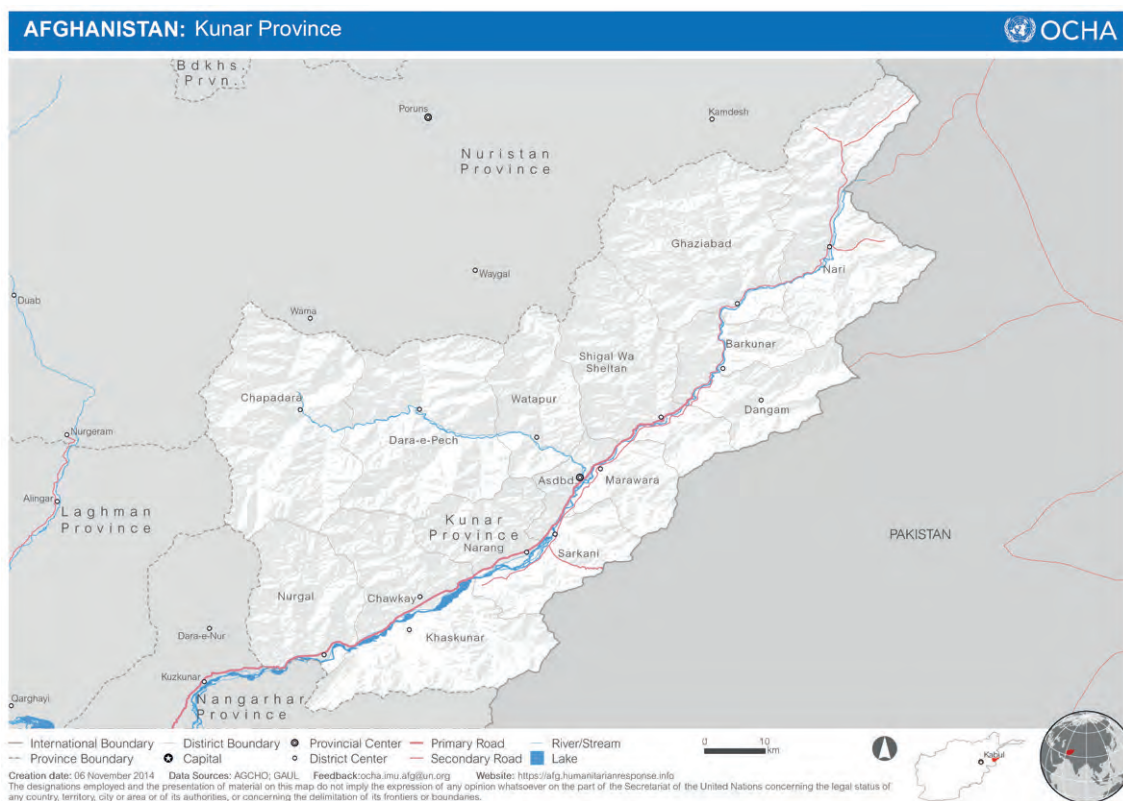
⁽¹⁰⁷⁵⁾ Tolonews, Daesh Fighters Flee to Mountains After Commanders Eliminated: Muslimyar, 12 July 2015.

⁽¹⁰⁷⁶⁾ Roggio B., Islamist State says Emir for Khorasan province is alive, 13 July 2015.

⁽¹⁰⁷⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 Daesh fighters killed, 6 held in Jalalabad, 28 July 2015.

2.5.3 Kunar

General description of the province



Kunar province is composed of 15 districts: Asadabad, Barkuniar, Chapadara, Chawkay, Dangam, Dara-e-Pech, Ghaziabad, Khaskuniar, Marawara, Narang, Nari, Nurgal, Sarkani, Shigal wa Sheltan, Watapur. ⁽¹⁰⁷⁸⁾ Its capital, Asadabad, is divided by the main road which links Jalalabad (Nangarhar administrative centre) to the Nuristan province and Pakistan. According to UNOCHA, 450,652 people live in the province ⁽¹⁰⁷⁹⁾, mostly Pashtun. ⁽¹⁰⁸⁰⁾ It has a 170-kilometre border with the Pakistani tribal areas. ⁽¹⁰⁸¹⁾

Description of the violence

From 1 January to 31 August 2015, Kunar province counted 1,056 security incidents. Table 21 provides an overview of the nature of the security incidents: ⁽¹⁰⁸²⁾

Violence targeting individuals	62
Armed confrontations and airstrikes	868
Explosions	74
Security enforcement	51
Other incidents	1
Total security incidents	1,056

Table 21: Security incidents by type, Kunar (Jan - Aug 2015)

The map in figure 23 presents the number of security incidents per district in Kunar province. ⁽¹⁰⁸³⁾

⁽¹⁰⁷⁸⁾ UNOCHA, Kunar province - Reference Map [map], 19 February 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁷⁹⁾ UNOCHA, Afghanistan population estimate for 2015, 26 August 2015.

⁽¹⁰⁸⁰⁾ Tolonews, Provincial profile: Kunar, n.d.

⁽¹⁰⁸¹⁾ Roggio, B., Quetta airbase attacks carried out by Pakistani Taliban, IMU, 17 August 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁸²⁾ For more information on the source of the data and the methodology, see [introduction](#).

⁽¹⁰⁸³⁾ For more information on the source and the methodology of the maps, see [introduction](#).

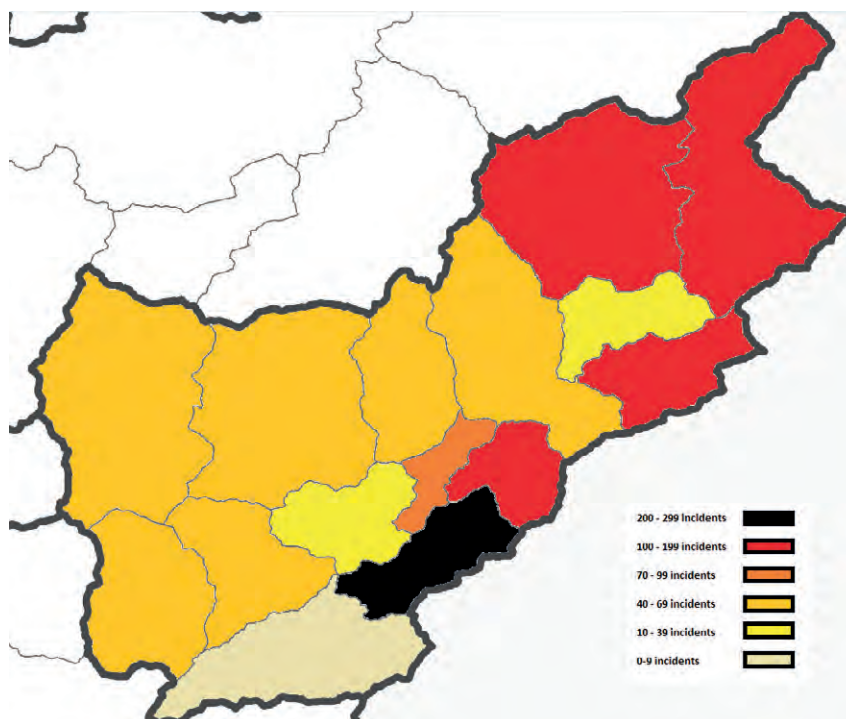


Figure 23: Kunar, security incidents (Jan - Aug 2015)

The Taliban attacked isolated security posts in Chapadara ⁽¹⁰⁸⁴⁾, Nurgal districts ⁽¹⁰⁸⁵⁾ or organised coordinated attacks on security posts in districts such as Marawara ⁽¹⁰⁸⁶⁾, Ghaziabad ⁽¹⁰⁸⁷⁾, Sarkani ⁽¹⁰⁸⁸⁾, Dangam ⁽¹⁰⁸⁹⁾ and Nari. ⁽¹⁰⁹⁰⁾ The Afghan security forces retaliated with large-scale clearing operations ⁽¹⁰⁹¹⁾ especially in Dangam district where two anti-insurgent operations were launched in January 2015 (the ‘Red Valley’ operation) ⁽¹⁰⁹²⁾ and in December 2014 ⁽¹⁰⁹³⁾ which lasted for several days and where civilians strongly resisted the attacks by hundreds of Taliban fighters. ⁽¹⁰⁹⁴⁾ During these fights, livestock was stolen by the Taliban, civilian houses set on fire ⁽¹⁰⁹⁵⁾ and elders killed. ⁽¹⁰⁹⁶⁾

Civilians and children are the indirect victims as a result of the Taliban’s attacks on security posts (Marawara district) ⁽¹⁰⁹⁷⁾, roadside bombs (Nari district) ⁽¹⁰⁹⁸⁾, mortar attacks (Asadabad city) ⁽¹⁰⁹⁹⁾, rocket launches (Asadabad district). ⁽¹¹⁰⁰⁾ Civilians were also casualties of clashes between insurgents and ANSF. ⁽¹¹⁰¹⁾

⁽¹⁰⁸⁴⁾ Khaama Press, Army quelled Taliban attack, two bomb makers detained, 10 July 2015.

⁽¹⁰⁸⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 18 rebels killed in Nangarhar, Kunar, 18 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁸⁶⁾ Khaama Press, Taliban militants launch major attack in Kunar province, 28 July 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, 6 militants killed in Kunar clash, 17 June 2015.

⁽¹⁰⁸⁷⁾ Khaama Press, Security forces rebuff Taliban coordinated attack in Kunar, 7 July 2015.

⁽¹⁰⁸⁸⁾ Khaama Press, Coordinated terrorist attacks suppressed in eastern Afghanistan, 13 insurgents killed, 11 June 2015.

⁽¹⁰⁸⁹⁾ Khaama Press, Pakistani Taliban launch attack on Kunar province, 14 December 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁹⁰⁾ Tolonews, Clash in Kunar Kills 2 Police and 10 Taliban, 15 November 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁹¹⁾ Pajhwok Aghan News, Search operation launched in Kunar to bolster security, 17 April 2015; Tolonews, 20 Taliban insurgents killed in Afghan troops operations, 21 February 2015.

⁽¹⁰⁹²⁾ Tolonews, Joint anti-insurgent operation launched in Kunar’s Dangam district, 16 January 2015.

⁽¹⁰⁹³⁾ Tolonews, Afghan forces launch offensive in Dangam, 18 December 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁹⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Dangam residents under Taliban siege, 21 December 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁹⁵⁾ Khaama Press, Mehwar: Houses looted in Kunar, items distributed amongst Pakistani Taliban, 24 December 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 uprising leaders killed in Dangam clash, 17 December 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁹⁶⁾ Pajhwok Aghan News, 2 uprising leaders killed in Dangam clash, 17 December 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁹⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 6 militants killed in Kunar clash, 17 June 2015.

⁽¹⁰⁹⁸⁾ RFE/RL, At least 17 killed In Afghan attacks, 21 December 2014.

⁽¹⁰⁹⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 5 injured in mortar attack on PC office, 17 December 2014.

⁽¹¹⁰⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 6 militants killed in Kunar clash, 17 June 2015; Khaama Press, Rocket attack in Kunar kills school child, injures 5 others, 20 November 2014; Pajhwok Aghan News, 2 women injured in Pakistani rocket strike, 4 November 2014.

⁽¹¹⁰¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Pakistanis among 136 rebels killed in Dangam, 23 December 2014; RFE/RL, At least 17 killed In Afghan attacks, 21 December 2014.

Insurgents also specifically targeted civilians. During the first six months of 2015, school teachers were gunned down ⁽¹¹⁰²⁾, schools torched or blown up as well as medical centres (Dangam and Nari districts). ⁽¹¹⁰³⁾ People suspected of working for the government are killed. ⁽¹¹⁰⁴⁾

Insurgents attacked civilians on roads (Narang district) ⁽¹¹⁰⁵⁾ or obstructed travel by blocking and putting landmines along the Nari district- Adadabad road which caused shortage of food and medical assistance. ⁽¹¹⁰⁶⁾

Displacement

Due to heavy fighting in Dangam in December 2014, 354 families (2,024 individuals) were displaced from Dangam to other districts in the same province. ⁽¹¹⁰⁷⁾ In the following month, hundreds of IDPs, mainly from Dangam district, continued to be profiled by UNHCR for whom ‘armed conflict between AGEs and ANSF were cited as the main cause of displacement’. ⁽¹¹⁰⁸⁾ From January to July 2015, there were between 1,001 and 3,000 IDPs from Kunar. ⁽¹¹⁰⁹⁾

Actors in the conflict

Even though a group of insurgents led by Khair Mohammad in Chaparada district joined the peace process in June 2015 ⁽¹¹¹⁰⁾, the insurgents’ presence is still strong. Laskar-e Taiba and al Qaeda operate training camps in this province ⁽¹¹¹¹⁾ and due to its 170-kilometre border with the Pakistani tribal zones the activity of several insurgent groups is concentrated within this province. Pakistani Taliban, Laskar-e Taiba ⁽¹¹¹²⁾ and Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) ⁽¹¹¹³⁾ conduct operations in Kunar. Foreign fighters such as Uzbeks also participate in insurgents attacks. ⁽¹¹¹⁴⁾ Numerous drone strikes in different districts (Watapur ⁽¹¹¹⁵⁾, Dara-e Pech ⁽¹¹¹⁶⁾, Ghaziabad ⁽¹¹¹⁷⁾) led to the killing of major insurgent leaders: Omar Zadran, the Taliban’s shadow governor for the province ⁽¹¹¹⁸⁾, Mullah Abid ⁽¹¹¹⁹⁾ and Maulvi Nasrullah (Dara-e Pech district) ⁽¹¹²⁰⁾, Ali (Shigal wa Sheltan district). ⁽¹¹²¹⁾ In August 2015, the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan said that Mawlawi Muhammad Umar was the Taliban in charge of this province and Ghulam Rahman Haidari was the Taliban ‘military in-charge’ of Gaziabad. ⁽¹¹²²⁾

⁽¹¹⁰²⁾ Khaama Press, School teacher gunned down in Kunar, 1 June 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 schoolteachers gunned down in Kunar, 30 April 2015.

⁽¹¹⁰³⁾ UNAMA, Press release, 9 February 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban blows up school, clinic in Kunar, 7 February 2015.

⁽¹¹⁰⁴⁾ Khaama Press, Militants attack civilians in Kunar, 7 April 2015.

⁽¹¹⁰⁵⁾ Khaama Press, Militants attack civilians in Kunar, 7 April 2015.

⁽¹¹⁰⁶⁾ Khaama Press, Taliban blockade of District road in Kunar entered 4th day, 10 February 2015.

⁽¹¹⁰⁷⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, 31 December 2014, p. 8.

⁽¹¹⁰⁸⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, 31 January 2015, pp. 3 and 5; UNHCR, Afghanistan Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, 28 February 2015, pp. 3-4, accessed 6 October 2015.

⁽¹¹⁰⁹⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, July 2015, p. 8.

⁽¹¹¹⁰⁾ Khaama Press, 40 insurgents joined peace process in Kunar, 10 June 2015.

⁽¹¹¹¹⁾ Roggio, B., Harakat-ul-Mujahideen ‘operates terrorist training camps in eastern Afghanistan’, 8 August 2014.

⁽¹¹¹²⁾ Tolonews, 150 Taliban militants killed in Dangam fighting, 25 December 2014.

⁽¹¹¹³⁾ Khaama Press, Pakistani Taliban launch attack on Kunar province, 14 December 2014.

⁽¹¹¹⁴⁾ Khaama Press, Taliban attack another district in Kunar, 30 December 2014.

⁽¹¹¹⁵⁾ Tolonews, Kunar drone strike kills four taliban, 22 May 2015.

⁽¹¹¹⁶⁾ Tolonews, Commander among 3 Taliban killed in Foreign drone strike in Kunar, 12 April 2015.

⁽¹¹¹⁷⁾ Khaama Press, Drone strike leaves four militants dead in Kunar province, 19 November 2014.

⁽¹¹¹⁸⁾ Tolonews, Kunar Air Strike Kills Taliban’s Shadow Governor, 14 June 2015.

⁽¹¹¹⁹⁾ Khaama Press, Senior Taliban commander among three killed in drone strikes in Kunar, 12 April 2015.

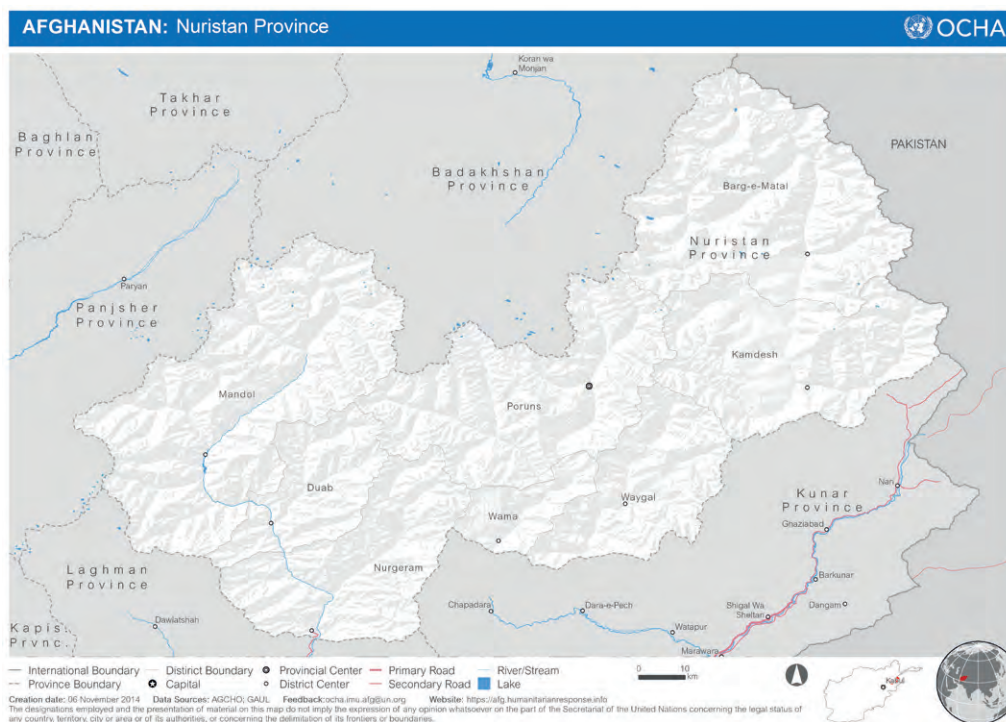
⁽¹¹²⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Shadow district chief among 5 rebels killed, 21 November 2014.

⁽¹¹²¹⁾ Tolonews, 10 Pakistani Taliban Killed in US Drone Strike in Kunar, 7 December 2014.

⁽¹¹²²⁾ Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Pledges of allegiance to new Amir take place throughout Afghanistan, 9 August 2015.

2.5.4 Nuristan

General description of the province



According to UNOCHA, the population of this province is 147,967. The province of Nuristan, surrounded by Laghman, Panjshir, Badakhshan and Kunar provinces⁽¹¹²³⁾, borders Pakistan in the east, and comprises 8 districts: Barg-e-Matal, Duab, Kamdesh, Mandol, Nurgeram, Poruns, Wama and Waygal.⁽¹¹²⁴⁾ The population is mainly composed of Nuristani ethnic groups: Kats, Kunish, Pashayi, Wama and Paroni.⁽¹¹²⁵⁾

Description of the violence

From 1 January to 31 August 2015, Nuristan province counted 64 security incidents. Table 22 provides an overview of the nature of the security incidents:⁽¹¹²⁶⁾

Violence targeting individuals	7
Armed confrontations and airstrikes	44
Explosions	11
Security enforcement	1
Other incidents	1
Total security incidents	64

Table 22: Security incidents by type, Nuristan (Jan - Aug 2015)

The map in figure 24 presents the number of security incidents per district in Nuristan province.⁽¹¹²⁷⁾

⁽¹¹²³⁾ UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Population Estimate for 2015, 26 August 2015.

⁽¹¹²⁴⁾ UNOCHA, Nuristan: Reference Map, 19 February 2014.

⁽¹¹²⁵⁾ MRRD, Nuristan provincial profile, n.d.

⁽¹¹²⁶⁾ For more information on the source of the data and the methodology, see [introduction](#).

⁽¹¹²⁷⁾ For more information on the source and the methodology of the maps, see [introduction](#).

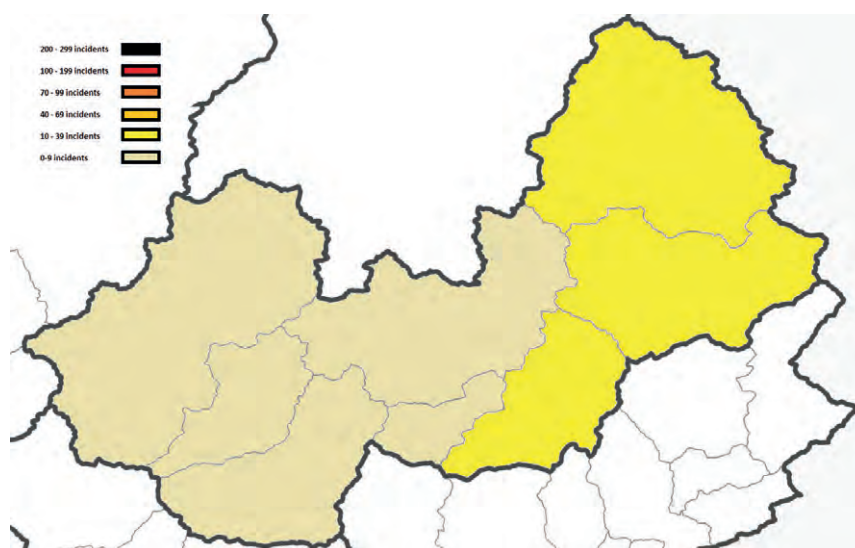


Figure 24: Nuristan, security incidents (Jan - Aug 2015)

The Taliban mounted a major attack in the province ⁽¹¹²⁸⁾ and seized Waygal district in June 2015 ⁽¹¹²⁹⁾ though it was retaken by government forces. ⁽¹¹³⁰⁾

Soldiers and policemen, as well as civilians, were injured or killed in Nuristan due to clashes with the insurgents or in blasts. One police vehicle hit a bomb which killed two policemen in Wama district in Nuristan. ⁽¹¹³¹⁾ In June 2015, 18 security personnel, including ANP, public order police and ANA soldiers were killed during a firefight. Militants also torched the houses of the district police chief and six civilians during the attack. ⁽¹¹³²⁾

According to reports, the Taliban has substantial control of the districts in Nuristan province and reportedly captured several areas recently. President Ghani, while praising the services and sacrifices of the people of Nuristan for the country, said that he will send a delegation to assess the overall situation of this province. ⁽¹¹³³⁾ Unlike many other provinces, after the election of President Ghani no new governor was appointed in Nuristan until September 2015. ⁽¹¹³⁴⁾

The war has also impacted the everyday life of residents. According to Nuristan local authorities at least 80 percent of girls in the province are being denied education. Officials at the women affairs and education directorate in Nuristan province said that due to insecurity and local customs the overwhelming majority of girls are not going to school. Officials said that only a few schools in the capital, Parun, and in a few districts are open to girls. According to officials, among the 255 schools in Nuristan only 20% of them are in actual buildings – the rest are in makeshift locations. ⁽¹¹³⁵⁾

There were casualties among insurgents due to clashes with security forces. Drone and missile strikes injured and killed large numbers of rebels including Taliban fighters. ⁽¹¹³⁶⁾ The latter killed its own fighters on charges of spying for the government or for abandoning fighting. ⁽¹¹³⁷⁾

In March 2015, militants killed three civilians for cooperating with the government. The victims had been kidnapped some days previously and their bodies were returned to their families. They did not have any government jobs. ⁽¹¹³⁸⁾

⁽¹¹²⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban mount big attack on district center in Nuristan, 25 June 2015.

⁽¹¹²⁹⁾ Tolonews, Nuristan Waygal district falls to the Taliban, 26 June 2015.

⁽¹¹³⁰⁾ Tolonews, Forces retake nuristan's district that fell to the Taliban, 26 June 2015.

⁽¹¹³¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 policemen and banker killed in blasts, 26 April 2015.

⁽¹¹³²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 18 soldiers and 20 rebels killed in Want Wegal fight, 27 June 2015.

⁽¹¹³³⁾ New Afghan Press, Ghani to send delegation to Nuristan to assess governance, 17 September 2015.

⁽¹¹³⁴⁾ Roehrs, C. and Suroush, Q., Young technocrats taking over who are the new afghan governors and can they achieve, Afghanistan Analysts Network, 18 September 2015.

⁽¹¹³⁵⁾ Tolonews, 80 percent of Nuristani girls not going to school, 17 September 2015.

⁽¹¹³⁶⁾ Khaama Press, NATO drone strike kills 8 Taliban insurgents in Nuristan, 16 December 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, Drone strike kills 4 insurgents in Nuristan, 22 May 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, 6 Militants killed in Nangarhar drone strike, 26 May 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, US drone strike in Nuristan leaves 5 rebels dead, 28 June 2015; Tolonews, April roundup notes sharp spike in civilian casualties, 5 May 2015.

⁽¹¹³⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Nuristan Taliban gun down former colleagues, 9 May 2015.

⁽¹¹³⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Insurgents kill 3 civilians abducted in Nuristan, 11 March 2015.

Displacements

Compared to other provinces, displacements have been lower in Nuristan. ⁽¹¹³⁹⁾ According to UNOCHA, there were 640 new conflict-induced displacements profiled between 1 January and 31 July 2015 in this province, mainly in the eastern districts. ⁽¹¹⁴⁰⁾

Actors in the conflict

Al Qaeda is believed to maintain a limited presence in Nuristan and continues to have links to anti-government groups operating throughout Afghanistan. ⁽¹¹⁴¹⁾ Al Qaeda and Lashkar-e Taiba are known to operate several training camps in Nuristan. ⁽¹¹⁴²⁾

Multiple insurgent factions have declared their allegiance to IS in Nuristan since September 2014. ⁽¹¹⁴³⁾

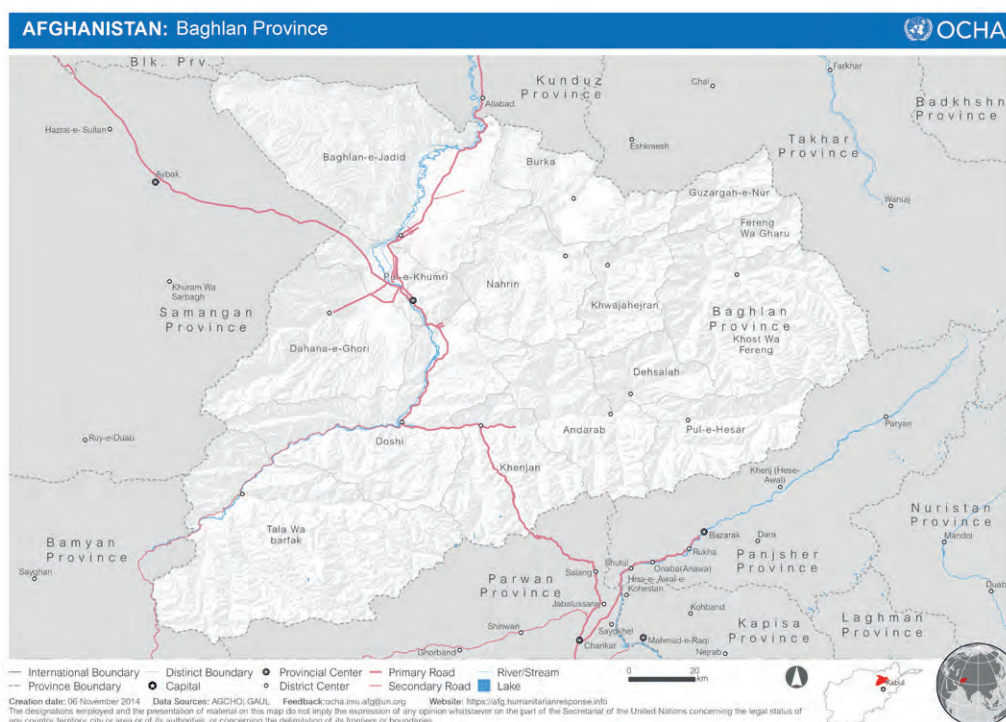
In August 2015, the Provincial council head of Nuristan claimed that IS was constructing a military base in the area of Mandawal which is located in eastern Nuristan and has easy access to Parun, Panjshir and Badakhshan. Nuristan officials confirmed presence of IS and said that ‘the group can recruit more people in Nuristan’. ⁽¹¹⁴⁴⁾

Since August 2015, Mujahidin and Ulama of Nuristan province are under the control of Nuristan deputy in-charge of Taliban, Mawlawi Munibullah. ⁽¹¹⁴⁵⁾

2.6 North-East

2.6.1 Baghlan

General description of the province



⁽¹¹³⁹⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, April 2015.

⁽¹¹⁴⁰⁾ UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Conflict-induced displacements (January to July 2015), 16 September 2015.

⁽¹¹⁴¹⁾ UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Afghanistan, 15 May 2015.

⁽¹¹⁴²⁾ LWJ, Haqqani Network publicizes training camp in Afghanistan, September 2015.

⁽¹¹⁴³⁾ Edinburgh International, Weekly security report, 18 June 2015.

⁽¹¹⁴⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Daesh constructing military base in Nuristan: PC, 5 August 2015.

⁽¹¹⁴⁵⁾ Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Pledges of Allegiance to new Amir take place throughout Afghanistan, 9 August 2015.

According to UNOCHA, the population of this province is 910,784. ⁽¹¹⁴⁶⁾ The province of Baghlan, surrounded by Bamian, Samangan, Kunduz, Takhar, and Parwan provinces, lies on the main route to the north and northeastern regions of Afghanistan ⁽¹¹⁴⁷⁾ and comprises diverse ethnic groups (mainly Tajiks, also Pashtuns, Uzbeks, Turkmens and Ismaili). ⁽¹¹⁴⁸⁾ This province is made up of the following districts: Andarab, Baghlan-e-Jadid, Burka, Dahana-e-Ghori, Dehsalah, Doshi, Fereng Wa Gharu, Guzargah-e-Nur, Khenjan, Khost Wa Fereng, Khwajahejran, Nahrin, Pul-e-Hasar, Pul-e-Kumri ⁽¹¹⁴⁹⁾ and Tala Wa Barfak. ⁽¹¹⁵⁰⁾ Its principal income is derived from agriculture, boosted by the water sources of the Baghlan-Kunduz river system, and from energy plants and modest industrial enterprises, notably the Ghorī cement factory, the sugar mill, hydropower plants, and coal mines. ⁽¹¹⁵¹⁾

Description of the violence

From 1 January to 31 August 2015, Baghlan province counted 354 security incidents. Table 23 provides an overview of the nature of the security incidents: ⁽¹¹⁵²⁾

Violence targeting individuals	31
Armed confrontations and airstrikes	174
Explosions	65
Security enforcement	71
Non-conflict related incidents	12
Other incidents	1
Total security incidents	354

Table 23: Security incidents by type, Baghlan (Jan - Aug 2015)

The map in figure 25 presents the number of security incidents per district in Baghlan province. ⁽¹¹⁵³⁾

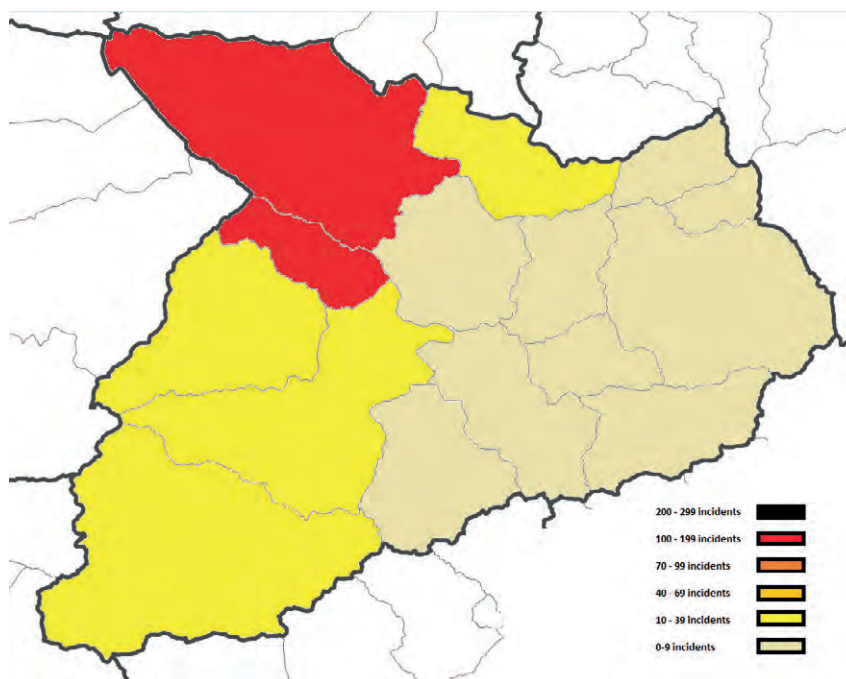


Figure 25: Baghlan, security incidents (Jan - Aug 2015)

⁽¹¹⁴⁶⁾ UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Population Estimate for 2015, 26 August 2015.

⁽¹¹⁴⁷⁾ MRRD, Baghlan Provincial Profile, n.d.

⁽¹¹⁴⁸⁾ AAN, Baghlan on the Brink: ANSF weaknesses and Taliban resilience, 31 May 2013.

⁽¹¹⁴⁹⁾ UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Baghlan Province – District Atlas, April 2014.

⁽¹¹⁵⁰⁾ UNOCHA, Baghlan Province – Reference Map, 19 February 2014.

⁽¹¹⁵¹⁾ Goodhand, J. and Hakimi, A., Counterinsurgency, local militias, and statebuilding in Afghanistan, January 2014.

⁽¹¹⁵²⁾ For more information on the source of the data and the methodology, see [introduction](#).

⁽¹¹⁵³⁾ For more information on the source and the methodology of the maps, see [introduction](#).

Foreign troops transferred the security responsibilities of the province to the ANSF in June 2013. ⁽¹¹⁵⁴⁾ The following year was marked by increasing violence. In 2015, and especially during the month of Ramadan (June–July), the province was affected by a series of attacks. ⁽¹¹⁵⁵⁾ Hundreds of acres of crops were destroyed and dozens of families were left homeless because of these attacks. ⁽¹¹⁵⁶⁾ According to the report of the UN Secretary-General, the victims of attacks in Baghlan were predominantly civilians. A series of deadly attacks targeted NGO teams. ⁽¹¹⁵⁷⁾ The Taliban attacked many Provincial Council candidates from Baghlan. ⁽¹¹⁵⁸⁾ Among civilians, women are also targeted. Taliban militants forcibly married an engaged girl and a married woman to their fighters in Burka district. ⁽¹¹⁵⁹⁾ Women and children are victims of indiscriminate attacks. ⁽¹¹⁶⁰⁾

The deteriorating situation led the Afghan government to sign a deal with tribal elders seeking to keep the insurgents from attacking security forces and placing landmines. ⁽¹¹⁶¹⁾ As a result, the local government was accused of handing the Baghlan area to the Taliban. ⁽¹¹⁶²⁾

UNAMA launched an initiative focused on promoting inclusive Afghan-owned and -led dialogue in Baghlan province. The initiative was focused on engagement with local ulema and resulted in recommendations to support the latter's role in local mediation efforts and conflict resolution mechanisms to address drivers of conflict. Ulema involved in the initiative called upon the government to strengthen ties between local and national level reconciliation efforts. On 15 July 2015, participants in the Afghan People's Dialogue on Peace asked the parties to consider the needs of the people, including women and young people, in any negotiations. ⁽¹¹⁶³⁾

Security operations have been conducted in 2015. At least 31 Taliban fighters were killed and 47 others injured in August 2015. ⁽¹¹⁶⁴⁾ Earlier in the year 86 rebels were killed and 142 others wounded. ⁽¹¹⁶⁵⁾ Many insurgents have surrendered due to these operations. For example, 10 insurgents, including its commander Nooruddin, joined the peace process in Baghlan in March 2015. ⁽¹¹⁶⁶⁾ More than 1,200 insurgents were provided with employment opportunities after shunning violence in the province. Among them, the commanders were paid 13,000 afghanis (afs) while the fighters were paid 8,000 afs monthly by the government. ⁽¹¹⁶⁷⁾ Weapons were recovered in the province. ⁽¹¹⁶⁸⁾ Suicide attack organisers ⁽¹¹⁶⁹⁾ as well as rebels involved in planting landmines and issuing night letters were arrested. ⁽¹¹⁷⁰⁾

In November 2014, 20 people watching a *buzkashi* competition were injured by a powerful blast. ⁽¹¹⁷¹⁾ In December 2014, a suicide bomber blew himself up during funeral prayers for a tribal elder in the province, leaving at least nine people dead, including a former jihadi commander and a district security official, and 22 others wounded. ⁽¹¹⁷²⁾ Many civilians were killed in bomb blasts in 2015. ⁽¹¹⁷³⁾ In July 2015, passengers on a bus were abducted in Baghlan and released in exchange for a Taliban commander. ⁽¹¹⁷⁴⁾ Kidnappings are increasing on Afghan highways. ⁽¹¹⁷⁵⁾ The Taliban continue to target police and security forces. In April 2015, a roadside bomb killed four police officers and

⁽¹¹⁵⁴⁾ Khaama Press, Baghlan security responsibilities transferred to Afghan forces, 15 June 2013.

⁽¹¹⁵⁵⁾ UN Security Council, The Situation in Afghanistan and its implication for international peace and security, 1 September 2015.

⁽¹¹⁵⁶⁾ Tolonews, SPECIAL REPORT: ongoing Fighting Has Devastating Effect on Baghlan Locals, 16 June 2015.

⁽¹¹⁵⁷⁾ Triple Canopy, Afghanistan weekly security report, 4 June 2015.

⁽¹¹⁵⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Wolesi Jirga member survives bomb attack, 21 December 2014.

⁽¹¹⁵⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 Baghlan women forcibly married to Taliban men, 3 September 2015.

⁽¹¹⁶⁰⁾ Ariana News, Roadside bomb kills women, injures 15 civilians in Baghlan, 10 March 2015.

⁽¹¹⁶¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Govt deal to keep Taliban out draws flak in Baghlan, 16 September 2015.

⁽¹¹⁶²⁾ Tolonews, Local Govt accused of handing Baghlan Area to Taliban, 16 September 2015.

⁽¹¹⁶³⁾ UN Security Council, The Situation in Afghanistan and its implication for international peace and security, 1 September 2015.

⁽¹¹⁶⁴⁾ Tolonews, 31 Insurgents killed in Baghlan Operation, 18 August 2015.

⁽¹¹⁶⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 86 rebels eliminated in a fortnight in North: ANA, 4 February 2015.

⁽¹¹⁶⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Rebel groups surrender in Nuristan, Baghlan, 26 March 2015.

⁽¹¹⁶⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Baghlan rebels get jobs after shunning violence, 2 March 2015.

⁽¹¹⁶⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 9 held, weapons recovered in Kabul & Baghlan, 27 January 2015; Khaama Press, Terrorist arrested, hidden ammunition depot seized in Baghlan, 6 April 2015.

⁽¹¹⁶⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 19 suicide attack organisers nabbed: NDS, 5 December 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, 4 suspected militants detained in Baghlan, says NDS, 15 September 2015.

⁽¹¹⁷⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 4 suspected militants detained in Baghlan, says NDS, 15 September 2015.

⁽¹¹⁷¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 20 injured in blast on buzkashi ground, 18 November 2014.

⁽¹¹⁷²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 9 dead, 22 injured in suicide attack at funeral, 2 December 2014.

⁽¹¹⁷³⁾ UNAMA, Press Release, UN envoy Nicholas Haysom condemns attack targeting Baghlan civilians, 14 July 2015.

⁽¹¹⁷⁴⁾ Tolonews, Baghlan Hostages Released By Taliban after 48 Hours, 28 July 2015.

⁽¹¹⁷⁵⁾ Tolonews, Senators Blast Government Over Insecurity in North, 26 April 2015.

injured two others in Baghlan. ⁽¹¹⁷⁶⁾ During an event organised in July 2015 by the acting Governor of Baghlan, Sultan Muhammad Ibadi, a bomb blast hit a mosque in Pul-e-Khomri. Forty worshippers were wounded including women, children, senior local officials and a provincial lawmaker. No group claimed responsibility for the bombing. ⁽¹¹⁷⁷⁾ In the same month, Taliban fighters took control of the Baiseqal locality of Baghlan-e-Markazi after police had retreated from the area. ⁽¹¹⁷⁸⁾

Police and army installations have been targeted. The Taliban seized the Baghlan Police Training Centre in May 2015 ⁽¹¹⁷⁹⁾ and a military post in July 2015. ⁽¹¹⁸⁰⁾ In the beginning of September 2015, three policemen joined the Taliban with their weapons. ⁽¹¹⁸¹⁾ Earlier in the year, militants captured three bases and 20 checkpoints after severe fighting in Dand-i-Ghori and Baghlan-e-Markazi. ⁽¹¹⁸²⁾

The operations led by the rebel groups in Baghlan are diverse: intimidation letters sent at night, kidnappings, landmine attacks, bomb blasts, suicide bombings, ambushes, roadside bombings as mentioned previously, as well as firefights with the security forces. ⁽¹¹⁸³⁾

Displacement

According to UNOCHA, about 800 families reportedly remained displaced in Baghlan province as of 27 May 2015. ⁽¹¹⁸⁴⁾ In June 2015, 150 Baghlan families were displaced due to clashes. ⁽¹¹⁸⁵⁾ Northern Afghanistan has seen a marked increase in conflict-induced displacement during the summer of 2015. ⁽¹¹⁸⁶⁾

Actors in the conflict

Several armed groups, particularly the Taliban ⁽¹¹⁸⁷⁾, can be found in Baghlan. The former head of Baghlan, Qari Muhammad Ishaq, pledged his allegiance to the new Amir of the Islamic Emirate, Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansur. ⁽¹¹⁸⁸⁾ The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), which declared allegiance to IS ⁽¹¹⁸⁹⁾, is present in the province. ⁽¹¹⁹⁰⁾ The newly arrived IS insurgents were operating in Baghlan in February 2015. ⁽¹¹⁹¹⁾ According to the Head of Baghlan Provincial Council, about 1,000 illegal armed men are known to be active in the province. ⁽¹¹⁹²⁾

⁽¹¹⁷⁶⁾ RFE/RL, Deadly Roadside Bombings Target Police in Afghanistan, 6 April 2015; Tolonews, Senators Blast Government Over Insecurity in North, 26 April 2015.

⁽¹¹⁷⁷⁾ Tolonews, Bomb blast hits mosque in Baghlan, 40 wounded: officials, 13 July 2015.

⁽¹¹⁷⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban take control of area after police retreat, 23 July 2015.

⁽¹¹⁷⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban seize Baghlan Police Training Centre, 16 May 2015.

⁽¹¹⁸⁰⁾ Tolonews, Insurgents seize control of Military Post in Baghlan district : Officials, 11 July 2015.

⁽¹¹⁸¹⁾ Tolonews, Three police join Taliban in Baghlan, 3 September 2015.

⁽¹¹⁸²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Baghlan facing looming insurgents' threat: PC, May 2015.

⁽¹¹⁸³⁾ Tolonews, Fearce Fighting in Baghlan, 7 killed, 2 June 2015.

⁽¹¹⁸⁴⁾ UNOCHA, AFGHANISTAN: Conflict-Induced Displacement (as of 27 May 2015).

⁽¹¹⁸⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 10 killed, 150 families displaced in Baghlan clashes, 3 June 2015.

⁽¹¹⁸⁶⁾ UNAMA, Humanitarian situation focus of UN envoy's visit to Faryab province, 27 August 2015.

⁽¹¹⁸⁷⁾ Tolonews, Troops surrounded by Taliban in Baghlan: Officials, 28 June 2015.

⁽¹¹⁸⁸⁾ Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Pledges of Allegiance to new Amir take place throughout Afghanistan, 9 August 2015.

⁽¹¹⁸⁹⁾ Tolonews, Daesh activity caught on camera in Afghanistan, 7 April 2015.

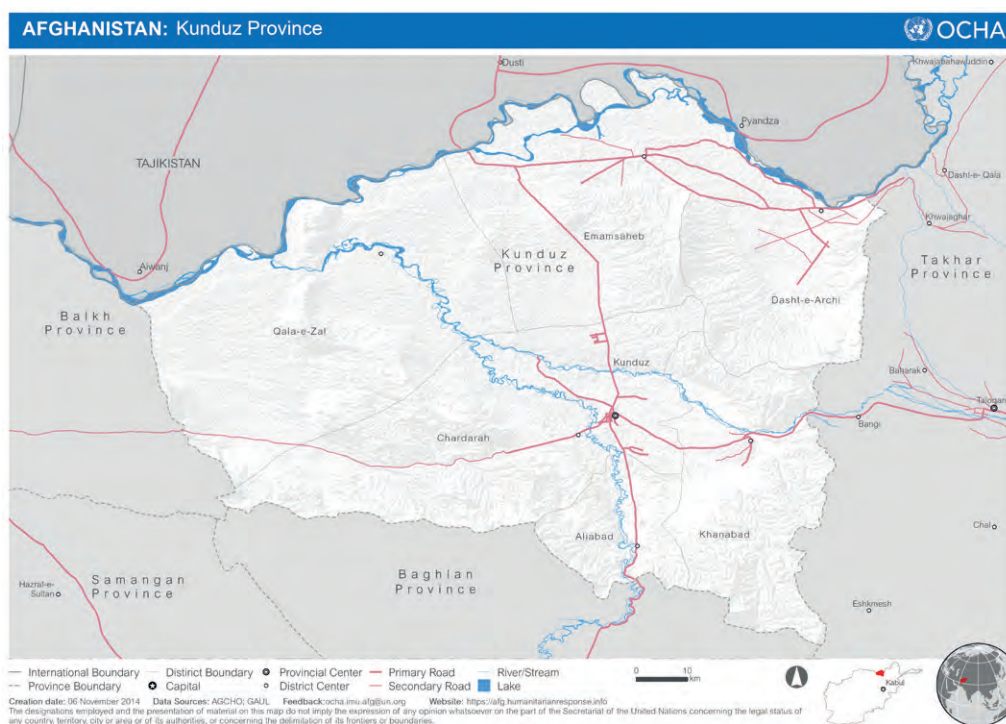
⁽¹¹⁹⁰⁾ RFE/RL, The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan Overshadows Afghan Battlefield, 12 May 2015.

⁽¹¹⁹¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, ISIS flexing muscles in Kunduz, governor says, 2 February 2015.

⁽¹¹⁹²⁾ Tolonews, 22 People killed at Wedding Party in Baghlan, 27 July 2015.

2.6.2 Kunduz

General description of the province



According to UNOCHA, the population of this province is 1,010,037. ⁽¹¹⁹³⁾ Kunduz, surrounded by Balkh, Takhar, and Baghlan provinces, and by Tajikistan, is made up of Aliabad, Chardarah, Dasht-e-Archi, Emamsaheb, Khanabad, Kunduz and Qala-e-Zal districts. ⁽¹¹⁹⁴⁾ It lies in the northern region of Afghanistan and comprises diverse ethnic groups (Pashtuns (34%), Uzbeks (27%), Tajiks (20%) and Turkmens (9.4%). This mix has often led to inter-ethnic tensions over control of Kunduz which is crossed by the strategic trade route north to Tajikistan. ⁽¹¹⁹⁵⁾

Description of the violence

From 1 January to 31 August 2015, Kunduz province counted 462 security incidents. Table 24 provides an overview of the nature of the security incidents: ⁽¹¹⁹⁶⁾

Violence targeting individuals	44
Armed confrontations and airstrikes	291
Explosions	69
Security enforcement	48
Non-conflict related incidents	7
Other incidents	3
Total security incidents	462

Table 24: Security incidents by type, Kunduz (Jan - Aug 2015)

The map in figure 26 presents the number of security incidents per district in Kunduz province. ⁽¹¹⁹⁷⁾

⁽¹¹⁹³⁾ UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Population Estimate for 2015, 26 August 2015.

⁽¹¹⁹⁴⁾ UNOCHA, Kunduz: Province Atlas, April 2014.

⁽¹¹⁹⁵⁾ News (The), Wounded flood trauma centre as Taliban attack Afghan city, 25 August 2014.

⁽¹¹⁹⁶⁾ For more information on the source of the data and the methodology, see [introduction](#).

⁽¹¹⁹⁷⁾ For more information on the source and the methodology of the maps, see [introduction](#).

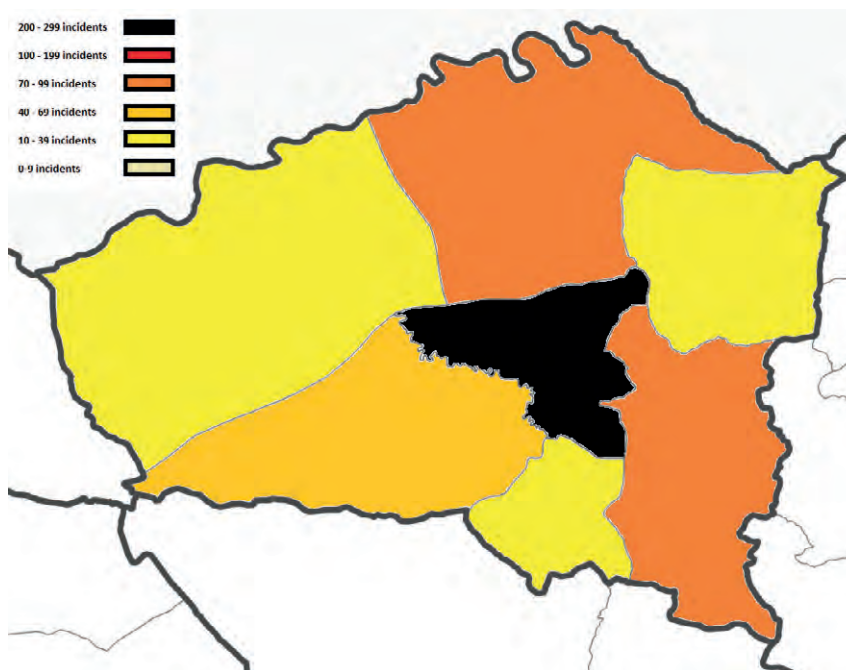


Figure 26: Kunduz, security incidents (Jan - Aug 2015)

Foreign troops transferred security responsibilities of the province to Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) in July 2012, except for the Khanabad district. ⁽¹¹⁹⁸⁾

According to the Afghanistan Analysts Network in October 2014, the security situation was ‘worsening in Kunduz province which is an exceptionally complex region of Afghanistan where the presence of numerous factions and a diverse population have made it nearly impossible for any one force to control the entire province’. The local MP noted that ‘Khanabad was close to collapse’ and a similar warning with regard to Dasht-e-Archi and Emamsaheb came from local government officials. ⁽¹¹⁹⁹⁾

The situation continues to be very instable in Kunduz. The ANSF tried to recruit militias to fight against the Taliban ⁽¹²⁰⁰⁾ while the latter, able to mount large and simultaneous operations in various areas ⁽¹²⁰¹⁾, was about to seize important localities such as Gor Tapa. ⁽¹²⁰²⁾ Disputes between officials in the province can partly explain the instability. The governor, a Pashtun appointed by President Ghani, did not get along with the police chief, a Tajik appointed from the Abdullah camp for reason of ethnic balance in the power share, nor with his deputy, a long-serving mujahid. ⁽¹²⁰³⁾

Taken by surprise by the Taliban’s first 2015 ‘spring offensive’ in Kunduz, ANSF were, however, able to react and push the insurgents back in some areas while they held their ground in others. ⁽¹²⁰⁴⁾ Many insurgents surrendered and agreed to join the peace process. ⁽¹²⁰⁵⁾ According to ISW, as of September 2015, militants remain entrenched outside the provincial capital. ⁽¹²⁰⁶⁾

On 28 September 2015, the Taliban overran the city of Kunduz, taking control of most areas and freeing hundreds of prisoners from its jail. Hundreds of militants stormed the city before dawn, quickly seizing key buildings and advancing on the airport. ⁽¹²⁰⁷⁾ This was the group’s first attempt on this scale to capture a provincial capital in 12 years of insurgency. The fighters entered the city and overran government buildings with little resistance. ⁽¹²⁰⁸⁾

⁽¹¹⁹⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, ISAF focus boosting Kunduz civil sector, 16 July 2012.

⁽¹¹⁹⁹⁾ Bleuer, C. and Obaid, A., Security in Kunduz worsening further: the case of Khanabad, 28 October 2014.

⁽¹²⁰⁰⁾ AAN, Stretched Afghan Army falls back on militias to help defend Kunduz, 22 May 2015.

⁽¹²⁰¹⁾ Ruttig, T., ANSF wrong Foot: The Taliban Offensive in Kunduz, 3 May 2015.

⁽¹²⁰²⁾ Obaid, A., The 2015 Insurgency in the North: Case Studies from Kunduz and Sar-e-Pul, 5 June 2015.

⁽¹²⁰³⁾ Matta, B., The Failed Pilot Test: Kunduz local governance crisis, 5 June 2015.

⁽¹²⁰⁴⁾ Ruttig, T., ANSF wrong Foot: The Taliban Offensive in Kunduz, 3 May 2015.

⁽¹²⁰⁵⁾ Afghan Zariza, At least 22 Taliban insurgents lay down arms in Kunduz province, 16 May 2015.

⁽¹²⁰⁶⁾ ISW, Militant Attack and Support Zones in Afghanistan: April - September 2015, 18 September 2015.

⁽¹²⁰⁷⁾ BBC, Taliban overrun Afghan city of Kunduz, 28 September 2015.

⁽¹²⁰⁸⁾ Osman, B., The Fall of Kunduz: What does it tell us about the strength of the post-Omar Taliban?, 30 September 2015.

According to the government, the city was retaken after a counter-offensive on 1 October 2015, however the Taliban contested this claim. ⁽¹²⁰⁹⁾ According to several sources, fighting was still ongoing in the city centre for days after 1 October. ⁽¹²¹⁰⁾ Reuters reported ongoing hit-and-run attacks by Taliban fighters. ⁽¹²¹¹⁾

People injured by the fighting were treated in the Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) hospital. The Afghan authorities suspected the Taliban would take shelter in the hospital. On the night of October 3, 2015, US forces carried out airstrikes in Kunduz and the MSF hospital was hit. Many patients and MSF staff were injured or killed in the attack. Having blamed the Taliban, saying that it attacked American Special Forces soldiers, then the ANSF for incorrect information, the US military admitted that the hospital had been mistakenly targeted. President Obama has apologised to MSF for the error. MSF accused Afghan and US forces of war crimes and wants an investigation to be conducted by an independent international commission. ⁽¹²¹²⁾ In an interview with UN Radio, Nicholas Haysom, the top UN envoy in Afghanistan and head of UNAMA, noted that the air strike on the MSF hospital had further deteriorated the humanitarian conditions in Kunduz. ⁽¹²¹³⁾

Insurgents suffered heavy casualties in Kunduz. Many of them were killed each month in 2015 in operations led by ANSF, including airstrikes (at least 70 in January, 30 in February, 21 in March, 150 in April, 200 in May, 19 in June, 14 in August). ⁽¹²¹⁴⁾ The security forces began also to use the Taliban to launch insider attacks and get insurgents eliminated by their own colleagues. In September 2015, Abdul Latif, a Taleb in touch with security forces, attacked a house where his colleagues had been invited and killed 14 of them ⁽¹²¹⁵⁾ before surrendering to ANSF.

In August 2015, 29 people were killed in a Taliban suicide bombing. The Home Ministry described the victims as civilians but local officials and the Taliban said they were pro-government militiamen. ⁽¹²¹⁶⁾ One month later, six civilians, half of them children, were killed during separate incidents of violence in northern Kunduz and northwestern Badghis provinces. ⁽¹²¹⁷⁾

Newspapers barely mention the casualties suffered by security forces in Kunduz. A police headquarters was targeted in February 2015. ⁽¹²¹⁸⁾ In March 2015, 7 policemen were ambushed and killed by at least 33 insurgents. ⁽¹²¹⁹⁾ In June 2015, 12 soldiers were killed in clashes. ⁽¹²²⁰⁾

A series of deadly attacks against NGOs were carried out in rural areas. ⁽¹²²¹⁾ Civilians are victims of blind attacks, including women and children.

MSF medical teams treated 77 patients directly wounded in the fighting, one-third of whom were women or children. ⁽¹²²²⁾ Civilians are also harassed by Taliban and pro-government militiamen who extort money from them. ⁽¹²²³⁾

The operations led by the rebel groups are diverse: bomb blasts, ambushes, suicide bombings and attacks as previously mentioned, but also kidnappings which are increasing in the province. ⁽¹²²⁴⁾

⁽¹²⁰⁹⁾ RFE/RL, Afghan Officials Say Have Retaken Control Of Most Of Kunduz, 1 October 2015; LA Times, Even as Afghan forces reclaim Kunduz, question remains: Why did city fall?, 1 October 2015; Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Remarks of spokesman of Islamic Emirate regarding report by Amnesty International, 2 October 2015.

⁽¹²¹⁰⁾ Afghan, Mirwais [Twitter], posted on: 6 October 2015; Sarwary, Bilal [Twitter], posted on: 6 October 2015; Tolonews [Twitter], posted on: 6 October 2015.

⁽¹²¹¹⁾ Reuters, Taliban fighters launch hit-and-run attacks in Afghanistan's Kunduz, 6 October 2015.

⁽¹²¹²⁾ Monde (Le), Centre MSF de Kunduz : histoire d'une bavure, 8 October 2015.

⁽¹²¹³⁾ UNAMA, Civilians at risk as security across northeast Afghanistan remains volatile, 6 October 2015.

⁽¹²¹⁴⁾ Tolonews, 70 Taliban insurgents killed in Kunduz operation, 27 January 2015; Tolonews, 19 insurgents killed in Afghan forces operations, 3 February 2015; Tolonews, 11 Taliban insurgents killed in Kunduz operation, 23 February 2015; Tolonews, Afghan airstrike kills 21 Taliban in Kunduz, 4 March 2015; Tolonews, 104 Taliban insurgents killed in nationwide ANSF operations, 25 April 2015; Tolonews, 40 Taliban insurgents killed in clash with ANSF in Kunduz, 26 April 2015; Tolonews, Kunduz battle leaves 154 Taliban insurgents dead, 29 April 2015; Tolonews, More than 200 insurgents killed in Kunduz as clashes continue, 2 May 2015; Tolonews, 19 Taliban insurgents killed in Kunduz airstrike, 27 June 2015.

⁽¹²¹⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 14 Taliban killed in First 'insider attack' in Kunduz, 1 September 2015.

⁽¹²¹⁶⁾ BBC, Afghanistan: Taliban attack in Kunduz kills 29, 9 August 2015.

⁽¹²¹⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Children among six Civilians killed in Kunduz, Badghis, 7 September 2015.

⁽¹²¹⁸⁾ Tolonews, Five Insurgents Killed in Attack on Kunduz Police Headquarter, 10 February 2015.

⁽¹²¹⁹⁾ Indian Express (The), Taliban kill 7 police in ambush, 12 March 2015.

⁽¹²²⁰⁾ Tolonews, 12 Soldiers killed in ongoing Kunduz clashes, 21 June 2015.

⁽¹²²¹⁾ Triple Canopy, Afghanistan Weekly Security Report, 4 June 2015.

⁽¹²²²⁾ MSF, Scores Treated after Fighting in Kunduz, Afghanistan, 25 June 2015.

⁽¹²²³⁾ RFE/RL, Civilians displaced and Repressed in Volatile Afghan Province, Gandhara, 11 June 2015.

⁽¹²²⁴⁾ Afghanistan Today, Security Alliances crumble in Kunduz, 22 May 2015.

Regarding child recruitment in 2014, 55 cases of recruitment by armed opposition groups, five cases by the ANSF and two cases by a pro-Government militia have been recorded in Kunduz province. Most of the residences in Khanabad have to ‘voluntarily’ offer a young member of their families to a local armed group in order to secure their own protection. Otherwise, they have to arm themselves and protect their house, night and day. ⁽¹²²⁵⁾ The recruitment and use of children as fighters in Kunduz was also reported in 2015, the youngest being only 10 years old. ⁽¹²²⁶⁾

Since the launch of the Taliban offensive on Kunduz on 28 September 2015, at least 10 children have been killed and 53 injured. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Leila Zerrougui, expressed ‘alarm at reports of the use of children – some allegedly as young as 10 years old – by the Taliban in fighting in and around Kunduz. An unconfirmed number of these children were reportedly killed during combat. As a result of the hostilities, all 497 schools in Kunduz province have been closed, impeding access to education for over 330,000 children’. ⁽¹²²⁷⁾

Displacement

According to UNOCHA, 18,355 families from Aliabad, Chardarah, Dasht-e-Archi, Emamsaheb, Khanabad, Kunduz and Qala-e-Zal were reportedly displaced to Kunduz City and surrounding districts as of 27 May 2015. ⁽¹²²⁸⁾ If they cannot get back home in time to sow, they will lose the year’s harvest. ⁽¹²²⁹⁾

In August 2015, some 2,000 more families in northern Kunduz province were displaced due to fear of conflict, living in dire conditions. ⁽¹²³⁰⁾ After the launch of the Taliban offensive on 28 September 2015, these figures evolved. More than 7,000 families have been verified as displaced in Taloqan. Some families returned to Kunduz city. ⁽¹²³¹⁾

The fall of Kunduz city and the surge in violence in the region caused a displacement of between 100,000 and 140,000 people. ⁽¹²³²⁾ As of 18 October 2015, UNOCHA estimated more than 21,400 families being displaced to the regions surrounding Kunduz. ⁽¹²³³⁾

Actors in the conflict

As mentioned above, the Taliban is present in large numbers in Kunduz province. Civilians disappointed by official courts ask the Taliban to resolve their disputes. ⁽¹²³⁴⁾ According to the Taliban shadow governor of Kunduz, Mulla Abdul Salam Baryalai, the insurgents took control of many areas in this province. ⁽¹²³⁵⁾

Various illegal armed groups are major concerns for the Afghan government. These groups can be divided into three categories: groups led by former jihadi commanders, armed militias fighting against the Taliban, and criminal groups. ⁽¹²³⁶⁾ The governor of the province complained that he could not implement the urban master plan for Kunduz city due to interference by mafia elements and some powerful individuals in the province. ⁽¹²³⁷⁾

The largest foreign fighter contingents are said to be based with their families in Kunduz. ⁽¹²³⁸⁾ Three hundred Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) militants were present in the province by December 2014 who were reportedly led by Qari Balal who escaped from a Pakistani jail in 2010. ⁽¹²³⁹⁾ In August 2015, the National Directorate of Security,

⁽¹²²⁵⁾ Child Soldiers, Briefing on the situation of underage recruitment and use of children by armed forces and insurgent groups in Afghanistan to the UN Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, June 2015.

⁽¹²²⁶⁾ Al Jazeera, Q&A: The Taliban’s child soldiers in Kunduz, 14 October 2015; Tolonews, Concerns Raised Over Taliban’s Recruitment Of Child Soldiers, 28 October 2015; Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Concern over mourning child casualties and grave violations in Kunduz voiced by Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, 9 October 2015; Telegraph (The), ‘We can’t go back’ say women activists on Taliban Kunduz ‘hit list’, 18 October 2015.

⁽¹²²⁷⁾ Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Concern over mourning child casualties and grave violations in Kunduz voiced by Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, 9 October 2015.

⁽¹²²⁸⁾ UNOCHA, AFGHANISTAN: Conflict-Induced Displacement (as of 27 May 2015).

⁽¹²²⁹⁾ Ruttig, T., ANSF wrong Foot: The Taliban Offensive in Kunduz, 3 May 2015.

⁽¹²³⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Fear War Kunduz displaces 2000 more families, 31 August 2015.

⁽¹²³¹⁾ UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Northeast Conflict Situation – Situation Report No.9, 15 October 2015.

⁽¹²³²⁾ ACAPS, Afghanistan: ACAPS Briefing Note – Conflict and Displacement in the Northeast, Kunduz City, and Kabul, 13 October 2015.

⁽¹²³³⁾ UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Conflict Situation in North-Eastern Provinces (18 October 2015), 18 October 2015.

⁽¹²³⁴⁾ NY Times, Taliban Justice Gains Favor As Official Afghan Courts Fail, 31 January 2015.

⁽¹²³⁵⁾ Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, An interview with Mulla Abdul Salam Baryalai, the Jihadi in-charge of Kunduz Province, n.d.

⁽¹²³⁶⁾ Bleuer, C. and Ali, O., Security in Kunduz worsening further: the case of Khanabad, 28 October 2014.

⁽¹²³⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Mafia groups behind spiraling insecurity in Kunduz: Safi, 27 July 2015.

⁽¹²³⁸⁾ Tolonews, Influx of foreign militants blamed for uptick in violence, 28 April 2015.

⁽¹²³⁹⁾ Congressional Research Service, Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security and US Policy, 2 December 2014.

Afghanistan's intelligence service, claimed it killed Qari Ghulam Hazrat, the leader of Jundallah, in an airstrike in Kunduz province. Also known as Abu Hazefa, he had worked as 'military official' of the Taliban and served in al Qaeda. The Taliban has coordinated its northern offensive with groups such as Jundallah and the Islamic Jihad Union, an offshoot of IMU. The Islamic Jihad Union's fighters pledged loyalty to Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour, the newly appointed leader of the Taliban. Jundallah is a wing of the IMU which joined IS in August 2015. In the past, IMU has integrated its leaders and fighters with the Taliban command structure in northern Afghan. ⁽¹²⁴⁰⁾ The provincial governor stated that the Taliban had pledged allegiance to IS in this area for its own safety and the fighters had raised the group's black flag in nearby villages. He also said that foreign fighters from Turkey, Chechnya, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan have been found among the dead. ⁽¹²⁴¹⁾ Afghan officials have confirmed the presence of IS militants in the northeastern province of Kunduz, which borders Tajikistan and is close to Uzbekistan. ⁽¹²⁴²⁾ Dasht-e-Archi district has been turned into a training centre for Taliban, Jundallah and IS insurgents operating in Kunduz. ⁽¹²⁴³⁾

ALP forces are present in Kunduz, as well as armed pro-government militias. UNAMA continued to report serious human rights violations conducted by these actors in the province, including targeted killings, illegal detention, severe beatings, property destruction, theft, threats, intimidation, and harassment. ⁽¹²⁴⁴⁾

⁽¹²⁴⁰⁾ Roggio, B., Jundallah emir killed in northern Afghanistan, NDS claims, the Long War Journal, 25 August 2015.

⁽¹²⁴¹⁾ Tolonews, Kunduz Governor reports Taliban allegiance to Daesh, 26 May 2015.

⁽¹²⁴²⁾ RFE/RL, Islamic State rears its head in Afghan region bordering Central Asia, 4 March 2015.

⁽¹²⁴³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, ISIS flexing muscles in Kunduz, governor says, 2 February 2015.

⁽¹²⁴⁴⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan Midyear Report 2015, Protection of civilians in armed conflict, August 2015, pp. 69-75.

2.6.3 Takhar

General description of the province



The province of Takhar (capital Taloqan) is composed of 17 districts: Baharak, Bangi, Chahab, Chal, Darqad, Dasht-e-Qala, Eshkashem, Farkhar, Hazarsumuch, Khwajabahawuddin, Khwajaghar, Kalafgan, Namakab, Rostaq, Taloqan, Warsaj, Yangi Qala⁽¹²⁴⁵⁾ and has a largely mountainous or semi-mountainous landscape.⁽¹²⁴⁶⁾ According to UNOCHA, the population is 983,336⁽¹²⁴⁷⁾, and is divided between two main ethnic groups: Uzbeks (44%) and Tadjiks (42%); Pashtun tribes (10%) and Hazaras are also present⁽¹²⁴⁸⁾

⁽¹²⁴⁵⁾ UNOCHA, Paktya Province - Reference Map, 9 February 2014; MRRD, Takhar Provincial Profile, n.d., p. 2.

⁽¹²⁴⁶⁾ MRRD, Takhar Provincial Profile, n.d.

⁽¹²⁴⁷⁾ UNOCHA, Afghanistan population estimate for 2015, 26 August 2015.

⁽¹²⁴⁸⁾ Giustozzi, A. and Reuter, C., *The Insurgents of the Afghan North*, November 2011, p. 45.

Description of the violence

From 1 January to 31 August 2015, Takhar province counted 123 security incidents. Table 25 provides an overview of the nature of the security incidents: ⁽¹²⁴⁹⁾

Violence targeting individuals	7
Armed confrontations and airstrikes	72
Explosions	12
Security enforcement	20
Non-conflict related incidents	12
Total security incidents	123

Table 25: Security incidents by type, Takhar (Jan - Aug 2015)

The map in figure 27 presents the number of security incidents per district in Takhar province. ⁽¹²⁵⁰⁾

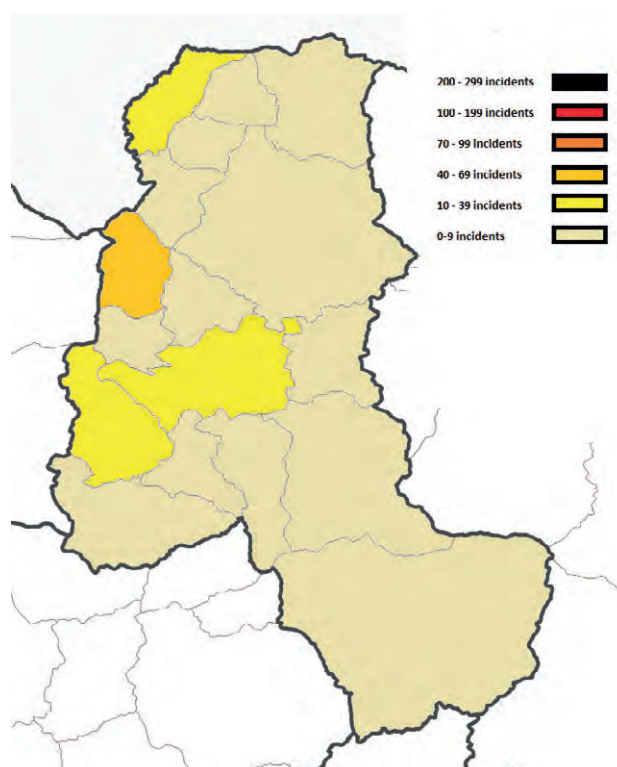


Figure 27: Takhar, security incidents (Jan - Aug 2015)

During the first six months of 2015, insurgents showed their active presence with several attacks against the ANP by storming police checkpoints (Darqad district ⁽¹²⁵¹⁾ and Dasht-e Qala ⁽¹²⁵²⁾) and police posts (Khwajaghar district ⁽¹²⁵³⁾), organising ambushes (Khwajaghar district) ⁽¹²⁵⁴⁾ or using magnetic bombs. ⁽¹²⁵⁵⁾ Civilians can be indirect victims when ANP is targeted: In July 2015, 7 people were wounded after an explosion near a police headquarters in Taloqan. ⁽¹²⁵⁶⁾ Insurgents also target government representatives: In July 2015, the Bangi district executive chief was killed by an

⁽¹²⁴⁹⁾ For more information on the source of the data and the methodology, see [introduction](#).

⁽¹²⁵⁰⁾ For more information on the source and the methodology of the maps, see [introduction](#).

⁽¹²⁵¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban shadow district chief, 3 police dead in clash, 30 June 2015.

⁽¹²⁵²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 8 police wounded in Takhar, Zabul attacks, 28 March 2015.

⁽¹²⁵³⁾ Tolonews, Two Policemen Killed by Taliban in Takhar, 14 April 2015; Tolonews, Six Taliban Insurgents Killed in Takhar, 17 November 2014.

⁽¹²⁵⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 8 police including a commander dead in Takhar ambush, 12 March 2015; Ariana News, 8 local police killed by armed oppositions in Takhar, 12 March 2015.

⁽¹²⁵⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Blast leaves senior Takhar police official injured, 21 May 2015.

⁽¹²⁵⁶⁾ Ariana News, Explosion rocks Takhar province in north Afghanistan, 25 July 2015.

IED; ⁽¹²⁵⁷⁾ in June 2015 the Eshkashem district governor and his communication director were shot dead ⁽¹²⁵⁸⁾, one month before the prosecutor of the same district was killed with his son in the same manner; ⁽¹²⁵⁹⁾ and in November 2014, an education official was shot dead in a Namakab district mosque. ⁽¹²⁶⁰⁾

An initial military operation called *Fatah* targeted insurgents in November 2014 and killed 12 of them. ⁽¹²⁶¹⁾ But Taliban fighters took control of a neighbouring district, Dasht-e Archi (Kunduz province), and also infiltrated Khwajaghar district and tried to take control of the area as the only road between the provincial capital and six other districts passes through it; this would allow them to block access to other districts. ⁽¹²⁶²⁾ Consequently, a major military operation was launched on 30 June 2015 in order to clear Khwajaghar district of Taliban fighters. ⁽¹²⁶³⁾ This operation lasted two days and was successful, according to official sources. ⁽¹²⁶⁴⁾ However, insurgents led a counter-offensive during the night of 5 and 6 July and took control of the lost areas. ⁽¹²⁶⁵⁾ This ‘heavy battle’ caused the displacement of more than 100 families ⁽¹²⁶⁶⁾ but no civilians were injured. ⁽¹²⁶⁷⁾ The Taliban also threatened security in Dasht-e Qala, Chahab, Rostaq, Darqad, Yangi Qala and Khwaja Bahauddin districts. ⁽¹²⁶⁸⁾

In September the Kunduz-Takhar highway was blocked by insurgents with rocks and trees in order to carry out an ambush. Landmines in districts adjacent to this highway have been also reported. ⁽¹²⁶⁹⁾

Displacement

In January 2015, the UNHCR reported between 1 and 100 IDPs in the province of Takhar. ⁽¹²⁷⁰⁾ Due to military operations in Khwajaghar district at the beginning of July, 1,500 families moved to Baharak, Taloqan and Dasht-e Qala districts. ⁽¹²⁷¹⁾ In its mid-year report, UNOCHA underlined that Takhar was part of the ‘provinces that have not been traditionally affected by large-scale displacement have experienced significant forced population movements’. ⁽¹²⁷²⁾

Actors in the conflict

According to the AAN, in 2010 insurgents first infiltrated the southern and the central part of the province and then came in numbers from Kunduz and settled in the woods in the area between Derqad, Yangi Qala and Khwaja Bahauddin districts’. ⁽¹²⁷³⁾

Mullaz Wazir, the military Taliban commander in Eshkamesh district, was arrested in March 2015 ⁽¹²⁷⁴⁾ and Qari Salahuddin, the shadow governor of this district, was killed in July 2015. During this operation a Taliban commander of Takhar province, Qari Ibrahim, was also killed. ⁽¹²⁷⁵⁾ One month earlier, the shadow governor of Darqad district, Mullah Malik, was killed during military operations. ⁽¹²⁷⁶⁾ Zabihullah Mujahid is considered ‘the Taliban’s spokesman’. ⁽¹²⁷⁷⁾

⁽¹²⁵⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Bangi district executive chief dead in landmine blast, 4 July 2015.

⁽¹²⁵⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, District chief, director communication dead in Takhar blast, 14 June 2015; Tolonews, district governor killed in Takhar province, 14 June 2015.

⁽¹²⁵⁹⁾ Khaama Press, Unknown gunmen shot dead prosecutor in Takhar, 27 May 2015.

⁽¹²⁶⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Post commander among 3 police killed in blast, 19 November 2014; Ariana News, Gunmen killed district attorney in Takhar, 27 May 2015.

⁽¹²⁶¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 12 rebels killed in Takhar offensive, 17 November 2014.

⁽¹²⁶²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 7 Takhar districts may be overrun by Taliban, PC warns, 29 July 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban trying to capture Khwaja Ghar district, 19 July 2015.

⁽¹²⁶³⁾ Tolonews, Heavy Clashes Ongoing in Takhar: Officials, 30 June 2015; Tolonews, Takhar’s Military Operation Ongoing to Clear All Insurgents: Officials, 1 July 2015.

⁽¹²⁶⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Khwaja Ghar district purged of militants: Official, 3 July 2015.

⁽¹²⁶⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Clashes on, Taliban seize several villages in north, 6 July 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, 3 security personnel, 10 rebels dead in Khwaja Ghar clashes, 10 July 2015.

⁽¹²⁶⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 23 insurgents dead in Takhar, Ghazni clashes, 11 July 2015.

⁽¹²⁶⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 ANA soldiers, 31 militants dead in Takhar showdown, 12 July 2015.

⁽¹²⁶⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban trying to capture Khwaja Ghar district, 19 July 2015.

⁽¹²⁶⁹⁾ Tolonews, Troops Inch Forward, Break Through Defense Lines, 30 September 2015.

⁽¹²⁷⁰⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, January 2015, p. 5.

⁽¹²⁷¹⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, June 2015, p.6.

⁽¹²⁷²⁾ UNOCHA, Afghanistan humanitarian response plan, Mid-year review of financing, achievements, and response challenges, July 2015, p. 4.

⁽¹²⁷³⁾ GIUSTOZZI, A. and REUTER, C., The Insurgents of the Afghan North, November 2011, p. 45.

⁽¹²⁷⁴⁾ Khaama Press, Key Taliban commanders arrested in Kabul, 12 March 2015.

⁽¹²⁷⁵⁾ Khaama Press, Two senior Taliban commanders killed in Takhar, 31 July 2015.

⁽¹²⁷⁶⁾ Khaama Press, Taliban shadow governor for Takhar’s Darqand District killed, 30 June 2015.

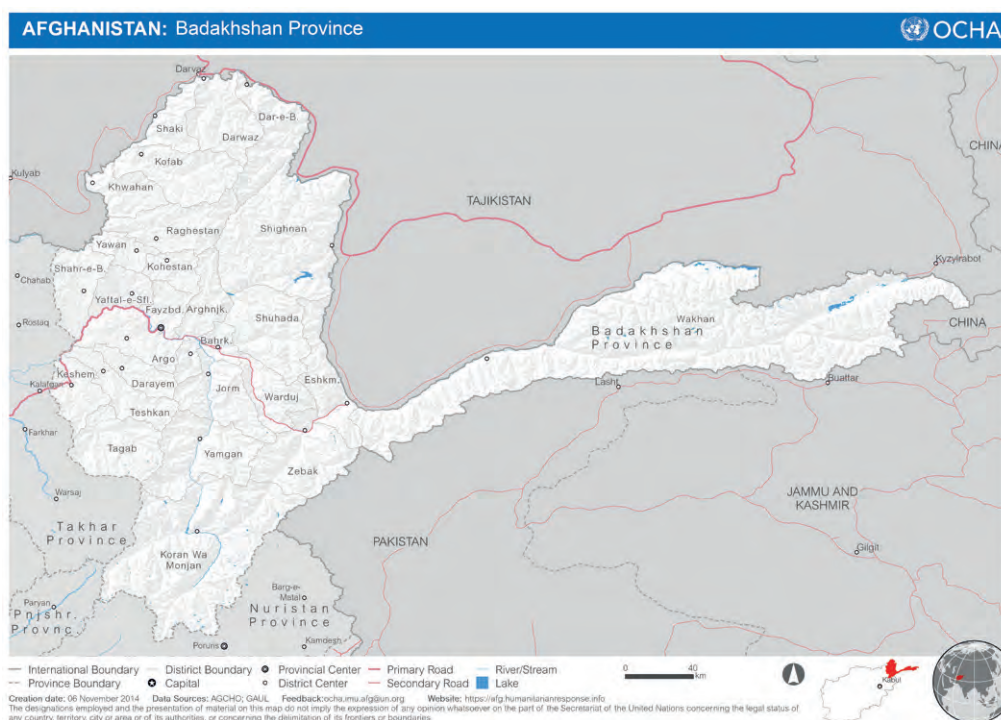
⁽¹²⁷⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 8 police wounded in Takhar, Zabul attacks, 28 March 2015.

The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan reported in August 2015 that Mawlawi Aminullah was the jihadi in charge for Takhar province and Qari Muhammad Ishaq was formerly in charge of Takhar and Baghlan provinces. ⁽¹²⁷⁸⁾

In May 2015, some public uprisings against the Taliban were organised by local residents. ⁽¹²⁷⁹⁾

2.6.4 Badakhshan

General description of the province



According to UNOCHA, the population of this province is 950,953, living mainly in rural areas. ⁽¹²⁸⁰⁾ Located in the north-eastern region, Badakhshan is bordered by Takhar Province in the west and Nuristan in the south, and shares international borders with Tajikistan in the north, China in the east, and Pakistan in the south. Nearly 90% of the province is mountainous or semi mountainous terrain while 10% of the area is made up of flat or semi-flat land. The provincial capital is Fayzabad. ⁽¹²⁸¹⁾ The province is divided into 28 districts and contains 1,851 villages. These districts are Arghanjkhwa, Argo, Baharak, Darayem, Darwaz, Darwazeballa, Eshkmesh, Fayzabad, Jorm, Keshem, Khash, Khwahan, Kofab, Kohestan, Koran Wa Monjan, Raghistan, ShahreBuzorg, Shaki, Shighnan, Shuhada, Tagab, Teshkan, Wakhan, Warduj, YaftaleSufla, Yawan, Yamgan, Zebak. ⁽¹²⁸²⁾ Its population is composed of 77% of Tajiks, some Uzbeks and Ismaili. It is considered an important region for poppy cultivation and a transit zone for drug-trafficking. ⁽¹²⁸³⁾

Description of the violence

From 1 January to 31 August 2015, Badakhshan province counted 120 security incidents. Table 26 provides an overview of the nature of the security incidents: ⁽¹²⁸⁴⁾

⁽¹²⁷⁸⁾ Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Pledges of allegiance to new Amir take place throughout Afghanistan, 9 August 2015.

⁽¹²⁷⁹⁾ Khaama Press, Mol supports public uprising against Taliban-led insurgency: Sediqi, 27 May 2015.

⁽¹²⁸⁰⁾ UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Population Estimate for 2015, 26 August 2015.

⁽¹²⁸¹⁾ MRRD, Badakhshan Provincial Profile, n.d.

⁽¹²⁸²⁾ UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Badakhshan Province – District Atlas, April 2014.

⁽¹²⁸³⁾ AREU, Evolving Terrain: Opium Poppy Cultivation in Balkh and Badakhshan Provinces in 2013, April 2014.

⁽¹²⁸⁴⁾ For more information on the source of the data and the methodology, see [introduction](#).

Violence targeting individuals	12
Armed confrontations and airstrikes	90
Explosions	2
Security enforcement	12
Non-conflict related incidents	4
Total security incidents	120

Table 26: Security incidents by type, Badakhshan (Jan - Aug 2015)

The map in figure 28 presents the number of security incidents per district in Badakhshan province. ⁽¹²⁸⁵⁾

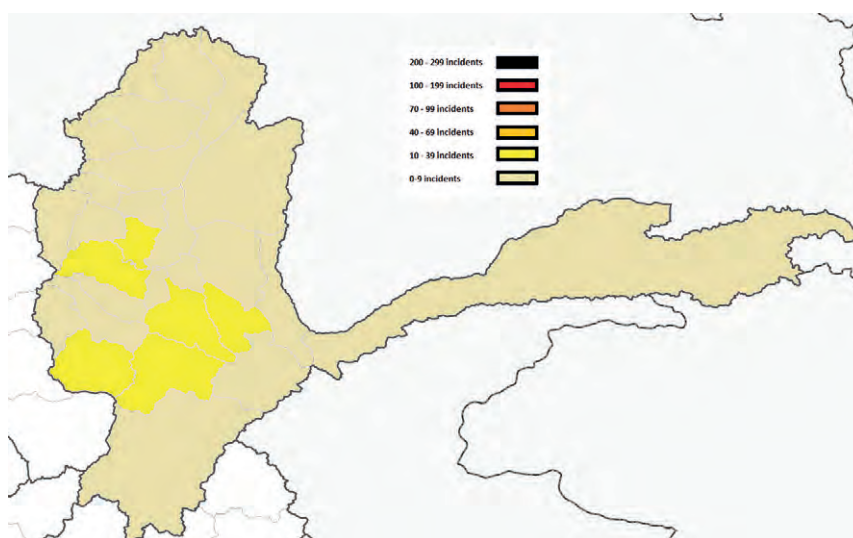


Figure 28: Badakhshan, security incidents (Jan - Aug 2015)

Foreign troops transferred security responsibilities to ANSF in January 2012. ⁽¹²⁸⁶⁾ In Badakhshan, the German Provincial Reconstruction Teams' (PRT) troops never covered the whole of this vast and remote province, with its dozens of rival commanders and drug smugglers. ⁽¹²⁸⁷⁾ The province had been a relatively peaceful province until several years ago, but has become a battleground for the Taliban and its allies. The districts of Jorm, Warduj, and Yamgan shifted between government and Taliban control several times during 2014. The Taliban has taken advantage of the government's inability to maintain security in this remote mountainous province. ⁽¹²⁸⁸⁾ The casualties among civilians increased in the first 6 months of 2015. ⁽¹²⁸⁹⁾

Badakhshan province is known for its natural treasures, such as gold, lapis lazuli, ruby and other precious minerals. The province borders both China and Tajikistan and is a key link in the chain expected to be developed as part of the new Silk Road trade initiative between Afghanistan and China. Some analysts have suggested the recent insecurity in Badakhshan could be an attempt by the Taliban to prevent the project from succeeding, as it would give Afghanistan greater economic leverage among its neighbours, especially Pakistan. According to residents, independent political analysts and journalists, MPs and government officials from the province should be blamed as they have deliberately allowed or facilitated security problems in the province in order to pursue their own political and economic objectives. This has resulted in increased clashes between security forces and insurgents, violence by local powerbrokers associated with organised crime, more roadside bomb incidents and an overall lack of government services. ⁽¹²⁹⁰⁾

Over the past four years, insurgents have taken root in 12 of Badakhshan's 28 districts: Jorm, Warduj, Yamgan, Tagab, Koran wa Monjan, Argo, Shuhada, Shahr-e Bezorg, Arghanjkhwah, Yaftal, Raghestan and Keshem. ⁽¹²⁹¹⁾

⁽¹²⁸⁵⁾ For more information on the source and the methodology of the maps, see [introduction](#).

⁽¹²⁸⁶⁾ UNAMA, Articles, 24 January 2015.

⁽¹²⁸⁷⁾ Foschini, F., One Year of Transition: a Look Back (2), Afghanistan Analysts Network, 18 March 2012.

⁽¹²⁸⁸⁾ Roggio, B., Taliban overrun base capture and release 100 afghan security personnel, 26 July 2015.

⁽¹²⁸⁹⁾ Monde (Le), En Afghanistan, les froides statistiques des victimes civiles, 5 August 2015, accessed 22 September 2015.

⁽¹²⁹⁰⁾ Tolonews, Badakhshan Residents Blame Government, MPs for Deteriorating Security, 14 May 2015.

⁽¹²⁹¹⁾ Obaid, A., The 2015 Insurgency in the North (2): Badakhshan's Jurm district under siege, 14 September 2015.

Scores of insurgents were killed in operations led by ANSF in 2015 (at least 17 in April 2015, 63 in May in Badakhshan and surrounding provinces, 96 in June ⁽¹²⁹²⁾).

The Taliban targets mainly security forces. It overran a military base in Badakhshan, capturing more than 100 police and tribal fighters before disarming and freeing them. Taliban fighters began their assault on the Qala base in the embattled district of Warduj on July 24, according to the jihadist group and Afghan press reports. The Taliban claimed it detained 110 ANA soldiers, police and Arbaki militiamen and that it seized 6 checkpoints. The fighting in Badakhshan almost backfired on the Taliban after fighters beheaded seven Afghan soldiers. After widespread condemnation in the media, the jihadist group felt obligated to issue an official statement admitting the beheadings were wrong, but then placed the blame for the acts on the Afghan military, claiming its forces executed Taliban fighters and civilians. ⁽¹²⁹³⁾ Earlier in the year, the Taliban killed 18 soldiers. Among the victims, eight soldiers were beheaded. ⁽¹²⁹⁴⁾

In August 2015, the Taliban killed a policewoman and her husband in front of their children. One week before these murders, they threw a woman in a river for allegedly having links with the government. ⁽¹²⁹⁵⁾ In the same month, they judged, raped and killed women in various localities of the province. ⁽¹²⁹⁶⁾

In February 2015, a freelance reporter was killed in his home in Faizabad. ⁽¹²⁹⁷⁾

The Taliban abducted NGO workers in the province. World Food Program (WFP) vehicles were stopped by armed men, and drivers were briefly taken hostages while the militants destroyed the vehicles. ⁽¹²⁹⁸⁾

Casualties among civilians increased from 311 in the first 6 months of 2014 to 545 in (the same period in) 2015. ⁽¹²⁹⁹⁾

Displacement

According to UNOCHA, about 2,000 families were displaced in May 2015 within the Jorm district. 474 families were reportedly displaced from Baharak, Jorm and Warduj districts due to conflict as of 27 May 2015. ⁽¹³⁰⁰⁾ In July 2015, nearly 300 families were displaced and more than 100 houses were washed away as a result of flash floods. ⁽¹³⁰¹⁾

Actors in the conflict

In May 2015, the Taliban released a propaganda video containing an interview with Qari Fasehuddin, the Taliban shadow governor for Badakhshan, who is reportedly about 30 years old and commands an insurgent force of nearly 1,000 fighters located in seven of Badakhshan's districts, according to Afghan officials. ⁽¹³⁰²⁾

In July 2015, the Islamic Jihad Union, an al Qaeda and Taliban-linked group, said it had deployed fighters to the province as part of the Taliban's *Azm* offensive. ⁽¹³⁰³⁾

Badakhshan Governor Shah Waliullah Adeeb said that some 200 fighters, some of them with their families, are based in the Dara-e Khustak area and identified them as being from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Chechnya and other countries. In Jowzjan's Aqcha district, officials said there were at least 300 'foreign' fighters among enemy forces. Civilians in the region claim these foreigners are speaking Uzbek and Tajik with accents that reveal they are originally from Central Asia, not Afghanistan. It is very difficult to say who the militants are and where they are from. Some Afghan officials have mentioned a militant group called Jamaat Ansarullah, which is the Tajik wing of the IMU, while other officials have used the term Jundullah, a combination of Jamaat Ansarullah and the IMU. ⁽¹³⁰⁴⁾

⁽¹²⁹²⁾ Afghanistan News Centre, 17 Afghan Taliban militants killed in Badakhshan, 27 April 2015; Tolonews, 63 insurgents killed in ANSF operations, 27 May 2015.

⁽¹²⁹³⁾ Roggio, B., Taliban overrun base capture and release 100 afghan security personnel, 26 July 2015.

⁽¹²⁹⁴⁾ Monde (Le), Afghanistan : 18 soldats tués par les talibans, 13 April 2015.

⁽¹²⁹⁵⁾ Khaama Press, Couple brutally killed in Badakhshan, 15 August 2015.

⁽¹²⁹⁶⁾ Khaama Press, Taliban hang woman to death in Badakhshan over adultery charges, 9 August 2015.

⁽¹²⁹⁷⁾ Khaama Press, Freelance Reporter Brutally Killed in Badakhshan Hand Grenade Attack, 18 September 2015.

⁽¹²⁹⁸⁾ Triple Canopy, Afghanistan weekly security Report, 17 September 2015.

⁽¹²⁹⁹⁾ Monde (Le), En Afghanistan, les froides statistiques des victimes civiles, 5 August 2015.

⁽¹³⁰⁰⁾ UNOCHA, AFGHANISTAN: Conflict-Induced Displacement (as of 27 May 2015).

⁽¹³⁰¹⁾ Tolonews, Hundreds Displaced, Houses Washed Away in Badakhshan Floods, 10 July 2015.

⁽¹³⁰²⁾ Long War Journal (The), Former Taliban Shadow Governor appears in New Propaganda Video, Depicts Recent Combat in Badakhshan Province, 25 May 2015.

⁽¹³⁰³⁾ Roggio, B., Taliban overrun base capture and release 100 afghan security personnel, 26 July 2015.

⁽¹³⁰⁴⁾ RFE/RL, Closer To Home, Islamic Movement Of Uzbekistan May Renew Original Goals, 21 May 2015.

2.7 North

2.7.1 Faryab

General description of the province



Faryab is situated in the western end of the northern region of Afghanistan, bordering Turkmenistan to the west and north, Jawzjan and Sare Pul to the east, Ghor to the south and Badghis in the southwest. The provincial capital is Maymana. The province is comprised of the following districts: Almar, Andkhoy, Bilcheragh, Dawlatabad, Gurziwan, KhaneChahar Bagh, Khwaja Sabz Posh, Kohestan, Maymana, Pashtun Kot, Qaramqol, Qaysar, Qorghan, Shirin

Tagab. ⁽¹³⁰⁵⁾ The terrain of the province ranges from the Hindu Kush mountains of southern Faryab to the desert flatlands of northern Faryab. The ring road passes through the majority of district centres of Faryab, connecting Maymana to other cities of the northern region such as Mazare Sharif. Construction on the connection with Herat through Badghis has stalled. ⁽¹³⁰⁶⁾ The road between Maymana and Shiberghan in Jawzjan is intermittently closed due to insurgent activities. ⁽¹³⁰⁷⁾

The population of the province is estimated to be 998,147, with 84,098 in the capital, Maymana. ⁽¹³⁰⁸⁾ According to UNAMA figures cited in a Norwegian report, Faryab is the only Afghan province with an ethnic Uzbek majority, giving it a symbolic national significance for this Afghan minority. Tajiks are the second-largest group, Pashtuns come third and Turkmens fourth, while there is a minor Hazara presence. ⁽¹³⁰⁹⁾

Obaid Ali considers the province as the Taliban's gateway to the north. ⁽¹³¹⁰⁾ Graeme Smith from ICG described the situation as deteriorating rapidly after the withdrawal of IMF. The Taliban reportedly deliberately choose the 'hard approach' for Faryab. ⁽¹³¹¹⁾ According to a source in Kabul, the security situation may indicate that the province has passed the 'tipping point' into a vicious cycle of insecurity, consistent attacks on security forces, inaccessibility of government actors and eventual inaccessibility of nongovernment development actors, increased frustrations of local communities, feeding into further insecurity. ⁽¹³¹²⁾

According to locals, government control is limited to district centres – one member of Afghanistan's parliament claimed in April 2015 that militants controlled more than 80% of Faryab Province. He claimed the insurgents were 'very much at ease' in the province, extorting money from local entrepreneurs and planting poppies. ⁽¹³¹³⁾ Since the start of the spring offensive in 2015, local MPs have said the security situation is worse than ever. ⁽¹³¹⁴⁾

Description of the violence

From 1 January to 31 August 2015, Faryab province counted 879 security incidents. Table 26 provides an overview of the nature of the security incidents: ⁽¹³¹⁵⁾

Violence targeting individuals	94
Armed confrontations and airstrikes	601
Explosions	90
Security enforcement	87
Non-conflict related incidents	7
Total security incidents	879

Table 26: Security incidents by type, Faryab (Jan - Aug 2015)

The map in figure 29 presents the number of security incidents per district in Faryab province. ⁽¹³¹⁶⁾

The focus of fighting in the province is in the southern districts of Qaysar, Almar and Pashtun Kot. Regularly violence spills over into the more central districts of Gurziwan, Khwaja Sabz Posh, Shirin Tagab and Dawlatabad. Militant attacks, clearing operations and clashes in these districts had been ongoing during this reporting period. ⁽¹³¹⁷⁾ Of

⁽¹³⁰⁵⁾ Humanitarian Response, AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries, 25 September 2012.

⁽¹³⁰⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Foreign militants pose serious threat to Faryab security: PC, 2 June 2015.

⁽¹³⁰⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Rebel leader injured, 3 killed in Faryab incidents, 15 March 2015.

⁽¹³⁰⁸⁾ UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Population estimate for 2015, 26 August 2015.

⁽¹³⁰⁹⁾ Bauck P., a.o., An Assessment of Conflict and Actors in Faryab Province to Establish a Basis for Increased Norwegian Civilian Involvement, Chr. Michelsen Institute, July 2007.

⁽¹³¹⁰⁾ Obaid, A., Moving East in the North: transitioned Faryab and the Taleban, 17 May 2014.

⁽¹³¹¹⁾ ICG, Afghanistan's Insurgency after the Transition, 12 May 2014, pp. 10-11.

⁽¹³¹²⁾ Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - October 2015.

⁽¹³¹³⁾ RFE/RL, Afghan MP says Taliban 'very much at ease' in Faryab province, 15 April 2015.

⁽¹³¹⁴⁾ Tolonews, MPs: Insurgents carving out north-bound corridor, 17 May 2015.

⁽¹³¹⁵⁾ For more information on the source of the data and the methodology, see [introduction](#).

⁽¹³¹⁶⁾ For more information on the source and the methodology of the maps, see [introduction](#).

⁽¹³¹⁷⁾ Tolonews, Taliban leader killed in Faryab clash, 4 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, 3 police killed, journalist injured in Farah blast, 13 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, 6 Jundullah fighters detained in Baghlan, 12 December 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, Rebel leader injured, 3 killed in Faryab incidents, 15 March 2015; Tolonews, Taliban shadow district governor killed in Faryab, 17 March 2015; Tolonews, Taliban sets fire to a mosque in Faryab, 9 April 2015; Tolonews, 4 Afghan soldiers killed in Taliban attack, 9 April 2015; Tolonews, Six Taliban insurgents, including commander killed in Faryab, 9 May 2015.

the 223 security incidents in Qaysar in the first eight months of 2015, 169 were armed confrontations, with major ones on 23 April, 9-14 May and 3-8 July. Clashes in Qaysar included heavy weaponry. ⁽¹³¹⁸⁾

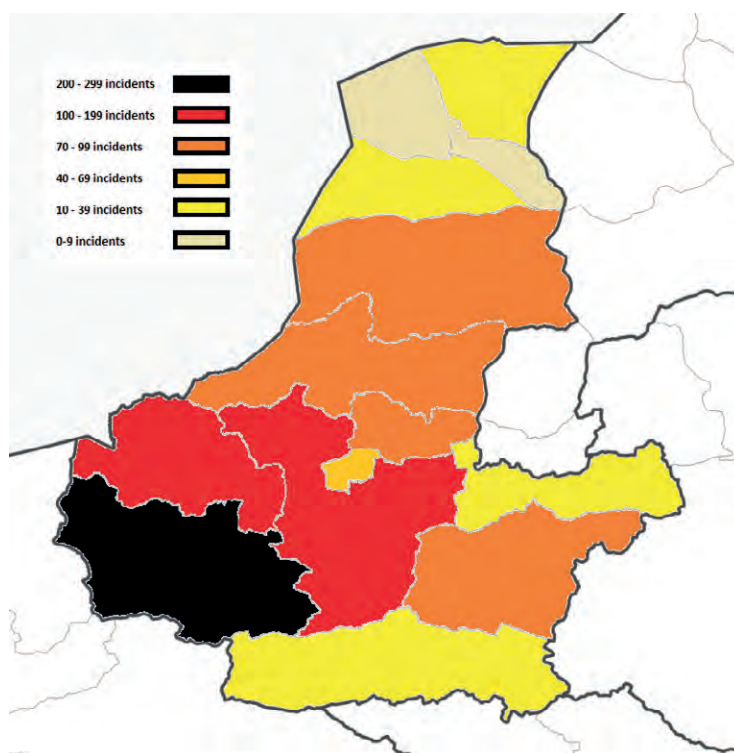


Figure 29: Faryab, security incidents (Jan - Aug 2015)

Several times in the last few years insurgents have tried to overrun the bazaar of Shakh in Qaysar district. ⁽¹³¹⁹⁾ Local officials claim that the bazaar turns into a major drugs and weapons bazaar whenever the Taliban takes over. ⁽¹³²⁰⁾ In July 2015, hundreds of Taliban fighters coming from Badghis, Ghor, Sar-i-Pul and Jawzjan provinces, together with foreign fighters, attacked dozens of villages in the districts of Qaysar, Almar and Pashtun Kot. ⁽¹³²¹⁾ MPs from Faryab claimed the violence had spread to six districts, without naming them. ⁽¹³²²⁾ Later that month, security forces claimed to have retaken some of the lost territory. ⁽¹³²³⁾ This offensive had a serious impact on the civilian population of the whole province (see section on ‘Displacement’). When taking the village of Qarayee in Almar, the insurgents burned down the houses of those who fought against them, 40 in total, and beheaded their leader. ⁽¹³²⁴⁾ In July 2015, Khwaja Sabz Posh also saw a major insurgent offensive. ⁽¹³²⁵⁾

This massive insurgent attack sparked a joint operation by several ANSF units from the Afghan Army, Afghan Border Police, Afghan Civil Order Police and local fighters to recapture the terrain in August 2015. This operation was led personally by vice-president Gen. Abdul Rashid Dostum. ⁽¹³²⁶⁾ Dostum even survived an ambush on his convoy when in Faryab. ⁽¹³²⁷⁾ Dostum declared the province cleared of insurgents, but several areas quickly fell back into their hands, including Mir Shadi in Almar and Astana in Shirin Tagab. According to local officials, insurgents set dozens of homes on fire. At least 50 members of a local ‘uprising’ went missing and were most likely killed by the Taliban. Twenty more uprising members who were sent to fight the Taliban were also killed. ⁽¹³²⁸⁾ Khwaja Kinti in Qaysar district was

⁽¹³¹⁸⁾ Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - September 2015.

⁽¹³¹⁹⁾ ISW, *The Taliban Resurgent: Threats to Afghanistan’s Security*, March 2015, p. 21.

⁽¹³²⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Faryab’s Shakh bazaar once again falls to insurgents*, 7 September 2015.

⁽¹³²¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *3 Faryab districts under attack from rebels*, 05 July 2015.

⁽¹³²²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Security forces suffered casualties in Faryab fighting: MPs*, 13 July 2015.

⁽¹³²³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Afghan forces capture Taliban centres in Faryab*, 21 July 2015.

⁽¹³²⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Taliban torch dozens of homes in Faryab*, 14 July 2015.

⁽¹³²⁵⁾ Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - September 2015.

⁽¹³²⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, *Dostum trip to boost security forces’ morale in Faryab*, 3 August 2015; RFE/RL, *Afghan Vice President vows to ‘Clear’ Northern Province of Militants*, 20 August 2015.

⁽¹³²⁷⁾ RFE/RL, *Afghan Vice President Survives Ambush*, 21 August 2015.

⁽¹³²⁸⁾ NY Times, *Afghan Vice President Raises Concerns After Turning to Militias in Taliban Fight*, 18 August 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, *Taliban recapture Faryab’s Astana baba area*, 27 August 2015.

also recaptured by the insurgents, leaving the local leader of an uprising group angry about the ANSF retreat and fearful that Shakh would soon fall again. ⁽¹³²⁹⁾ Shakh, Nawabad, Khwaja Kandou, Konjak, Chahar Shanba, Ashab Kaf, Faiz Nawa and Qabchin are said to be Pashtun-dominated areas. The Pashtun population accused the mainly Uzbek militiamen from Gen. Dostum's Junbesh-e Melli party, who took part in the military operation to sweep the area of insurgents, of gross human rights violations. ⁽¹³³⁰⁾

In September 2015, insurgents took control of Shakh bazaar again. ⁽¹³³¹⁾

Thomas Ruttig concluded: 'It looks as if Dostum was facing the same problem ISAF troops had encountered, ie when directly assaulted, the Taliban prefer to withdraw, only to return when the attacking party has left again; 'clearing' territory again proved to be easier than holding it.' ⁽¹³³²⁾

The New York Times stated after this offensive: 'In Faryab Province, a crucial gateway to the north, it is increasingly clear that the injection of such militias, with fluid loyalties, has made the battlefield so chaotic that it reminds many locals of the factional fighting of the 1990s.' ⁽¹³³³⁾ The newspaper illustrated this with the story of two rivaling pro-government commanders who both received weapons from the government to fight the insurgents around Qarayee village in Almar district, but started attacking each other's positions instead with government ammunition. One of the two briefly switched sides to join the Taliban, only to return to the government side a few weeks later, which was trumpeted by Dostum as the surrender of a Taliban commander. ⁽¹³³⁴⁾

In Dawlatabad, the fighting is centered on the road leading north, connecting Maymana with Shiberghan in Jawzjan. Villages on either side of the road are seriously affected and there is a high number of civilian casualties. Major clashes occurred there in March, April, June and July of 2015. ⁽¹³³⁵⁾

Less reporting of insurgent or military operations comes from the more northern districts. In May 2015, a clearing operation was conducted in Khan-e Chahar Bagh. ⁽¹³³⁶⁾

In Faryab in 2014, there were 315 civilian casualties (118 deaths and 197 injured) due to ground engagements. That is the third highest number for that year, after Helmand and Kunar. ⁽¹³³⁷⁾ UNAMA noticed that fighting in 2014 often occurred near district centres. The increased ground fighting in civilian-populated areas with all parties using mortars, other explosive weapons and small firearms often led to harmful consequences for civilians. ⁽¹³³⁸⁾ During a clash between ALP and insurgents in Qaysar in February 2015, rockets also hit civilian homes, injuring several. ⁽¹³³⁹⁾ In April 2015, a woman and child were killed when a rocket hit their house in Pahtun Kot. ⁽¹³⁴⁰⁾ A resident of Qaysar district who lost a child in a mortar attack told Pajhwok: 'Neither Taliban nor government care about civilians. When there is fighting both sides fire rockets and mortars, affecting civilians.' ⁽¹³⁴¹⁾

In 2014, Faryab suffered the fourth highest number of civilian casualties from IEDs after Helmand, Kandahar and Nangarhar. ⁽¹³⁴²⁾ IED incidents include the use of indiscriminate pressure-plate IEDs (PP-IED). For example, on 21 December 2014, a child stepped on a PP-IED in Shirin Tagab district as he was playing with friends. The detonation killed five children. ⁽¹³⁴³⁾ In February, five women were killed in a blast. ⁽¹³⁴⁴⁾ In July, 16 to 24 civilians, depending on the source, were injured when a bomb attached to a bike exploded in front of a branch of Kabul Bank in Maymana city. ⁽¹³⁴⁵⁾ Later that month, a suicide bomber killed 20 civilians and injured many more in a bazaar in Almar district. ⁽¹³⁴⁶⁾

⁽¹³²⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban recapture 3 areas in Qaysar district, 1 September 2015.

⁽¹³³⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, So-called vigilantes unleash hell on Qaysar residents, 24 August 2015.

⁽¹³³¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Faryab's Shakh bazaar once again falls to insurgents, 7 September 2015.

⁽¹³³²⁾ Ruttig, T., The Second Fall of Musa Qala: How the Taliban are expanding territorial control, 3 September 2015.

⁽¹³³³⁾ NY Times, Afghan Vice President Raises Concerns After Turning to Militias in Taliban Fight, 18 August 2015.

⁽¹³³⁴⁾ NY Times, Afghan Vice President Raises Concerns After Turning to Militias in Taliban Fight, 18 August 2015.

⁽¹³³⁵⁾ Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - September 2015.

⁽¹³³⁶⁾ Tolonews, Commander among 5 Taliban killed in Faryab, 17 May 2015.

⁽¹³³⁷⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan Annual Report 2014, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, February 2015, p. 30.

⁽¹³³⁸⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan Annual Report 2014, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, February 2015, p. 4.

⁽¹³³⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 civilians among 9 dead in Faryab, Jawzjan, 5 February 2015.

⁽¹³⁴⁰⁾ Tolonews, 4 Afghan soldiers killed in Taliban attack, 9 April 2015.

⁽¹³⁴¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Foreign militants pose serious threat to Faryab security: PC, 2 June 2015.

⁽¹³⁴²⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan Annual Report 2014, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, February 2015, pp. 43, 45.

⁽¹³⁴³⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan Annual Report 2014, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, February 2015, p. 49.

⁽¹³⁴⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 5 women dead in Faryab blast, 28 February 2015.

⁽¹³⁴⁵⁾ Tolonews, 16 civilians injured in Faryab blast, 15 July 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Bomb injured 24 in front of Maymana bank, 15 July 2015.

⁽¹³⁴⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 20 dead, 34 injured in Faryab suicide blast, 22 July 2015.

In April 2015, a local MP claimed ‘Faryab has slipped into an ocean of security threats, and government employees are unable to go to their offices and the same is true for school students’.⁽¹³⁴⁷⁾ According to UNAMA, these targeted killings are not only carried out by insurgents; competing warlords affiliated with progovernment movements Junbesh and Jamiat also regularly target each other.⁽¹³⁴⁸⁾ Victims of targeted killings, threats and abductions include village elders in Andkhoy district and the commander of a local pro-government force who was killed while five of his men were abducted in March 2015 in Almar.⁽¹³⁴⁹⁾ The director of the provincial High Peace Council and head of Jamiaat party was targeted but not killed in April 2015.⁽¹³⁵⁰⁾ The commander of ALP in Gurziwan district and the Shirin Tagab district attorney were killed in June 2015 together with several of their family members.⁽¹³⁵¹⁾ In July, three policemen, abducted from their security post in Qaysar were later found beheaded on the road between Qaysar and Ghormach.⁽¹³⁵²⁾ Insurgents also killed several clerics who spoke out against the Taliban or in favour of the ANSF in Ghormach and Almar districts in July 2015.⁽¹³⁵³⁾

Displacement

UNAMA says ‘Faryab province in the northern region continued to record significant levels of conflict-related displacement due to the activities of pro-Government armed groups in the first half of 2015’.⁽¹³⁵⁴⁾

UNHCR recorded high numbers of IDPs in almost every month of this reporting period. IDPs were mainly displaced from their villages in Pashtun Kot to Pashtun Kot district centre and Maymana provincial capital in January 2015 due to armed confrontations between insurgents and ANSF, but also because of clashes between armed men from ‘two prominent parties in the province’.⁽¹³⁵⁵⁾ In February 2015, additional families were displaced from Almar and Qaysar districts towards Maymana as a result of military operations and subsequent confrontations between ANSF and insurgents.⁽¹³⁵⁶⁾ Reportedly, nearly 1,000 families were displaced after one civilian was killed and 20 others injured during ongoing clashes in the province.⁽¹³⁵⁷⁾ In March 2015, Faryab was the main province where IDPs were displaced and profiled by UNHCR. IDPs fled confrontations between ANSF and insurgents, particularly in Qaysar, but also from Pashtun Kot, Almar and areas bordering Jawzjan in Shirin Tagab and Kohistan. IDPs fled towards Maymana, but displacement was also recorded in Qaysar. Unconfirmed reports pointed to the displacement of about 1,000 families in Qaysar and towards Ghormach district in Badghis. Due to high levels of instability and clashes, areas in Qaysar outside the district centre were inaccessible for monitoring. In Shirin Tagab, residents fled localised clashes between security forces and insurgents infiltrating from Jawzjan’s Qush Tapa district.⁽¹³⁵⁸⁾ In April 2015, fresh displacement was also recorded from Shirin Tagab district.⁽¹³⁵⁹⁾ The same pattern of displacement continued in May 2015 and, additionally, dozens of families were recorded in the Khwaja Sabs Posh district.⁽¹³⁶⁰⁾ In June 2015, IDPs were recorded from Qaysar, Pashtun Kot, Almar and Shirin Tagab, but also from Dawlatabad and Gurziwan districts. Reasons for displacement were frequent insurgent attacks against ANP checkpoints and ALP-controlled areas close to the residences of the IDP families. Illegal taxation, personal tensions and targeted persecution by illegal armed groups were other reasons for displacement. During the first weeks of July 2015, insurgents started a major offensive simultaneously in the eastern and southern parts of Qaysar, the Qarahi valley in southern Almar, some 30 villages in the southern part of Pashtun Kot and the Astana valley in Shirin Tagab. Many villages fell under the control of insurgents, prompting the displacement of thousands.⁽¹³⁶¹⁾ According to provincial officials, about 2,500 to 3,000 families – depending on the source – were caught up in the fighting for whom humanitarian hardship

⁽¹³⁴⁷⁾ Tolonews, MPs allege acting governors, district chiefs involved in security threats, 27 April 2015.

⁽¹³⁴⁸⁾ Obaid, A., Moving East in the North: transitioned Faryab and the Taleban, 17 May 2014.

⁽¹³⁴⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Faryab elders among five civilians killed by Taliban, 23 March 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Pro-govt commander dead in Faryab attack, 26 March 2015.

⁽¹³⁵⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Faryab HPC director survives bomb attack, 16 April 2015.

⁽¹³⁵¹⁾ Tolonews, Local police commander and 4 family members killed in Faryab blast, 9 June 2015; Tolonews, Faryab’s Chief District Attorney killed in blast, 11 June 2015.

⁽¹³⁵²⁾ Tolonews, 3 kidnapped police found beheaded in Faryab, 9 July 2015.

⁽¹³⁵³⁾ Tolonews, Taliban kill another Faryab cleric, 15 July 2015.

⁽¹³⁵⁴⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan Midyear Report 2015, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, July 2015, p. 25.

⁽¹³⁵⁵⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, January 2015.

⁽¹³⁵⁶⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, February 2015.

⁽¹³⁵⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Faryab clashes displace hundreds of families, 3 February 2015.

⁽¹³⁵⁸⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, March 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, April 2015.

⁽¹³⁵⁹⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, April 2015.

⁽¹³⁶⁰⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, May 2015.

⁽¹³⁶¹⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, June 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, July 2015.

loomed. ⁽¹³⁶²⁾ UNHCR profiled more than 6,000 IDPs. Displacement was, according to UNHCR, multiple and multi-directional, destabilising the whole province. Displacement took place mainly towards district centres and Maymana, the provincial capital, and the districts of Dawlatabad and Khwaja Sabz Posh, but also towards Balkh province. ⁽¹³⁶³⁾

Displaced people from Faryab in Dehbad district of Balkh complained in June 2015 that they did not receive any support from the government. ⁽¹³⁶⁴⁾ According to the acting governor, the military operation in Qaysar, Almar, Pashtun Kot and Kohistan displaced 10,000 families, of which 7,000 returned immediately after the fighting. Three thousand found themselves in a difficult situation without much support in the provincial capitals of Faryab and Balkh. ⁽¹³⁶⁵⁾ After the large clearing operation in August 2015, New York Times stated: 'Roughly 30,000 civilians have been displaced by this year's violence in Faryab, according to the Norwegian Refugee Council aid group. Much of the displacement has happened just as the people were preparing to reap the year's harvest. The United Nations, reporting a 160 percent increase this year compared to last year in civilian casualties resulting from fighting between rival pro-government militias, said that 'significant levels' of the displacements were caused by pro-government groups.' ⁽¹³⁶⁶⁾ Faryab residents very often lost all their livestock and harvest due to conflict, displacement and looting in the summer of 2015. ⁽¹³⁶⁷⁾

Actors in the conflict

Insurgents in Faryab include the Taliban and IMU. ⁽¹³⁶⁸⁾ The Taliban is reportedly actively recruiting among the Uzbek community. ⁽¹³⁶⁹⁾ Regularly, insurgents are believed to include foreign nationals, such as Pakistanis, Uzbeks, Chechens, Uighurs, Tajiks and Arabs. ⁽¹³⁷⁰⁾ This contingent of foreign fighters only increased after the Pakistani military operations in Waziristan drove thousands of foreign fighters into Afghanistan. ⁽¹³⁷¹⁾ These foreign fighters include IMU fighters expelled from their safe havens in Pakistan who then align with their comrades already in the province. ⁽¹³⁷²⁾ Afghan analysts blame the Pakistani Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI) for helping these foreign militants to move into the north of Afghanistan, while others accuse local leaders of aiding them. ⁽¹³⁷³⁾ Vice-president Abdul Rashid Dostum claimed in August 2015 that Afghan troops killed a Pakistani general in their offensive to retake several districts from the insurgents. This proves, according to Dostum, that the ISI is implicated in the insurgency in the north. ⁽¹³⁷⁴⁾ According to Pajhwok, apart from the Taliban, 'dozens of Uzbek fighters and their family members' have a presence in the province. ⁽¹³⁷⁵⁾ One source said that about 70 Uzbek families related to the IMU came from Waziristan in Pakistan and settled in Shakh village; another said the figure was about 25 families. ⁽¹³⁷⁶⁾ Local MPs said 400 Uzbek fighters joined local Taliban fighters during their offensive in July 2015. ⁽¹³⁷⁷⁾ According to the New York Times, '[t]he Taliban in the province are numbered at about 3,000 local fighters, aided by about 500 foreign militants, largely from the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, which pledged loyalty this year to the Islamic State.' ⁽¹³⁷⁸⁾ The shadow governor of Faryab is Mawlavi Salahuddin, who was previously affiliated to the Quetta Shura and the Haqqani Network. ⁽¹³⁷⁹⁾

Local fighters easily switch their movements from one province to the other. When fighting in one province increases, in another it decreases, such as when local fighters joined their colleagues in neighbouring provinces such as Badghis,

⁽¹³⁶²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 2,500 families under siege of Taliban in Faryab, 7 July 2015; Tolonews, Taliban seize control of several villages in Faryab: Officials, 7 July 2015.

⁽¹³⁶³⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, June 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, July 2015.

⁽¹³⁶⁴⁾ Tolonews, Insecurity in Faryab left over hundred families displaced, 19 June 2015.

⁽¹³⁶⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Scores of rebels dead and injured in Faryab operations, 11 August 2015.

⁽¹³⁶⁶⁾ NY Times, Afghan Vice President Raises Concerns After Turning to Militias in Taliban Fight, 18 August 2015.

⁽¹³⁶⁷⁾ Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - October 2015.

⁽¹³⁶⁸⁾ BBC, Afghan suicide bombing at market leaves many dead, 18 March 2014.

⁽¹³⁶⁹⁾ ICG, Afghanistan's Insurgency after the Transition, 12 May 2014, p. 14.

⁽¹³⁷⁰⁾ Khaama Press, Pakistani militants among 200 killed or injured in Farah operations, 25 May 2014; Tolonews, Hundreds of insurgents attack district of Faryab, 24 August 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, 75 rebels killed in Faryab offensive, 28 August 2014.

⁽¹³⁷¹⁾ Tolonews, Influx of foreign militants blamed for uptick in violence, 28 April 2015.

⁽¹³⁷²⁾ RFE/RL, Afghanistan's New Northern Flash Points, July 2015.

⁽¹³⁷³⁾ Tolonews, Analysts blame ISI, foreign militants for North's deterioration, 20 May 2015.

⁽¹³⁷⁴⁾ RFE/RL, Afghan Vice President vows to 'Clear' Northern Province of Militants, 20 August 2015.

⁽¹³⁷⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Foreign militants pose serious threat to Faryab security: PC, 2 June 2015.

⁽¹³⁷⁶⁾ RFE/RL, Militant melting pot: extremists flourish South of Turkmenistan, 11 March 2015.

⁽¹³⁷⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Security forces suffered casualties in Faryab fighting: MPs, 13 July 2015.

⁽¹³⁷⁸⁾ NY Times, Afghan Vice President Raises Concerns After Turning to Militias in Taliban Fight, 18 August 2015.

⁽¹³⁷⁹⁾ UN Security Council, Letter dated 18 August 2015 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council, 26 August 2015, p. 20.

Ghor and Jawzjan in the spring of 2015. ⁽¹³⁸⁰⁾ In their offensive of July 2015, insurgents in Faryab were in turn helped by insurgents from neighbouring provinces. ⁽¹³⁸¹⁾

According to a source in Kabul, the Junbeshe Melli party, led by ethnic Uzbek General and Vice President Dostum, established its dominance within the province and retained a strong grip on politics. There exists a strong rivalry with Jamiate Islami. The province has long been a place for factional conflict, in recent years fuelled by the remobilisation of former commanders in the ALP and its predecessor the CIP. ⁽¹³⁸²⁾

Armed progovernment militias were a major source of insecurity in Faryab. Some 300 ALP were active in Qaysar district and, according to a source in Kabul, some 200 ALP members were being recruited in Pashtun Kot and Almar. UNAMA quoted community members and district authorities who labelled a portion of the ALP force in Qaysar as a private militia beyond the control of the ANP. Qaysar was the district with the highest number of human rights violations attributed to the ALP outside of Kunduz. These violations included torture, illtreatment, systematic extortion, arbitrary detention, threats, intimidation, harassment and the blocking of civilian access to government institutions. ⁽¹³⁸³⁾

Under the leadership of Gen. Dostum, Afghan security forces launched joint operations against the Taliban in Qaysar, Almar, Pashtunkot and Ghormach districts of the province in August 2015. Fighters of Junbesh-e Melli also joined the security forces in the operation. These paramilitary forces were blamed by local residents for harassment, robbery, burning down civilian homes, sexual assault and murder during this major operation to drive back militants in August 2015. The residents of Qaysar made a clear distinction between army and intelligence personnel, whom they found respectful, and on the other hand the militiamen and some police officers, whom they blamed for supporting the looting militiamen. ⁽¹³⁸⁴⁾ According to the New York Times, some 5,000 militiamen were mobilised during this offensive. ⁽¹³⁸⁵⁾ These militia often fall outside the ALP programme but fight in the conflict alongside the government. UNAMA stated that the vast majority of incidents, such as abuses and civilian casualties, involving these 'pro-government forces' occurred in the north and north-east, mainly in Kunduz and Faryab. In Faryab, the district of Pashtun Kot stands out. Residents blamed armed men for illegal taxation, forced labour, restrictions on movement, killings, private incarceration, beatings, interference in the education system and interference in marriage arrangements/decisions, including claiming the right to forbid, authorise or impose marriage. ⁽¹³⁸⁶⁾ These abuses were carried out, according to UNAMA, 'with complete impunity and follow a continuing pattern of human rights abuses documented in the north and northeast in 2013 and 2014.' ⁽¹³⁸⁷⁾

Besides the ALP, some 382 disbanded CIP members were, according to a source in Kabul, still operational in Bilchiragh and Dawlatabad districts in 2014. ⁽¹³⁸⁸⁾ According to a report by ICG, some of these men joined the ALP, others became 'freelance warlords'. Because of the ties these militias have with political parties such as Junbesh or Jamiat, they enjoy a degree of impunity. ⁽¹³⁸⁹⁾

Local officials complain that their province is largely ignored by the central government. One official said less soldiers were deployed in the whole of Faryab province than in Sangin district of Helmand alone. ⁽¹³⁹⁰⁾

⁽¹³⁸⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Foreign militants pose serious threat to Faryab security: PC, 2 June 2015.

⁽¹³⁸¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 3 Faryab districts under attack from rebels, 5 July 2015; RFE/RL, Afghanistan's New Northern Flash Points, July 2015.

⁽¹³⁸²⁾ Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - October 2015.

⁽¹³⁸³⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan Annual report 2013, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, 8 February 2014, p. 53.

⁽¹³⁸⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, So-called vigilantes unleash hell on Qaysar residents, 24 August 2015.

⁽¹³⁸⁵⁾ NY Times, Afghan Vice President Raises Concerns After Turning to Militias in Taliban Fight, 18 August 2015.

⁽¹³⁸⁶⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan Annual Report 2014 Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, February 2015, p. 85.

⁽¹³⁸⁷⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan Midyear Report 2015, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, August 2015, pp. 73-77.

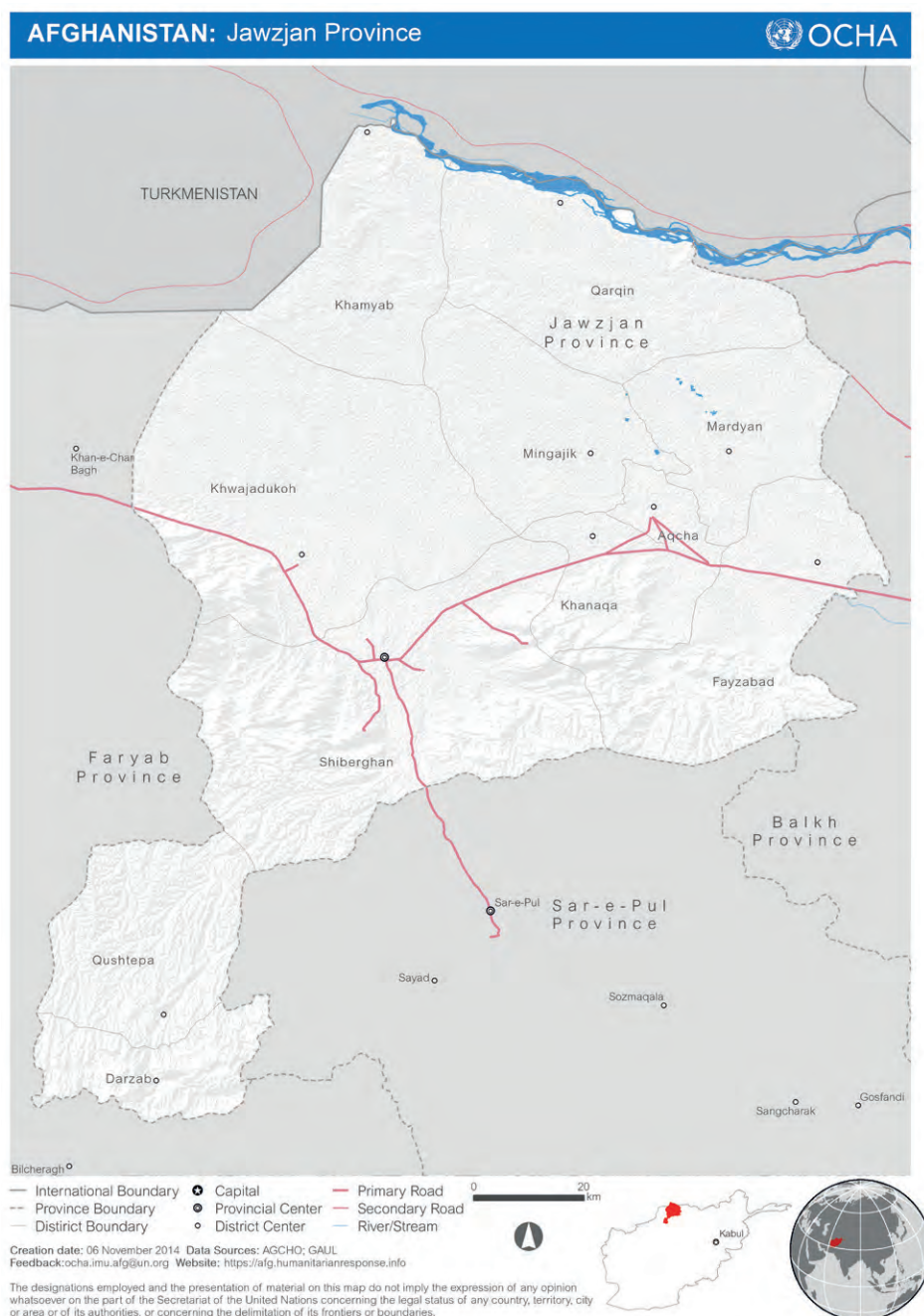
⁽¹³⁸⁸⁾ Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - October 2015.

⁽¹³⁸⁹⁾ ICG, Afghanistan's Insurgency after the Transition, 12 May 2014, p. 11; Pajhwok Afghan News, Civilian murder sparks protest in Faryab, 1 June 2014.

⁽¹³⁹⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Foreign militants pose serious threat to Faryab security: PC, 2 June 2015.

2.7.2 Jawzjan

General description of the province



Jawzjan is situated in the northern part of Afghanistan, bordering Turkmenistan in the north, Balkh in the east, Sar-e Pul in the south and Faryab in the west. It is divided into 11 districts (Aqcha, Darzab, Fayzabad, Khamyab, Khanaqa, Khwajadukoh, Mardyan, Mingajik, Qarqin, Qushtepa, Shiberghan) ⁽¹³⁹¹⁾ and its capital, Shiberghan, lies on the ring road from Mazar-e Sharif to Herat. A secondary road connects Sar-e Pul with the ring road also in Shiberghan. The province has an estimated 540,255 inhabitants; the provincial capital Shiberghan has a population of 80,032. ⁽¹³⁹²⁾ More than one quarter of the province is mountainous or semi-mountainous terrain while more than two-thirds of the area is made up of flat land. The major ethnic groups living in Jawzjan province are Uzbek and Turkmen followed by Tajik, Pashtun and Arab. Uzbek is spoken by the largest proportion of the population. Turkmen

⁽¹³⁹¹⁾ UNOCHA, AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries, 25 September 2012.

⁽¹³⁹²⁾ UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Population estimate for 2015, 26 August 2015.

is second. ⁽¹³⁹³⁾ Turkmen dominate the population in the northern and eastern districts, notably Khamyab, Qarqin, Mingajik, Mardyan and Aqcha. Uzbeks comprise the largest ethnic group in Darzab, Qushtepa and Fayzabad. ⁽¹³⁹⁴⁾ There are strategically important gas fields near Shiberghan, deemed important for the economy of neighbouring Balkh province. Construction on a 95-kilometre pipeline have been ongoing for two years and occasionally attracts insurgent attacks. ⁽¹³⁹⁵⁾

Description of the violence

From 1 January to 31 August 2015, Jawzjan province counted 199 security incidents. Table 27 provides an overview of the nature of the security incidents: ⁽¹³⁹⁶⁾

Violence targeting individuals	38
Armed confrontations and airstrikes	100
Explosions	16
Security enforcement	41
Non-conflict related incidents	3
Other incidents	1
Total security incidents	199

Table 27: Security incidents by type, Jawzjan (Jan - Aug 2015)

The map in figure 30 presents the number of security incidents per district in Jawzjan province. ⁽¹³⁹⁷⁾

An anonymous source in Kabul stated that due to a large number of insurgents infiltrating the province from Balkh, Sar-e Pul and Faryab, the security situation in Jawzjan was deteriorating during 2015. Previously this province was considered stable. Particularly the districts of Mingajik, Aqcha, Mardyan, Qarqin, Khamyab, Darzab and Qush Tepa were, in July 2015, considered very volatile. ⁽¹³⁹⁸⁾

In the provincial capital of Shiberghan, residents in April 2015 told a Tolonews reporter that they were satisfied with the security situation. ⁽¹³⁹⁹⁾ In March 2015, on Afghan New Year, Newrooz, ANSF claimed to have foiled an attempt to assassinate First Vice President Abdul Rashid Dostum – a bomb had been tied to the back of a horse meant to perform in a Buzkashi match. ⁽¹⁴⁰⁰⁾ In April 2015, two students were wounded in a crossfire when insurgents ambushed a fuel convoy near a school in Shiberghan and the ANP responded. ⁽¹⁴⁰¹⁾ Outside the city, a doctor was kidnapped in February 2015 and a policeman was killed while defusing a roadside bomb on the road between Shiberghan and Sar-e Pul. ⁽¹⁴⁰²⁾ In June, gunmen targeted and killed the director of the population department. Two other civilians were killed in the attack. ⁽¹⁴⁰³⁾ In July 2015, a roadside bomb targeted and killed one ALP officer and wounded four others in Shiberghan district. ⁽¹⁴⁰⁴⁾ In August 2015, a bomb targeted the vehicle of the leader of a popular uprising in the provincial capital, killing at least one person and wounding two, one of whom was the intended target. ⁽¹⁴⁰⁵⁾ Also in August 2015, insurgents abducted five municipality workers, west of the provincial capital. ⁽¹⁴⁰⁶⁾

⁽¹³⁹³⁾ MRRD, Jawzjan Provincial Profile, n.d.

⁽¹³⁹⁴⁾ Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - October 2015.

⁽¹³⁹⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Work on 95 km Jawzjan-Balkh pipeline launched, 2 July 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 dead in attack on Jawzjan check post, 6 January 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, 7 dead in Ghor and Jawzjan clashes, 17 May 2014.

⁽¹³⁹⁶⁾ For more information on the source of the data and the methodology, see [introduction](#).

⁽¹³⁹⁷⁾ For more information on the source and the methodology of the maps, see [introduction](#).

⁽¹³⁹⁸⁾ Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - October 2015.

⁽¹³⁹⁹⁾ Tolonews, Jowzjan Police concerned over Uzbek terrorist activities, 20 April 2015.

⁽¹⁴⁰⁰⁾ RFE/RL, Afghan authorities foil attempt to kill Vice President, 21 March 2015.

⁽¹⁴⁰¹⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan Midyear Report 2015, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, August 2015, p. 34.

⁽¹⁴⁰²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, No more clemency for attackers on security forces: Govt, 21 February 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Drug smuggler escapes Samangan jail, 9 February 2015.

⁽¹⁴⁰³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Population dept official among 3 killed in Jawzjan, 2 June 2015.

⁽¹⁴⁰⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 6 militants and policeman killed in Faryab and Jawzjan, 7 July 2015.

⁽¹⁴⁰⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Uprising group commander wounded in Jawzjan blast, 24 August 2015.

⁽¹⁴⁰⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 5 Shiberghan municipality workers abducted, 17 August 2015.

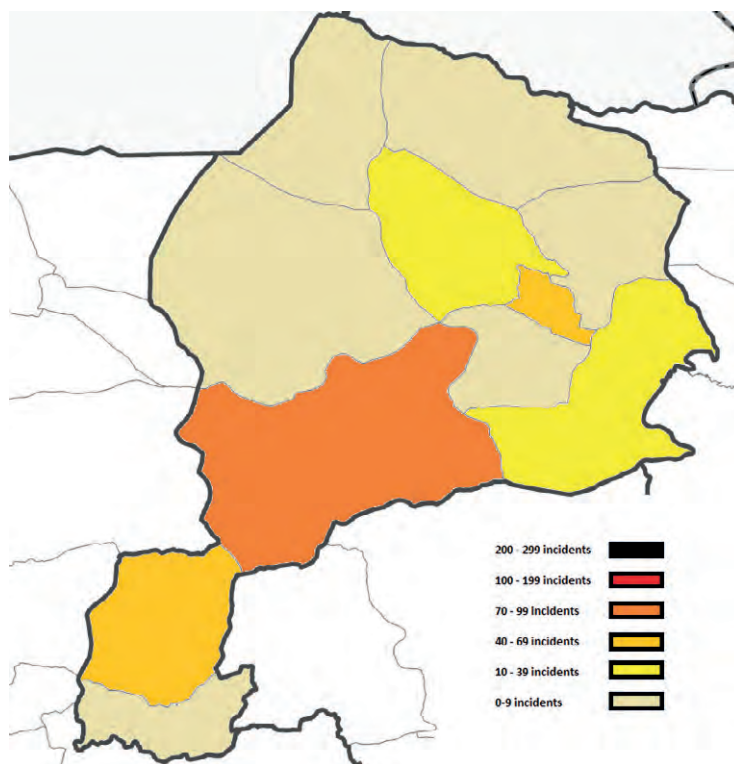


Figure 30: Jawzjan, security incidents (Jan – Aug 2015)

Most incidents in the southern districts of Qushtepa and Darzab are insurgent attacks on ALP positions on the main road between Shiberghan and Qushtepa. In December 2014, several local policemen were killed in attacks on their positions in Darzab and Qushtepa. ⁽¹⁴⁰⁷⁾ The attacking Taliban in one incident numbered 200; the Afghan army conducted clearing operations after the attack. ⁽¹⁴⁰⁸⁾ In the other incident, five ALP men were killed in their sleep by their own commander, who previously was a member of the Taliban and after the attack rejoined the insurgents. ⁽¹⁴⁰⁹⁾ In March 2015, Pajhwok mentioned the death of two insurgents during a night-time clash with the ANSF in Darzab. ⁽¹⁴¹⁰⁾ In April 2015, 500 Taliban fighters attacked several security posts in Qushtepa. ⁽¹⁴¹¹⁾ At the end of May, insurgents targeted police with a roadside bomb and a night attack on their post, killing several policemen. ⁽¹⁴¹²⁾ In July 2015, an IED killed several ALP members, including their commander and, in a separate incident, several Taliban, including a former ALP member who joined the insurgency one month earlier. They are killed while attacking a security post in Qushtepa. ⁽¹⁴¹³⁾ In August 2015, several insurgents were killed and wounded during another night attack on a security post. ⁽¹⁴¹⁴⁾

Reportedly, insurgents carry out their activities in almost all villages of Qushtepa and Darzab districts except the district centres. Harassment of the local population in areas controlled by insurgents led several families to flee these districts and seek refuge in Shiberghan. ⁽¹⁴¹⁵⁾ According to a source in Kabul, such harassment includes extortion, targeted killings, illegal taxation, intimidation, forced recruitment/child recruitment as well as Taliban use of the civilian houses, schools/madrassa (religious schools) and residential areas as human shields to launch attacks against ANSF. In order to avoid airstrikes, Taliban fighters use mobile units rather than permanent bases and hide in people's houses during raids. ⁽¹⁴¹⁶⁾ Additionally, a parallel court is active in almost all villages under control of insurgents.

⁽¹⁴⁰⁷⁾ Tolonews, Insurgents killed 4 local police in Jowzjan, 4 December 2014; Tolonews, 7 ALP killed in clash with Taliban in Jowzjan, 21 December 2014.

⁽¹⁴⁰⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Policemen among 12 dead in Jawzjan clash, 21 December 2015.

⁽¹⁴⁰⁹⁾ NY Times, Betrayed While Asleep, Afghan Police Die at Hands of Their Countrymen, 27 December 2014.

⁽¹⁴¹⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 4 rebels killed in Baghlan, Jawzjan violence, 22 November 2014.

⁽¹⁴¹¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 12 rebels eliminated in fresh violence, 30 April 2015.

⁽¹⁴¹²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Police commander among 3 dead in Jawzjan violence, 31 May 2015.

⁽¹⁴¹³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Jawzjan gun battle leaves 7 rebels dead, 28 July 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Civilians among 10 killed in fresh bout of violence, 29 July 2015.

⁽¹⁴¹⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 6 rebels dead in Badakhshan, Jawzjan showdown, 5 August 2015.

⁽¹⁴¹⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Insecurity causing exodus of 2 Jawzjan towns, 10 March 2015; Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - October 2015.

⁽¹⁴¹⁶⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan, Midyear report 2013, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, 31 July 2013, p. 28; Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - October 2015.

These parallel courts solve cases of marriage, rape and murder. ⁽¹⁴¹⁷⁾ In the absence of a reliable state judicial system, people turn voluntarily to these parallel courts with their criminal cases. ⁽¹⁴¹⁸⁾

In several instances, there were attacks on the road construction works between Shiberghan and Qushtepa. Several construction workers were kidnapped or killed, along with the policemen protecting them. ⁽¹⁴¹⁹⁾ Commuters often complain about growing insecurity on that highway. Taliban fighters allegedly stop passengers' cars and ask for identity cards. A resident of Shiberghan said that Taliban would abduct those who had a government identity card. ⁽¹⁴²⁰⁾

The district of Aqcha was described by Tolonews as 'vulnerable'. ⁽¹⁴²¹⁾ In November 2014, Taliban members reportedly summarily killed two men who stopped vehicles in Aqcha district to extort money from passengers. ⁽¹⁴²²⁾ At the end of 2014, several clashes broke out between insurgents and Afghan security forces in Aqcha, resulting in casualties on both sides. ⁽¹⁴²³⁾ In December 2014, a local resident told Pajhwok that both sides used heavy weapons in their engagement. ⁽¹⁴²⁴⁾ In March 2015, several policemen were killed during a night attack on their security post in Aqcha. ⁽¹⁴²⁵⁾ There were also clashes between insurgents and security forces in April and May 2015. ⁽¹⁴²⁶⁾ During a clearing operation in May 2015, one child was killed and 11 other civilians, including two women and three children, were injured in the crossfire. According to UNAMA, both sides used heavy weapons. ⁽¹⁴²⁷⁾ According to an Afghan army commander, the fighting in Aqcha was the result of clearing operations in Kunduz. ⁽¹⁴²⁸⁾ The massive deployment of ANA in Aqcha district in May 2015 is, according to the analysis of private security company Edinburgh International, 'paramount in the stability of the region at present, with levels of violence [in the North] in excess of 2014 averages expected to persist while militant infiltration across the territories remains elevated'. ⁽¹⁴²⁹⁾

In December 2014, the provincial chief of police and two commanders of local *arbaki* (militias) declared to Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) that the Khamyab district in northern Jawzjan had fallen to the Taliban. Afghan security forces and local militias had retreated from the district. As a result, according to RFE/RL, female doctors and teachers were harassed and had to leave their jobs and often the district altogether. ⁽¹⁴³⁰⁾ At the beginning of 2015, the provincial chief of police announced a military offensive against insurgents in the border areas of Turkmenistan. ⁽¹⁴³¹⁾ In April 2015, the district chief of Khamyab again announced a military campaign to drive the Taliban out of the district. ⁽¹⁴³²⁾ In August 2015, insurgents stormed a security post in Khamyab, killing four policemen and abducting six more. ⁽¹⁴³³⁾ In October 2015, the Taliban announced on its website that it was once again in full control of the district. ⁽¹⁴³⁴⁾

In March 2015, two Taliban militants, including a commander, were killed and six others wounded during a clash with members of an uprising in Fayzabad. ⁽¹⁴³⁵⁾

There were several targeted killings. These happened mainly in Fayzabad and Shiberghan. In February, two members of a civilian uprising against the Taliban were killed by a roadside bomb in Fayzabad district. ⁽¹⁴³⁶⁾ In February 2015, a teacher was shot dead in Fayzabad by Taliban fighters who claimed he was part of a local uprising. ⁽¹⁴³⁷⁾ In May 2015,

⁽¹⁴¹⁷⁾ Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - October 2015.

⁽¹⁴¹⁸⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan, Midyear report 2013, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, 31 July 2013, p. 22.

⁽¹⁴¹⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 4 construction company workers kidnapped in Jawzjan, 10 March 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Road construction worker dead in Jawzjan attack, 19 May 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 road construction company employees shot dead, 24 June 2015.

⁽¹⁴²⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 road construction company employees shot dead, 24 June 2015.

⁽¹⁴²¹⁾ Tolonews, Jowzjan Police concerned over Uzbek terrorist activities, 20 April 2015.

⁽¹⁴²²⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan Annual Report 201, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, February 2015, p. 64.

⁽¹⁴²³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 6 militants killed in Jawzjan clash, 11 November 2015.

⁽¹⁴²⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Police among 10 killed in Jawzjan clash, 06 December 2014.

⁽¹⁴²⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 3 Jawzjan police killed in predawn firefight with Taliban, 23 March 2015.

⁽¹⁴²⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 8 rebels and police officer killed in Jawzjan clashes, 16 April 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Policeman and 20 insurgents dead in Jawzjan gun battle, 17 April 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, 30 rebels dead in Jawzjan operation: police chief, 19 May 2015.

⁽¹⁴²⁷⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan Midyear Report 2015, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, July 2015, p. 34.

⁽¹⁴²⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Aliens run centre of Badakhshan, Gen. Haider, 23 May 2015.

⁽¹⁴²⁹⁾ Edinburgh International, Afghanistan Weekly Security Report, 21 May 2015.

⁽¹⁴³⁰⁾ RFE/RL, Taliban takes district on Turkmen border, 11 December 2014.

⁽¹⁴³¹⁾ Tolonews, Militants extend activities to Turkmenistan border, 3 January 2015.

⁽¹⁴³²⁾ RFE/RL, Afghan MP says Taliban 'very much at ease' in Faryab province, 15 April 2015.

⁽¹⁴³³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 4 policemen dead in clash with militants in Jawzjan, 14 August 2015.

⁽¹⁴³⁴⁾ Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Khamab district liberated in Jawzjan, 3 October 2015.

⁽¹⁴³⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Insurgent commander killed by Jawzjan residents, 23 March 2015.

⁽¹⁴³⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 civilians among 9 dead in Faryab, Jawzjan, 5 February 2015.

⁽¹⁴³⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Teacher shot dead in Jawzjan, 14 February 2015.

unidentified gunmen shot dead a judge of a primary court in Shiberghan. ⁽¹⁴³⁸⁾ In August 2015, a roadside bomb hit a civilian car, killing three passengers and wounding 14. The victims were pensioners on their way to collect their pension. ⁽¹⁴³⁹⁾

Displacement

With just under 5,000 IDPs from September 2011 to August 2014, of which almost 3,000 were in the last year, conflict-related displacement seems to be a recent phenomenon in Jawzjan. ⁽¹⁴⁴⁰⁾ In November 2014, Pajhwok reported on dozens of families who fled an increasing insecure situation in Darzab and Qush Tapa. According to inhabitants quoted in the article, armed opposition groups roamed freely outside the district capitals and stole money and food from its residents. ⁽¹⁴⁴¹⁾ UNHCR mentions several families fleeing armed conflict between insurgents and ANSF in Darzab to Sar-e Pul city in April 2015. ⁽¹⁴⁴²⁾ UNHCR reported minor displacement during December 2014 and January, February, March, May and June 2015. ⁽¹⁴⁴³⁾ In an overview of profiled IDPs from January to July 2015, Jawzjan is in the lowest category, from 81 to 300 in these seven months. ⁽¹⁴⁴⁴⁾

Actors in the conflict

The political situation in Jawzjan is closely linked to Junbeshe Melli and its leader, First Vice-President Abdul Rashid Dostum. After years of singleparty domination by Junbesh in the province, however, other political parties, namely Jamiat and Hezbe Islami, have succeeded in establishing bases in the province. ⁽¹⁴⁴⁵⁾

By December 2014, local parliamentarians warned that insecurity was ‘widely spread’ in northern provinces including Jawzjan. They also warned of a popular uprising. ⁽¹⁴⁴⁶⁾ In January 2015, thousands of Jawzjan residents took to the streets to demonstrate against the Taliban. Men and women vowed to form a popular uprising against the insurgents if they did not reconcile with the government. ⁽¹⁴⁴⁷⁾ That uprising came about under the direction of Uzbek strongman Dostum. After months of lobbying in the National Security Council, he decided to raise his own militia to take on the insurgents in the north. In July 2015, he gathered thousands of armed men to fight the Taliban in Jawzjan, neighbouring Sar-e Pul and Faryad, commanding them from his residence in Shiberghan. ⁽¹⁴⁴⁸⁾ In August 2015, thousands of Jawzjan residents again rallied in the provincial capital to voice their support for Dostum and to denounce Pakistan’s alleged role in the insurgency. ⁽¹⁴⁴⁹⁾

According to RFE/RL: ⁽¹⁴⁵⁰⁾

By 2015, Afghan government forces appeared to be in control only of the administrative centers in nine of Jowzjan’s 11 districts. In Jowzjan’s outlying villages, security often is up to local police or civilian volunteers. Most are thought to once have been members of Dostum’s militia. IMU militants appear to have begun infiltrating Jowzjan in large numbers during the spring of 2015 from neighboring Faryab Province to the west. Villagers in the province tell RFE/RL that they’ve seen Central Asian militants working as IMU recruiters and trainers since spring 2015. In May 2015, officials in Jowzjan’s central district of Aqcha estimated that there were at least 300 ‘foreigners’ among militants battling government forces. Residents there tell RFE/RL the foreign fighters speak Uzbek and Tajik with accents that suggest they are from Central Asia, not Afghanistan – an indication that they are from the IMU and its Tajik wing, Jamaat Ansarullah.

⁽¹⁴³⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, ‘Gunmen kill Jawzjan judge from a primary court’, 17 May 2015.

⁽¹⁴³⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Jawzjan blast leaves 3 dead, 14 wounded, 15 August 2014.

⁽¹⁴⁴⁰⁾ UNOCHA, 2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan, November 2014, p. 36.

⁽¹⁴⁴¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Insecurity causing exodus of 2 Jawzjan towns, 10 March 2015.

⁽¹⁴⁴²⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, April 2015.

⁽¹⁴⁴³⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, December 2014; UNHCR, Afghanistan Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, January 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, February 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, March 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, May 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, June 2015.

⁽¹⁴⁴⁴⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, July 2015.

⁽¹⁴⁴⁵⁾ Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - October 2015.

⁽¹⁴⁴⁶⁾ Tolonews, Northern provinces face serious security threats, 22 December 2014.

⁽¹⁴⁴⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Jawzjan residents warn militants to join peace process, 5 January 2015.

⁽¹⁴⁴⁸⁾ NY Times, Afghan Vice President raises Concerns by Turning to Militias in Taliban Fight, 18 August 2015.

⁽¹⁴⁴⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Thousands rally against Pakistan’s meddling in Jawzjan, 22 August 2015.

⁽¹⁴⁵⁰⁾ RFE/RL, Afghanistan’s New Northern Flashpoints, n.d.

Insurgents mainly seem to consist of Taliban fighters. Unlike neighbouring Faryab, where IMU is broadly recruiting among Turkic speakers, ethnic Turkmen in Jawzjan eager to fight are recruited by the Taliban. According to a source of RFE/RL's Qishloq Ovozi Blog, more than 90% of Taliban in Aqcha, Shiberghan and Andkhoy districts are ethnic Turkmen. ⁽¹⁴⁵¹⁾ In southern Darzab and Qushtepa, the Taliban seems to be drawing more from frustrated Uzbek. ⁽¹⁴⁵²⁾

In August 2015, the Taliban issued a statement where mawlawi Abdul Rahman is mentioned as 'in charge' of the province Jawzjan. ⁽¹⁴⁵³⁾ In an article of September 2015, a senior security official told Pajhwok that the former Taliban governor in Mingajik district, mullah Qader, had killed qari Amin, the Taliban military commander in Jawzjan. The killing was in retaliation for the murder of one of mullah Qaders bodyguards by qari Amin. ⁽¹⁴⁵⁴⁾

In February 2015, the provincial chief of police claimed 600 insurgents 'rebranded' themselves as fighters of 'Daesh' or Islamic State. ⁽¹⁴⁵⁵⁾ Already in January 2015, a Sar-e Pul official stated there were reports of IS recruiting in Darzab. ⁽¹⁴⁵⁶⁾ In April 2015, a small group of Uzbek members of IS were reported recruiting in some villages in Qushtepa. ⁽¹⁴⁵⁷⁾

In April 2015, the chief of police mentioned an influx of IMU fighters and their families, driven out of Faryab into Qushtepa. ⁽¹⁴⁵⁸⁾

In the spring of 2015, thousands of foreign fighters, such as Chechens, Uighur, Arabs, Turkmen and Uzbek, were driven out of their safe havens in the Pakistani tribal areas by a military campaign and settled throughout the northern provinces, including Jawzjan. This movement was claimed to be partially responsible for the uptick in violence in the north of the country. These foreign insurgents and their families have allegedly been involved in the fighting, propaganda and preparation of explosives. ⁽¹⁴⁵⁹⁾ In May 2015, officials in Jawzjan's central district of Aqcha estimated that there were at least 300 'foreigners' among militants battling government forces. ⁽¹⁴⁶⁰⁾

In December 2014, former Taliban shadow governor Mawlawi Nehtamullah, allegedly joined the peace process, together with 200 of his fighters previously active in the southern districts of Qushtepa and Darzab. ⁽¹⁴⁶¹⁾ Later, these men joined the ALP and several were killed by the Taliban in attacks on their positions in Qushtepa. ⁽¹⁴⁶²⁾ In December 2014, an official claimed that of the 600 ALP in both districts, 200 had already left their jobs. ⁽¹⁴⁶³⁾ In July 2015, another 50-personel ALP-programme was approved for Fayzabad district. As of July 2015, of the 600 approved, a total of 420 ALP were reported to serve in the districts of Qush Tepa, Darzab and Fayzabad. ⁽¹⁴⁶⁴⁾

In the northern districts, several former Jihadi warlords have rearmed their followers and created *arbaki*. In Qarqin, a group of 150 armed people managed to keep the Taliban out of the district, and in Kokal Dash, Fayzabad district, 70 to 80 *arbaki* chased the Taliban from their area and set up a string of fortified checkpoints. ⁽¹⁴⁶⁵⁾ Several *arbaki* groups joined the ANSF in the fight for Khamyab and withdrew with them when they gave up the district in December 2014. ⁽¹⁴⁶⁶⁾

⁽¹⁴⁵¹⁾ RFE/RL, More warnings south of the Afghan-Turkmen Border, Qishloq Ovozi Blog, 17 August 2014.

⁽¹⁴⁵²⁾ Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - October 2015.

⁽¹⁴⁵³⁾ Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Pledges of allegiance to the new Amir take place throughout Afghanistan, 9 August 2015.

⁽¹⁴⁵⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Tit for tat: Taliban kill their commander in Jawzjan, 8 September 2015.

⁽¹⁴⁵⁵⁾ Tolonews, Taliban militants raise Daesh flags in Jowzjan: Officials, 11 February 2015.

⁽¹⁴⁵⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, IS emergence worries Sar-i Pul residents, 15 January 2015.

⁽¹⁴⁵⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Jawzjan group wooing residents to join Daesh, 13 April 2015.

⁽¹⁴⁵⁸⁾ Tolonews, Jowzjan Police concerned over Uzbek terrorist activities, 20 April 2015.

⁽¹⁴⁵⁹⁾ Tolonews, Influx of foreign militants blamed for uptick in violence, 28 April 2015.

⁽¹⁴⁶⁰⁾ RFE/RL, Afghanistan's New Northern Flashpoints, n.d.

⁽¹⁴⁶¹⁾ Tolonews, Thousands insurgents to join peace soon: Dostum, 30 December 2014.

⁽¹⁴⁶²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Former Taliban members among 5 dead in violence, 6 April 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, 4 Taliban members killed in Jawzjan, 28 June 2015.

⁽¹⁴⁶³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Insecurity causing exodus in 2 Jawzjan towns, 10 November 2015.

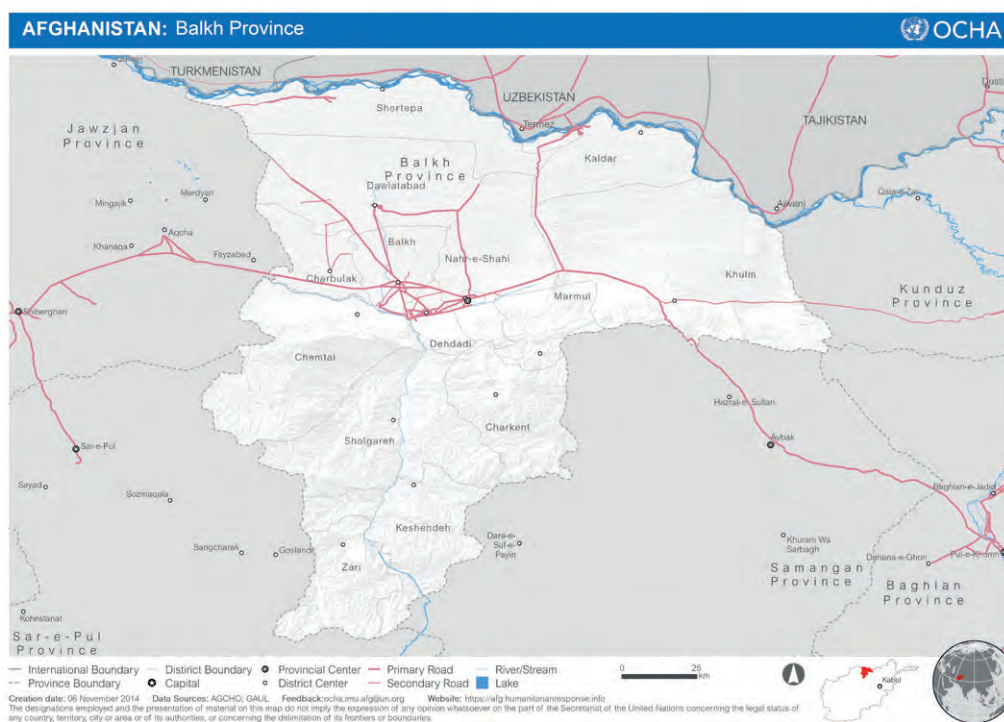
⁽¹⁴⁶⁴⁾ Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - October 2015.

⁽¹⁴⁶⁵⁾ RFE/RL, Last line of defense against the Taliban – Qarqeen, Qishloq Ovozi Blog, 15 March 2014; RFE/RL, More warnings south of the Afghan-Turkmen Border, Qishloq Ovozi Blog, 17 August 2014; RFE/RL, Turkmenistans new Afghanistan border policy, Qishloq Ovozi Blog, 10 October 2014.

⁽¹⁴⁶⁶⁾ RFE/RL, Taliban takes district on Turkmen border, 11 December 2014.

2.7.3 Balkh

General description of the province



Balkh is situated in the northern part of Afghanistan, bordering Uzbekistan in the north, Tajikistan in the northeast, Kunduz in the east, Samangan in the southeast, Sare Pul in the southwest and Jawzjan in the west. The province is estimated to have 1,325,659 inhabitants, of which an estimated 402,806 live in Mazar-e Sharif. ⁽¹⁴⁶⁷⁾ The capital of the province, Mazare Sharif, is one of the biggest commercial and financial centres of Afghanistan. Nearly half of the province is mountainous or semimountainous terrain while half of the area is made up of flat land. The province is divided into 15 districts: Balkh, Chahar Bolak, Charkent, Chintal, Dawlatabad, Dehdadi, Kaldar, Keshendeh, Khulum, Marmul, Mazare Sharif, NahreShahi, Sholgar, Shortepa, Zari. ⁽¹⁴⁶⁸⁾ The major ethnic groups living in Balkh province are Tajiks and Pashtuns followed by Uzbek, Hazaras, Turkmen, Arab and Baluch. ⁽¹⁴⁶⁹⁾

Mazare Sharif is the unofficial capital of northern Afghanistan. As it has been relatively isolated from the conflict in the last decade, its political and economic weight is big and getting bigger. ⁽¹⁴⁷⁰⁾ The city lies on an important eastwest connection between Herat in the west and Kabul and Kunduz in the east. On the border with Uzbekistan lies the vital economic dry port of Hairatan. ⁽¹⁴⁷¹⁾ This economic gateway to and from Afghanistan is also very strategic for the international military presence in Afghanistan, for both supplying and withdrawing the international forces. ⁽¹⁴⁷²⁾ Balkh has a tradition of high educational standards and has a comparatively high literacy rate, including for women. It is home to several universities including Balkh University, the secondlargest in Afghanistan. ⁽¹⁴⁷³⁾ According to a source of Landinfo, Mazare Sharif is one of the safest cities of Afghanistan, much more so than Kabul. ⁽¹⁴⁷⁴⁾

According to Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty: ⁽¹⁴⁷⁵⁾

Balkh is northern Afghanistan's most secure province. This is largely due to a monopoly on power, even in the province's most remote regions, held by ethnic-Tajik governor and former warlord Atta Mohammed

⁽¹⁴⁶⁷⁾ UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Population estimate for 2015, 26 August 2015.

⁽¹⁴⁶⁸⁾ UNOCHA, AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries, 25 September 2012.

⁽¹⁴⁶⁹⁾ MRRD, Balkh Provincial Profile, n.d.

⁽¹⁴⁷⁰⁾ Giustozzi, A., The Resilient Oligopoly: A Political-Economy of Northern Afghanistan 2001 and Onward, AREU, December 2012.

⁽¹⁴⁷¹⁾ CMFC, The rise of Afghan rails, 18 November 2010; Fishstein, P., Balkh's economy in transition, August 2013.

⁽¹⁴⁷²⁾ CMFC, The logistical challenges confronting the Afghan drawdown, June 2013.

⁽¹⁴⁷³⁾ MOHE, Balkh University, 15 January 2015; MRRD, Balkh Provincial Profile, n.d.

⁽¹⁴⁷⁴⁾ Landinfo, Temanotat Afghanistan Sikkerhetsoppdatering, 9 January 2014, p. 21.

⁽¹⁴⁷⁵⁾ RFE/RL, Afghanistan's New Northern Flash Points, July 2015.

Noor. However, that stability is largely dependent on Noor's relations with another former warlord, First Vice President Abdul Rashid Dostum. In June [2015] the traditional rivals agreed to work together to restore security to northern Afghanistan.

Description of the violence

From 1 January to 31 August 2015, Balkh province counted 226 security incidents. Table 28 provides an overview of the nature of the security incidents: ⁽¹⁴⁷⁶⁾

Violence targeting individuals	30
Armed confrontations and airstrikes	81
Explosions	26
Security enforcement	70
Non-conflict related incidents	18
Other incidents	1
Total security incidents	226

Table 28: Security incidents by type, Balkh (Jan - Aug 2015)

The map in figure 31 presents the number of security incidents per district in Balkh province. ⁽¹⁴⁷⁷⁾

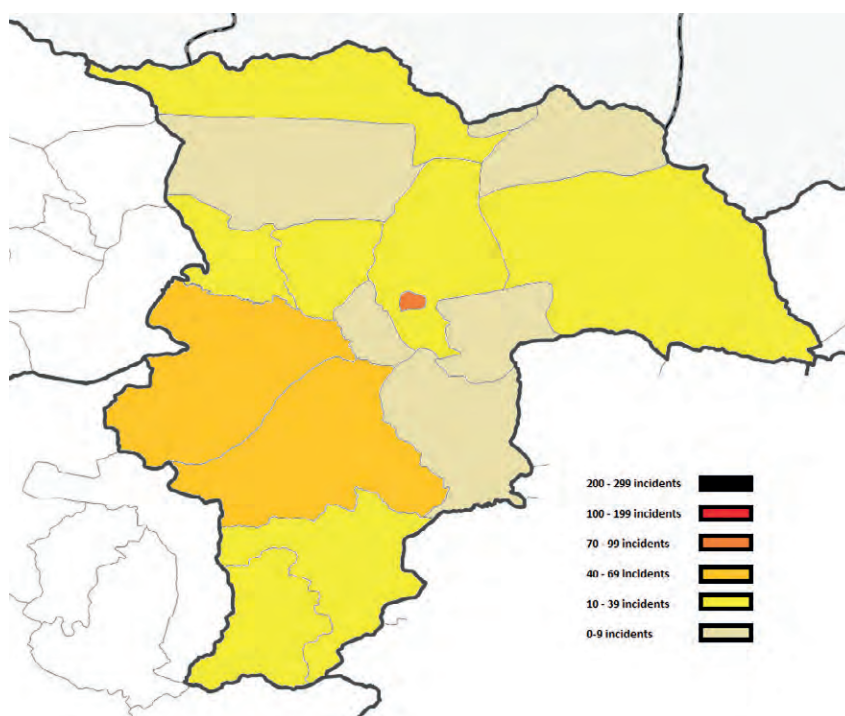


Figure 31: Balkh, security incidents (Jan-Aug 2015)

The London-based private security company Edinburgh International stated in December 2014: ⁽¹⁴⁷⁸⁾

An increase in armed attacks is currently occurring in the regional hub Mazar-e Sharif and neighbouring districts of Balkh, raising the prospect of a brief revival in insurgent activity in line with seasonal trends. While such attacks remain almost exclusively directed against the national security forces, sporadic bombings in Balkh's major cities have been known to extend to civilian targets and could pose an indirect threat to the multitude of international and non-governmental agencies which operate from the city.

⁽¹⁴⁷⁶⁾ For more information on the source of the data and the methodology, see [introduction](#).

⁽¹⁴⁷⁷⁾ For more information on the source and the methodology of the maps, see [introduction](#).

⁽¹⁴⁷⁸⁾ Edinburgh International, Afghanistan Weekly Security Report, 4 December 2014.

Sporadically explosives went off in the city of Mazare Sharif. The target was not always clear. When a bomb placed on a handcart exploded on a fruit market in Mazar, three people were wounded at the end of November 2014. ⁽¹⁴⁷⁹⁾ At the end of March 2015, in two separate incidents, unknown gunmen killed two persons in the streets of Mazar. One was a relative of a provincial council member, the other an official of the ministry of Foreign Affairs, believed to be a close relative to provincial governor Mohammad Atta Noor. ⁽¹⁴⁸⁰⁾ At the beginning of April 2015, four heavily armed men dressed in military clothing attacked a court complex in Mazar-e Sharif. The attack lasted for many hours and only ended when all four attackers were killed by security forces. Depending on the source, 10 to 18 people were killed and more the 60 wounded, almost all of them civilians or civilian personnel of the court. ⁽¹⁴⁸¹⁾

The western districts of Chimtal and Chahar Bolak were deemed relatively insecure and were, along with Balkh District, the centres of poppy cultivation in the province. ⁽¹⁴⁸²⁾ The area is also known for producing cannabis, which is another major factor of instability. ⁽¹⁴⁸³⁾ Together with Sholgar and Zari, this western part of Balkh is a mountainous area known as the Alborz mountain range. ⁽¹⁴⁸⁴⁾ According to researcher Paul Fishstein: ⁽¹⁴⁸⁵⁾

Security in some areas of Balkh such as Jar Qalah was considered better due to the creation several years ago, under the sponsorship of Governor Atta, of the Afghan Local Police (ALP), which puts some money in local pockets, even if it raises concerns about long-term stability. Areas of Char Bolak, while not considered completely secure, were seen as better than two years ago. Taliban were said to circulate mainly at night, with elements from Koh-e Alburz (Alburz Mountains) attacking Chimtal and also collecting ten percent *ushr* (traditional tithe paid to the *mullah* or other religious leader for their services) in order to keep the opium poppy fields safe. Variation in security even within the two districts underlines the localised nature of conditions in Afghanistan.

Most insecurity incidents in this reporting period are from this area, with the epicentre in Chimtal district. In December 2014, an unknown person lobbed a hand grenade at a wedding party in Chimtal district, killing four guests and wounding 20 more. ⁽¹⁴⁸⁶⁾ Local security officials blamed insurgents for the attack. ⁽¹⁴⁸⁷⁾ In December 2014, ANSF conducted a military operation in the Chimtal district, claiming to have killed several insurgents. However, the Taliban spokesperson claimed to have killed several ANSF personnel in a bomb attack in the Alborz locality. ⁽¹⁴⁸⁸⁾ In January 2015 and April 2015, the ANA, together with police and intelligence forces of the NDS, launched major operations in the Alborz mountains to clear the area of insurgents. ⁽¹⁴⁸⁹⁾ One month later, ANSF held another major offensive in Khishindeh, Zari and Sholgar districts to clear these areas of insurgents. ⁽¹⁴⁹⁰⁾ A government spokesperson stated the operation was part of a wider campaign against the Taliban and IMU fighters who had been moving into neighbouring Sar-e Pul province in large numbers since 2014. ⁽¹⁴⁹¹⁾

In February 2015, police claimed to have killed two insurgents in Sholgar district. ⁽¹⁴⁹²⁾ At the end of March 2015, depending on the source, three to five people were kidnapped while travelling between Sholgar and Mazar. The reasons for the abduction were unclear at the time of reporting. ⁽¹⁴⁹³⁾ In June 2015, seven Afghan nationals working for a Czech NGO and two security guards were killed in an attack on their compound in Zari district. A government spokesperson claimed the attackers were Taliban and foreign fighters from the IMU who crossed into Balkh from

⁽¹⁴⁷⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 3 civilians injured in Balkh market blast, 28 November 2014.

⁽¹⁴⁸⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, MoFA official gunned down in Balkh, 30 March 2015.

⁽¹⁴⁸¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 18 dead, 67 hurt in militants attack in Balkh, 9 April 2015; Tolonews, Siege Ends but 10 Dead, 66 injured, 9 April 2015; RFE/RL, Deadly Siege Of Afghan Court Complex Ends, 9 April 2015.

⁽¹⁴⁸²⁾ Fishstein, P., Evolving terrain: Opium Poppy Cultivation In Balkh and Badakhshan Provinces in 2013, February 2014, p. 8.

⁽¹⁴⁸³⁾ AREU, A Little Bit Poppy-free and a Little Bit Eradicated: Opium poppy cultivation in Balkh and Badakhshan Provinces in 2011-2012, May 2013.

⁽¹⁴⁸⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, All Balkh polling stations be secured, 24 February 2014.

⁽¹⁴⁸⁵⁾ Fishstein, P., Briefing note on fieldwork in Balkh Province, May 2015. Opium Poppy and rural livelihoods, October 2015, p. 1.

⁽¹⁴⁸⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 4 wedding guests killed, 20 wounded, 7 December 2014.

⁽¹⁴⁸⁷⁾ Tolonews, Unknown Gunmen Attack Wedding Party in Balkh, 7 December 2014.

⁽¹⁴⁸⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 47 insurgents perish in new operations, 20 December 2014.

⁽¹⁴⁸⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Afghan forces launch counterinsurgency offensive in Balkh, 16 January 2015; Tolonews, ANA Operation Successfully Underway in Balkh, 16 January 2015; Tolonews, Security Forces Launch Operation 'Alborz Yak' in Balkh, 30 April 2015.

⁽¹⁴⁹⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 3 Balkh districts cleared of militants: official, 31 May 2015.

⁽¹⁴⁹¹⁾ RFE/RL, Nine Afghans Killed In Attack On Guesthouse, 2 June 2015.

⁽¹⁴⁹²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 15 rebels dead in fresh bout of violence, 23 February 2015.

⁽¹⁴⁹³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Gunmen kidnap 3 civilians including trader in Balkh, 30 March 2015; Tolonews, Unknown Gunmen Abduct Five Passengers in Balkh, 30 March 2015; Ariana News, 5 Local residents Kidnapped in mid way of Sholgara-Balkh Province, 30 March 2015.

the neighbouring province of Sar-e Pul. ⁽¹⁴⁹⁴⁾ In July 2015, a bomb exploded, depending on the source, in or near a mosque in Sholgara district. The blast killed one or three civilians and injured 11 to 14. ⁽¹⁴⁹⁵⁾

At the end of December 2014, two civilians were wounded when an explosives-laden motorbike drove into a border police vehicle in the town of Hayratan. ⁽¹⁴⁹⁶⁾

The districts of Balkh and Dawlatabad are included in the APPRO study on women's security in transition. At the end of November 2014, the survey concluded that in Balkh district, the security situation had improved because the initial post-election rise in insurgent activity had waned. Unlike Balkh, residents of Dawlatabad said the security situation got worse in the villages and rural areas around Dawlatabad, mostly in the eastern districts. However, respondents blamed insecurity in Chimtal and Chahar Bolak primarily on criminality, including theft and robbery. ⁽¹⁴⁹⁷⁾

After a kidnapping attempt was foiled, the provincial chief of police announced in June 2015 an increase of police checkpoints throughout the province, reacting to what he described as 'a spike in insecurity'. ⁽¹⁴⁹⁸⁾

Displacement

From January to July 2015, no displacement was profiled by UNHCR originating from Balkh. In July 2015, UNHCR stated: ⁽¹⁴⁹⁹⁾

Since the beginning of the year, few families had been assessed by the IDP Task Force. However, as a result of the growing instability in the northern region, during the last months, and particularly in July, authorities in Balkh started to report a growing presence of IDP families in the Province. Families were reported to have moved across provinces, from unstable areas to the most urbanised and developed provinces of Northern Afghanistan. As previous assessments showed, the more stable and secure situation mixed with the enhanced economic and livelihood opportunities, continued to be pull factors driving IDPs and other individuals towards Balkh, largely from Sar-i-Pul and Faryab but also as far as Kunduz.

In July, DoRR in Balkh received a significant number of petitions from families claiming to be newly displaced to the province. Based past experience, the IDP Task Force members felt that some of those families could be from areas not directly affected by the conflict and travelled to Balkh solely for economic opportunities. During July 2015, the teams visited 120 families and identified 54 families/290 individuals as conflict-induced IDPs who were assessed by the joint teams. They were largely from Qaisar district of Faryab and had left their houses due to military operations and generalised insecurity and violence. ⁽¹⁵⁰⁰⁾

Actors in the conflict

An important player in the north is the 209th Shaheen Military Corps, based in Balkh province and led by General Zalmai Weesa. ⁽¹⁵⁰¹⁾ The head of the training department of the Shaheen corps was killed at the end of February 2015 by his own secretary. ⁽¹⁵⁰²⁾

According to a study by APPRO, ANA and ANP are generally considered capable, helpful and respectful to women. In Balkh district, the decline in insurgent activity was attributed to ANSF effectiveness and specifically to the new district police chief. ⁽¹⁵⁰³⁾

ALP is deployed in the Alborz districts of Chimtal, Chahar Bolak and Sholgara. ⁽¹⁵⁰⁴⁾ Some concerns are also voiced about the ALP being a source of unrest in some districts. 'ALP were generally considered as groups of armed men with no responsibility and a source of instability. The fact that many ALP members do not wear uniforms adds to

⁽¹⁴⁹⁴⁾ RFE/RL, Nine Afghans Killed In Attack On Guesthouse, 2 June 2015.

⁽¹⁴⁹⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 1 killed, 11 injured in Balkh mosque bombing, 17 July 2015; Tolonews, Balkh blast kills 3, injures 14 near mosque, 17 July 2015.

⁽¹⁴⁹⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 civilians hurt in Hairatan suicide attack, 28 December 2014.

⁽¹⁴⁹⁷⁾ APPRO, Afghanistan: Monitoring Women's Security in Transition. Cycle 5, January 2015, p. 19-22.

⁽¹⁴⁹⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, More security check posts established in Balkh: Police, 21 June 2015.

⁽¹⁴⁹⁹⁾ UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Conflict-Induced Displacement (January to July 2015), 16 September 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, July 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁰⁰⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan Conflict-induced Internal Displacement – Monthly Update, July 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁰¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Rebels' infiltration into north blocked: Weesa, 22 December 2014.

⁽¹⁵⁰²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Shaheen Military Corps official shot dead in Balkh, 28 February 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁰³⁾ APPRO, Afghanistan: Monitoring Women's Security in Transition. Cycle 5, January 2015, pp. 19-22.

⁽¹⁵⁰⁴⁾ US Department of Defense, Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, April 2014, p. 55.

confusion and mistrust of ALP by community members.’⁽¹⁵⁰⁵⁾ Allegations that the provincial government paid and armed militias alongside the ANSF were denied by governor Atta Noor in June 2015.⁽¹⁵⁰⁶⁾ Yet RFE/RL claimed to have interviewed local commanders that were paid 10,000 afghanis (USD160) per month and armed with Kalashnikovs and RPGs to fight the insurgents in the eastern parts of the province, both inside and outside the ALP programme. Pashtun tribal elders claimed these militias ‘prey on villagers’:⁽¹⁵⁰⁷⁾

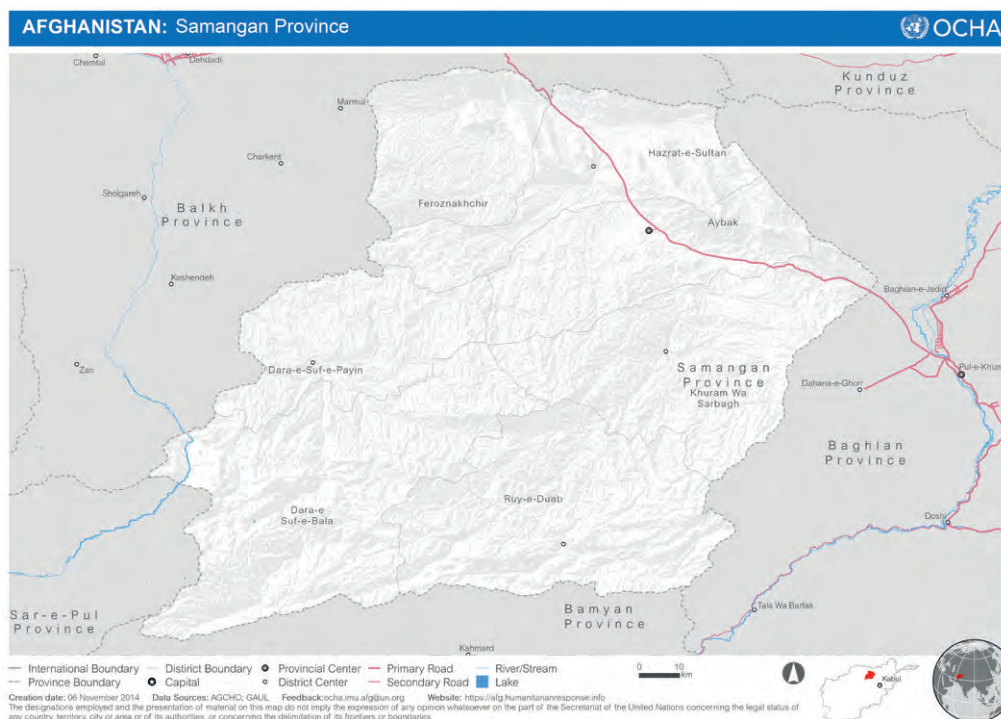
The tribal elder said militiamen were exhorting taxes from them, burning their crops, making arbitrary arrests, and even killing and raping villagers. ‘The region is being flooded with weapons,’ says the tribal leader. ‘Nobody knows which are the soldiers, police, militias, or militants. Everybody is fighting and killing each other.’

In January 2015, shortly after IS announced the birth of the Khorasan chapter, jihadi leaders and youth created the group *Margh* (‘Death’) in Mazar-e Sharif. They claimed they had 5,000 followers and would fight against any form of terrorism in Afghanistan.⁽¹⁵⁰⁸⁾ Not much has been heard of the group since. In Khulm district, the provincial administration has embarked on creating community policing forums called ‘Peace Committees’, said to bridge the gap between people and police and join hands against criminals.⁽¹⁵⁰⁹⁾

Insurgents include Taliban, and also IMU and al Qaeda. According to Landinfo, these groups cooperate with each other.⁽¹⁵¹⁰⁾ In August 2015, the Taliban issued a statement in which mullah Mohammad Yunus was named in charge of the province Balkh.⁽¹⁵¹¹⁾

2.7.4 Samangan

General description of the province



Samangan is located in northern Afghanistan and shares provincial borders with Balkh, Sare Pul, Kunduz, Baghlan and Bamyan. The province is divided into seven districts: Aybak, DaraeSufeBala, DaraeSufePayin, Feroz Nakhchir,

⁽¹⁵⁰⁵⁾ APPRO, Afghanistan: Monitoring Women’s Security in Transition. Cycle 5, January 2015, p. 19.

⁽¹⁵⁰⁶⁾ RFE/RL, Atta Noor: Unlikely Coalition To ‘Inflict A Powerful Blow’ Against Taliban, 23 June 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁰⁷⁾ RFE/RL, Afghanistan’s Underbelly: The Exposed North, 2 July 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁰⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Ex-jihadi leaders pledge support to security forces, 22 January 2015; Khaama Press, “Marg” Group formed against Taliban and ISIS in northern Afghanistan, 27 January 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁰⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Balkh starts creating community policing forums, 11 May 2015.

⁽¹⁵¹⁰⁾ Landinfo, Temanotat Afghanistan Sikkerhetsoppdatering, 9 January 2014, p. 21.

⁽¹⁵¹¹⁾ Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Pledges of allegiance to the new Amir take place throughout Afghanistan, 9 August 2015.

HazrateSultan, Khuram Wa Sarbagh, RuyeDuab and the provincial capital is Aybak. ⁽¹⁵¹²⁾ The major ethnic groups living in Samangan province are Uzbek and Tajiks followed by Pashtuns, Hazaras, Arabs and Tatars. ⁽¹⁵¹³⁾ With an estimated population of 387,928, Samangan is one of the least populated provinces of Afghanistan. ⁽¹⁵¹⁴⁾

Through the northwestern corner of the province, the road connecting Mazare Sharif with Pule Khumri and Kabul crosses the provincial capital Aybak. ⁽¹⁵¹⁵⁾ Samangan is home to some of Afghanistan's biggest coalmines. One coalmine in Dara-e Suf is said to employ about 6,000 people, of whom 2,000 are child labourers. ⁽¹⁵¹⁶⁾

Description of the violence

From 1 January to 31 August 2015, Samangan province counted 20 security incidents. Table 29 provides an overview of the nature of the security incidents: ⁽¹⁵¹⁷⁾

Violence targeting individuals	2
Armed confrontations	10
Explosions	1
Security enforcement	5
Non-conflict related incidents	2
Total security incidents	20

Table 29: Security incidents by type, Samangan (Jan-Aug 2015)

The map in figure 32 presents the number of security incidents per district in Samangan province. ⁽¹⁵¹⁸⁾

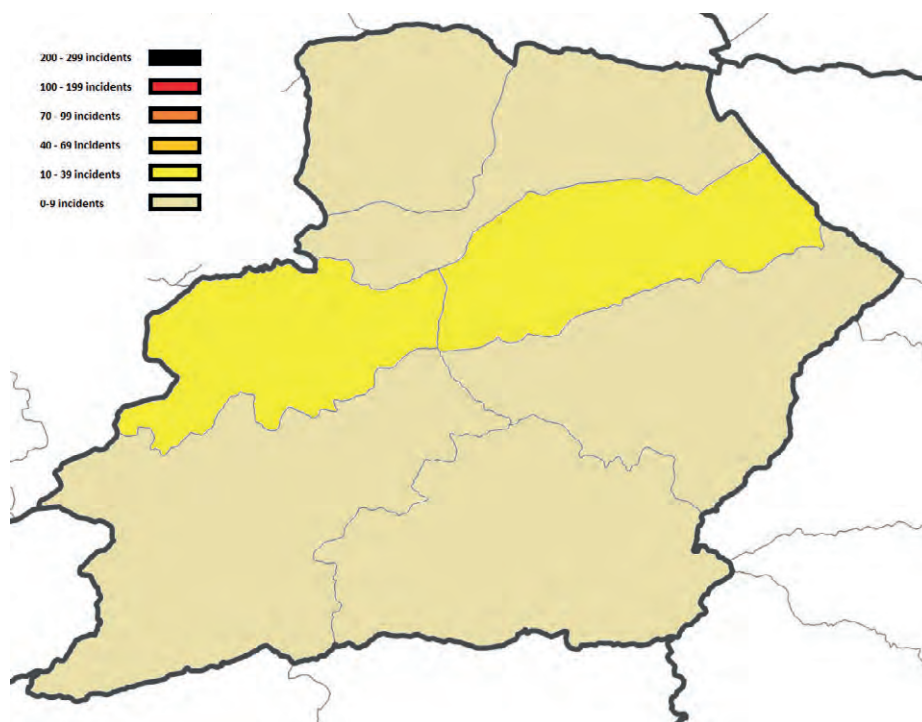


Figure 32: Samangan, security incidents (Jan - Aug 2015)

⁽¹⁵¹²⁾ UNOCHA, AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries, 25 September 2012.

⁽¹⁵¹³⁾ MRRD, Samangan Provincial Profile, n.d.

⁽¹⁵¹⁴⁾ UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Population estimate for 2015, 26 August 2015.

⁽¹⁵¹⁵⁾ UNOCHA, Samangan Province - Reference Map, 30 March 2014.

⁽¹⁵¹⁶⁾ Tolonews, Child labor in Samangan coal mines, 5 March 2015.

⁽¹⁵¹⁷⁾ For more information on the source of the data and the methodology, see [introduction](#).

⁽¹⁵¹⁸⁾ For more information on the source and the methodology of the maps, see [introduction](#).

At the end of January 2015, after Friday prayers, a bomb exploded in a mosque in DaraeSufePayin, injuring seven people. ⁽¹⁵¹⁹⁾ In April 2015, a policeman was found beheaded in a village outside Aybak city. The perpetrators were unidentified. ⁽¹⁵²⁰⁾ Later in April 2015, security forces stormed a house in Aybak city, where 20 insurgents were hiding ahead of a planned attack in the city, according to local officials. The operation sparked a five-hour gun battle inside the house, in which one police officer and the commander of the insurgents were killed. ⁽¹⁵²¹⁾ In May 2015, officials claimed they had killed a local Taliban commander in Hazrat Sultan during an ambush. The Taliban claimed it attacked a police checkpoint and killed three policemen. ⁽¹⁵²²⁾ In May 2015, Samangan was mentioned as one of the northern provinces where security forces launched a region-wide operation against insurgents in the north. ⁽¹⁵²³⁾ By the end of May 2015, insurgents staged an attack on a police checkpoint in the DaraeSufePayin district killing five policemen and abducting six others. ⁽¹⁵²⁴⁾ In July 2015, insurgents killed a local cleric in DaraeSufePayin, who previously was the Taliban shadow commander of the province, but defected from the group. ⁽¹⁵²⁵⁾

Aybak was included in a study about safety for women. The last cycle of this monitoring study was conducted in November 2014. It concluded that insurgent activity remained limited in the province, but that there was an increase in criminal activity, burglars, kidnappings and murders. Women complained about the widespread ownership of weapons. ⁽¹⁵²⁶⁾ In May 2015, residents complained about a deteriorating security situation. A provincial council member stated Samangan 'was said to be a peaceful province, but lately insurgents intensified their activities and some parts of the province became insecure'. ⁽¹⁵²⁷⁾ Officials suggested that insurgents active in neighbouring Baghlan used Samangan as a safe haven in case of ANSF operations against them. ⁽¹⁵²⁸⁾

Although there were several incidents, no reporting was found on civilian casualties from the province. The province saw two incidents where female students were allegedly poisoned with gas or a white powder while in school and fell ill. ⁽¹⁵²⁹⁾

Displacement

According to UNOCHA, Samangan had no IDPs in the period 2011-2014. ⁽¹⁵³⁰⁾ Nor did it produce any displacement in the first six months of 2015. It did receive a small amount of IDPs from Faryab. ⁽¹⁵³¹⁾

Actors in the conflict

There was no ALP programme rolled out in Samangan as of 2014. ⁽¹⁵³²⁾

In April 2015, security forces killed a local commander who 20 days earlier declared himself the leader of IS in Samangan. The incident happened in a village outside Aybak city. ⁽¹⁵³³⁾

In May 2015, a local official claimed dozens of Taliban fighters infiltrated in Bayanan, Daikondy, Baghak and Damaki villages of DaraeSufePayin district. This group overran a security post in the district at the end of May. ⁽¹⁵³⁴⁾ Later,

⁽¹⁵¹⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 7 worshippers wounded in Samangan mosque blast, 30 January 2015.

⁽¹⁵²⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Policeman beheaded; child dead in a blast, 5 April 2015.

⁽¹⁵²¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 20 militants holed up in Aibak house, clash on, 21 April 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Police, militants clash in Aibak leaves 2 dead, 22 April 2015.

⁽¹⁵²²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 4 militants dead in Farah, Samangan clashes, 7 May 2015.

⁽¹⁵²³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Aliens run centre in Badakhshan: Gen. Haider, 23 May 2015.

⁽¹⁵²⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 5 policemen dead in Samangan firefight, 31 May 2015.

⁽¹⁵²⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Gunmen kill Islamic scholar in Samangan, 13 July 2015; Tolonews, Unknown Gunmen Shot ex-Taliban Shadow Governor Dead at Samangan Mosque, 14 July 2015.

⁽¹⁵²⁶⁾ APPRO, Afghanistan: Monitoring Women's Security in Transition. Cycle 5, January 2015, p. 55.

⁽¹⁵²⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Samangan PC performance unsatisfactory: Residents, 25 May 2015.

⁽¹⁵²⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Baghlan-i-Markazi district cleared of rebels, 24 May 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban take control of area after police retreat, 23 July 2015.

⁽¹⁵²⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Tens of female students poisoned in Samangan, 19 May 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Students among 38 poisoned in Samangan, 1 June 2015.

⁽¹⁵³⁰⁾ UNOCHA, 2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan, November 2014, pp. 36, 42.

⁽¹⁵³¹⁾ UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Conflict-Induced Displacement (January to July 2015), 16 September 2015.

⁽¹⁵³²⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan Annual Report 2014, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, February 2015, p. 79.

⁽¹⁵³³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Self-proclaimed IS leader killed in Samangan, 9 April 2015.

⁽¹⁵³⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 5 policemen dead in Samangan firefight, 31 May 2015.

truck drivers complained about extortion by illegal armed men and insurgents on the road between the district and Aybak. ⁽¹⁵³⁵⁾

2.7.5 Sar-e Pul

General description of the province



⁽¹⁵³⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Truck drivers protest extortion on Samangan road, 25 June 2015.

Sare Pul borders Ghor and Bamyan provinces to the south, Faryab, Jawzjan and Balkh to the west and north and Samangan to the east. It is a mountainous province, especially in its southern part. The province consists of the following districts: Balkhab, Gosfandi, Kohestanat, Sangcharak, Sare Pul, Sayad, Sozmaqala. ⁽¹⁵³⁶⁾ The provincial capital is the town of Sare Pul. ⁽¹⁵³⁷⁾ The province has an estimated 559,577 inhabitants. ⁽¹⁵³⁸⁾

The major ethnic groups living in Sare Pul province are Uzbek, Pashtun, Hazara, followed by Arab and Tajik; the major tribe is Uzbek in all districts. ⁽¹⁵³⁹⁾

Sare Pul is among the richest provinces when it comes to natural resources. The province has vast reserves of petroleum, copper and other natural resources. ⁽¹⁵⁴⁰⁾

Description of the violence

From 1 January to 31 August 2015, Sar-e Pul province counted 129 security incidents. Table 30 provides an overview of the nature of the security incidents: ⁽¹⁵⁴¹⁾

Violence targeting individuals	17
Armed confrontations	90
Explosions	11
Security enforcement	11
Total security incidents	129

Table 30: Security incidents by type, Sar-e Pul (Jan - Aug 2015)

The map in figure 33 presents the number of security incidents per district in Sar-e Pul province. ⁽¹⁵⁴²⁾

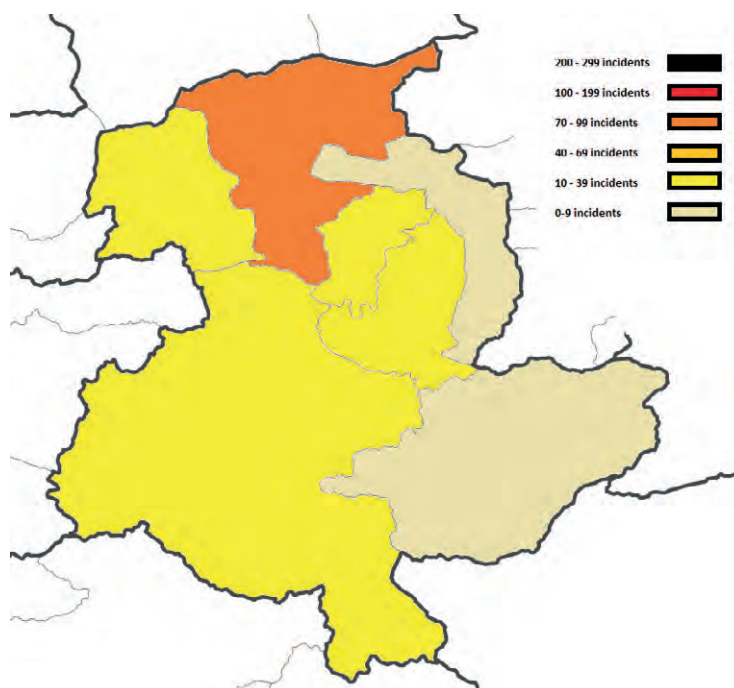


Figure33: Sar-e Pul, security incidents (Jan - Aug 2015)

⁽¹⁵³⁶⁾ UNOCHA, AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries, 25 September 2012.

⁽¹⁵³⁷⁾ MRRD, Sar-i-Pul Provincial Profile, n.d.

⁽¹⁵³⁸⁾ UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Population estimate for 2015, 26 August 2015.

⁽¹⁵³⁹⁾ MRRD, Sar-i-Pul Provincial Profile, n.d.

⁽¹⁵⁴⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Sar-i-Pul Province Background Profile, n.d.

⁽¹⁵⁴¹⁾ For more information on the source of the data and the methodology, see [introduction](#).

⁽¹⁵⁴²⁾ For more information on the source and the methodology of the maps, see [introduction](#).

According to Obaid Ali from the Afghanistan Analyst Network, the security situation in the province has deteriorated over the past two years. ⁽¹⁵⁴³⁾

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty stated: ‘the type of militant attacks since the autumn of 2014 - ambushes and assaults involving large groups of fighters - support the reports of a growing militant presence.’ ⁽¹⁵⁴⁴⁾

In Sar-e Pul district, Ali described how the Taliban had established a base only 10 kilometres from the governor’s office, in the Sheramha area just beyond the city borders. This mountainous area, which encompasses some 200 villages mainly inhabited by ethnic Arabs, borders the provinces of Balkh and Jawzjan. According to a local official, quoted by Ali, most villages in the area are controlled by Taliban fighters. They patrol the area at night and have set up a military-administrative unit that recruits fighters and appoints local sub-commanders and a judicial unit, whose verdicts are generally obeyed by the locals. According to a local commander quoted by Ali, many sub-commanders are locals angered by the ineffectiveness of local governance and the abuse of authority by local powerbrokers. All 81 ALP members have fled the area to Sar-e Pul city, taking their families with them. Two ALP commanders and 18 of their men have joined the Taliban. ⁽¹⁵⁴⁵⁾

Also close to the provincial capital, a lot of the fighting was concentrated in and around the village of Balghala, outside Sar-e Pul town. In January 2015, insurgents stormed a police post in the village. Reportedly, they wanted to stone a couple accused of adultery held in the police post. When they failed, they retreated and burned down some civilian homes in the village by firing on them with rockets. ⁽¹⁵⁴⁶⁾ The same security post came under attack two weeks later. In the attack a civilian was killed and another wounded while helping the security forces protect the post. ⁽¹⁵⁴⁷⁾ In the same village, a group of insurgents that had joined the government side earlier rejoined the insurgency again two weeks later when the security post came under attack again; this time it was torched by the insurgents. Again, a number of residential houses were burned down during the clash. ⁽¹⁵⁴⁸⁾ In the subsequent military operation to clear the area of insurgents, eight militants and an army soldier were killed. ⁽¹⁵⁴⁹⁾ The fighting in the area continued for several more days and included Afghan Special Forces and armed citizens. ⁽¹⁵⁵⁰⁾ In May 2015, insurgents again attacked the village, killing three members of the villagers’ civilian militia and injuring several others; in July 2015, another civilian was killed in an attack on the village. ⁽¹⁵⁵¹⁾ In August 2015, insurgents kidnapped four judges on the road between Sar-e Pul and Jazwjan. ⁽¹⁵⁵²⁾

In July 2015, an ALP commander in Kohistanat district defected to the Taliban and took, depending on the source, seven to 200 ALP members with him. Subsequently, the other ANSF members were driven out by the insurgents who took control over the whole district, including the district centre. ⁽¹⁵⁵³⁾ They managed to keep the district centre for more than one month. ⁽¹⁵⁵⁴⁾ At the beginning of August, ANSF launched an operation to retake the district, with the help of local residents of a so-called uprising against the insurgents. ⁽¹⁵⁵⁵⁾ The operation called ‘Shamshir –Do’ (Sword-2) lasted for several days and included heavy fighting with many casualties on both sides. ⁽¹⁵⁵⁶⁾ During the clashes, the insurgents kept the road blocked sending the prices of basic food items in the district soaring. ⁽¹⁵⁵⁷⁾ After weeks of fierce fighting, the security forces announced, at the end of August 2015 that they had recaptured the district. ⁽¹⁵⁵⁸⁾ The insurgents had apparently left the district without any more fighting when Vice President Abdul

⁽¹⁵⁴³⁾ Obaid, A., The Insurgency in the North: Case studies from Kunduz and Sar-e Pul, 5 June 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁴⁴⁾ RFE/RL, Afghanistan’s New Northern Flash Points, July 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁴⁵⁾ Obaid, A., The Insurgency in the North: Case studies from Kunduz and Sar-e Pul, 5 June 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁴⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 13 insurgents killed in Sar-i-Pul, Herat incidents, 17 January 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁴⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Civilians among 3 killed in incidents and violence, 4 February 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁴⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Policeman among 5 dead in Sar-i-Pul, 15 February 2015; Tolonews, Taliban insurgents attack police outpost in Sar-e-Pul, 15 February 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁴⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, ANA soldier among 8 dead in Sar-i-Pul clashes, 17 February 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁵⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, MP wants security forces better equipped, 21 February 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁵¹⁾ RFE/RL, Afghanistan’s New Northern Flash Points, July 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Civilians among two dead in Sar-i-Pul clash, 4 July 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁵²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban kidnap 4 judges in Sar-i-Pul, 18 August 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁵³⁾ Khaama Press, ALP commander joins Taliban group along with his 7 men in Sar-e-Pul, 27 July 2015; Khaama Press, Taliban seize Kohistanat district of Sar-e-Pul, says member of provincial council, 28 July 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Kohistanat district fall as ALP commander defects, 28 July 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁵⁴⁾ Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - October 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁵⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Sar-i-Pul clashes leave 20 dead, 11 wounded, 5 August 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁵⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, ANA soldiers among scores of dead in Sar-i-Pul offensive, 9 August 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁵⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Road blockade sends prices soaring in Kohistanat, 24 August 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁵⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Afghan security forces recapture Kohistanat district, 22 August 2015.

Rashid Dostum entered Sar-e Pul after arriving from Faryab with 2,000 armed men. ⁽¹⁵⁵⁹⁾ After the insurgent retreat the road opened again and the month-long blockade of the district ended. ⁽¹⁵⁶⁰⁾

In March 2015, ANSF launched a big military operation in certain areas of Sozma Qala, called 'Fateh Zemistani' in which they killed dozens of militants, including some commanders. ⁽¹⁵⁶¹⁾ In June 2015, insurgents took over 14 villages in Sozma Qala without a fight after the local police negotiated their way out. ⁽¹⁵⁶²⁾ A few days later, insurgents took control of the strategically important Mirzawalang valley in Sayyad district, connecting Kohistanat with the provincial capital. They subsequently cut off the road to the remote district. ⁽¹⁵⁶³⁾ This area was quickly retaken by ANSF. ⁽¹⁵⁶⁴⁾ Efforts to retake terrain in Sozma Qala lasted much longer. ⁽¹⁵⁶⁵⁾

The local director of Hajj affairs was abducted while travelling the road between Sozma Qala and the provincial centre and a few days later his decapitated body was found. Earlier, three employees of the National Solidarity Program were kidnapped in the same area but set free after negotiations. ⁽¹⁵⁶⁶⁾ In June 2015, a policeman was pulled out of his car by the insurgents and when he tried to resist, the Taliban shot him, together with the other passengers, including an eight-year-old child. Allegedly, the insurgents also stopped a taxi that was taking the victims to the hospital. ⁽¹⁵⁶⁷⁾ In July 2015, four students were abducted from the same road and later released after negotiations. ⁽¹⁵⁶⁸⁾ A roadside bomb targeting a police chief ended up killing a newlywed couple in July 2015. ⁽¹⁵⁶⁹⁾

There were group kidnappings in Sar-e Pul last winter. In November 2014, insurgents kidnapped 10 civilians in the area between Balkhab and Kohistanat districts ⁽¹⁵⁷⁰⁾ and in January 2015, 12 people were abducted from their home near Sar-e Pul city by unknown gunmen. ⁽¹⁵⁷¹⁾ In April 2015, eight to 11 people were kidnapped at gunpoint in the Sancharak district when travelling from Balkhab district to the provincial capital. ⁽¹⁵⁷²⁾ This incident came after insurgents launched an attack on a security post in the district and lost four combatants, as well as killing as many policemen. ⁽¹⁵⁷³⁾ Two weeks later, all of them were released, reportedly after a ransom was paid. ⁽¹⁵⁷⁴⁾

In January 2015, the district police chief of Sangcharak district was killed. The district governor and a former jihadi commander who were with him were unhurt. ⁽¹⁵⁷⁵⁾ Also, in Sancharak, a pro-government armed group stopped a bus at an illegal checkpoint, ordered one passenger off the bus, and shot and killed him in front of the other passengers in May 2015. ⁽¹⁵⁷⁶⁾

In January 2015, two suicide bombers targeting the district government compound of Balkhanab were identified by local residents and beaten to death. ⁽¹⁵⁷⁷⁾

In December 2014, a policeman died while trying to defuse a bomb placed along the road between Sar-e Pul and Jawzjan provinces. ⁽¹⁵⁷⁸⁾

⁽¹⁵⁵⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Dostum enters Sar-i-Pul city, warns rebels to surrender, 27 August 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban leave Kohistanat district to Afghan forces sans resistance, 28 August 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁶⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Vital road reopens to traffic in Sar-i-Pul, 29 August 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁶¹⁾ Tolonews, 11 Taliban insurgents killed in Sar-e-Pul operation, 1 March 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, 50 rebels dead in Sar-i-Pul operation, 26 February 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁶²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban overrun 14 villages in Sar-i-Pul, 9 June 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁶³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Sar-i-Pul villages fall for Taliban, 13 June 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁶⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 14 rebels eliminated in Sar-i-Pul clashes, 14 June 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁶⁵⁾ Khaama Press, 83 militants killed in newest military operations across the country, 15 June 2015; Khaama Press, Seven soldiers martyred 83 militants killed in newest military operations, 17 June 2015; Khaama Press, 10 soldiers martyred, 70 militants killed in newest military operations, 20 June 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁶⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Kidnapped district Hajj affairs director found dead, 25 May 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁶⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Minor girl among 3 killed in Sar-i-Pul attack, 4 June 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁶⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 4 abducted university students released in Sar-i-Pul, 12 July 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁶⁹⁾ Tolonews, Newly wed couple killed in Sar-e-Pul blast, 12 July 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁷⁰⁾ Khaama Press, Taliban militants kidnap 10 civilians in Sar-e-Pul operations, 28 November 2014.

⁽¹⁵⁷¹⁾ Khaama Press, Unknown gunmen kidnapped, 12 civilians in Northern Afghanistan, 10 January 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁷²⁾ Khaama Press, Nine civilians kidnapped in Sar-i-Pul, 2 April 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁷³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Policemen among 8 dead in Sar-i-Pul firefight, 1 April 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁷⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Kidnapped Sar-i-Pul passengers- released, 14 April 2015; RFE/RL, Afghanistan's New Northern Flash Points, July 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁷⁵⁾ Tolonews, District police chief killed in Sar-e-Pul ambush, 10 January 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁷⁶⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan Midyear Report 2015, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, July 2015, p. 54.

⁽¹⁵⁷⁷⁾ Khaama Press, 2 suicide bombers beaten to death by Sar-e-Pul residents, 7 January 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁷⁸⁾ Tolonews, Policemen killed defusing a bomb in Sar-i-Pul, 20 December 2014.

Displacement

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) profiled 104 families or 615 individuals displaced from Kohistanat, Sayyad and Sangcharak districts in Sar-e Pul and Darzab in Jawzjan towards Sar-e Pul city in April 2015. ⁽¹⁵⁷⁹⁾ Some, although limited, displacement towards Balkh also took place. ⁽¹⁵⁸⁰⁾ Major armed clashes displaced 87 families or 501 individuals from Kohistanat and 78 families or 446 individuals from Sar-e Pul from January to August 2015. ⁽¹⁵⁸¹⁾

Actors in the conflict

According to Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty: ⁽¹⁵⁸²⁾

[m]ost militants in Sar-e Pol Province are believed to be locals, but there has been a large influx of Taliban and foreign militants since 2014. Many militants arrive from Badghis and Faryab provinces, and are active today in about half of Sar-e Pol's seven districts. They control large swaths of territory and some fight for the Taliban as well as the IMU.

In December 2014, provincial authorities stated that several Uzbek nationals, including women, assisted local insurgents in anti-government activities in the Kohistanat district. They brought with them bomb-making skills they had learned in Pakistan. ⁽¹⁵⁸³⁾ Foreign fighters are said to run a major training camp in neighbouring Ghor province, from where they train and lead Afghan insurgents in Faryab and Sar-e Pul. ⁽¹⁵⁸⁴⁾ The Taliban shadow governor for Sar-e Pul is Mawlawi Najibullah Attaullah, affiliated to the Quetta Shura. ⁽¹⁵⁸⁵⁾

In January 2015, reports surfaced about the appearance of IS in Kohistanat district. Some residents claimed outsiders came to the district, carrying the black flag of IS, along with the white flag of the Taliban. One resident claimed it was a prison escapee from Sayyad district who pledged allegiance to IS. Officials claimed these reports were untrue. ⁽¹⁵⁸⁶⁾

Besides regular ANSF members, the ALP is active in the western districts of Sare Pul, Kohistanat and Sayyad. ⁽¹⁵⁸⁷⁾ There have been reports of misconduct by ALP members in the past. ⁽¹⁵⁸⁸⁾ In this reporting period (April 2015), a group of 10 ALP members severely beat eight civilians, including two boys, with their rifle butts following a dispute over land use in Sayyad district. After the attack, the ALP reportedly prevented the victims from seeking medical attention for several hours. ⁽¹⁵⁸⁹⁾

Villagers complained in Kohistanat and Sozmaqala about growing insurgent infiltration in the spring of 2015 and mobilised self-defence groups as they lacked government support. ⁽¹⁵⁹⁰⁾ These so-called 'popular uprisings', were reportedly involved in the fighting to retake the district of Kohistanat in August 2015. ⁽¹⁵⁹¹⁾ These pro-government armed groups had also been accused of misconduct. Between 1 January and 30 June 2015, UNAMA documented 13 separate incidents of human rights abuses carried out by pro-government armed groups in Sancharak district, while no incidents were documented in 2014. Human rights abuses included deliberate killings, serious assaults, illegal taxation and other forms of extortion, forced labour, illegal detention, denial of access to healthcare, land theft, and property destruction. Abuses by pro-government armed groups in Sancharak district caused eight civilian casualties (six deaths and two injured). Of further concern, UNAMA received multiple reports that a pro-government armed group in Sancharak district sexually exploited boys under the age of 16 in *bacha bazi* practices. ⁽¹⁵⁹²⁾

⁽¹⁵⁷⁹⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, April 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁸⁰⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, July 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁸¹⁾ Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - October 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁸²⁾ RFE/RL, Afghanistan's New Northern Flash Points, July 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁸³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Uzbek women join rebels in Sar-i-Pul, 21 December 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁸⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Hundreds of foreign insurgents lead, train Taliban in Ghor, 5 August 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁸⁵⁾ UN Security Council, Letter dated 18 August 2015 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council, 26 August 2015, p. 21.

⁽¹⁵⁸⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Emergence worries Sar-i-Pul residents, 15 January 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁸⁷⁾ US Department of Defense, Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, April 2014, p. 55.

⁽¹⁵⁸⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, ALP chided over families' displacement, 28 October 2013; Pajhwok Afghan News, AIHRC wants illegal armed groups disbanded, 2 September 2014.

⁽¹⁵⁸⁹⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan Midyear Report 2015, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, July 2015, p. 71.

⁽¹⁵⁹⁰⁾ RFE/RL, Afghanistan's New Northern Flash Points, July 2015.

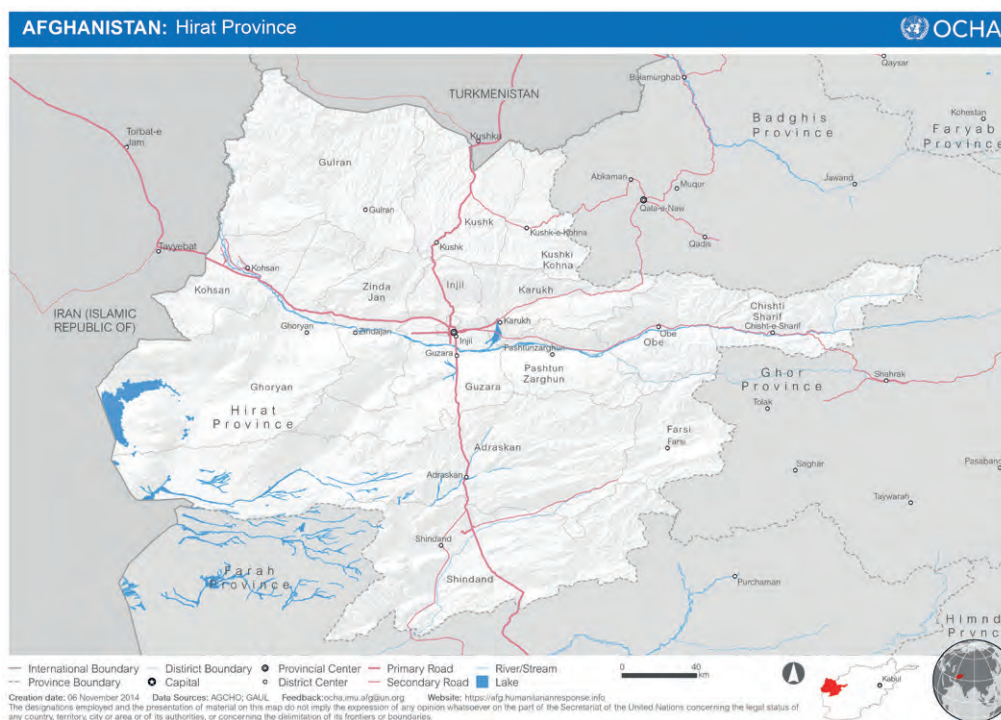
⁽¹⁵⁹¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Sar-i-Pul clashes leave 20 dead, 11 wounded, 5 August 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁹²⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan Midyear Report 2015, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, July 2015, p. 76.

2.8 West

2.8.1 Herat

General description of the province



Herat is one of the largest provinces of Afghanistan and is located in the west of the country. The province shares its borders with the provinces of Badghis and Turkmenistan in the north. The province of Farah is to the south, while Ghor is to the east and the Islamic republic of Iran to the west. ⁽¹⁵⁹³⁾ Herat has 16 districts: Adraskan, Chiste Sharif, Farsi, Ghoryan, Gulran, Guzara, Herat, Injil, Karukh, Kohsan, Kushk, Kushke Kohna, Obe, Pashtun Zarghun, Shindand, Zinda Jan. ⁽¹⁵⁹⁴⁾ The provincial capital is Herat city, estimated to house 477,452 inhabitants; the population in the province is an estimated 1,890,202. ⁽¹⁵⁹⁵⁾ Most instable is the district of Shindand, 130 kilometres from Herat City with an area of 6,762 square kilometres and a population of about 800,000 people. Shindand is Afghanistan's largest district as its area and population exceed areas and populations of some provinces, but it is allotted funds equal to other districts. In June 2015, president Ghani ordered the division of the district of Shindand into several districts without specifying how many. ⁽¹⁵⁹⁶⁾

Herat city is a Tajik-dominated enclave in a Pashtun-majority province that includes sizable Hazara and Aimaq minorities. In the city, ethnic groups tend to inhabit specific quarters for easier social interaction and, when required, to offer mutual protection. Neighbourhoods such as Jebrail (in the west of the city) are now home to a minority population of some 60,000, predominantly Hazaras. ⁽¹⁵⁹⁷⁾

Description of the Violence

From 1 January to 31 August 2015, Herat province counted 447 security incidents. Table 31 provides an overview of the nature of the security incidents: ⁽¹⁵⁹⁸⁾

⁽¹⁵⁹³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Background profile of Herat Province, n.d.

⁽¹⁵⁹⁴⁾ UNOCHA, AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries, 25 September 2012.

⁽¹⁵⁹⁵⁾ UNOCHA, Afghanistan : Population Estimate for 2015, 26 August 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁹⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Govt won't talk peace from weak position, Ghani, 1 June 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁹⁷⁾ USIP, Political and economic dynamics of Herat, 2 April 2015, p.8.

⁽¹⁵⁹⁸⁾ For more information on the source of the data and the methodology, see [introduction](#).

Violence targeting individuals	81
Armed confrontations	161
Explosions	55
Security enforcement	116
Non-conflict related incidents	28
Other incidents	6
Total security incidents	447

Table 31: Security incidents by type, Herat (Jan - Aug 2015)

The map in figure 34 presents the number of security incidents per district in Herat province. ⁽¹⁵⁹⁹⁾

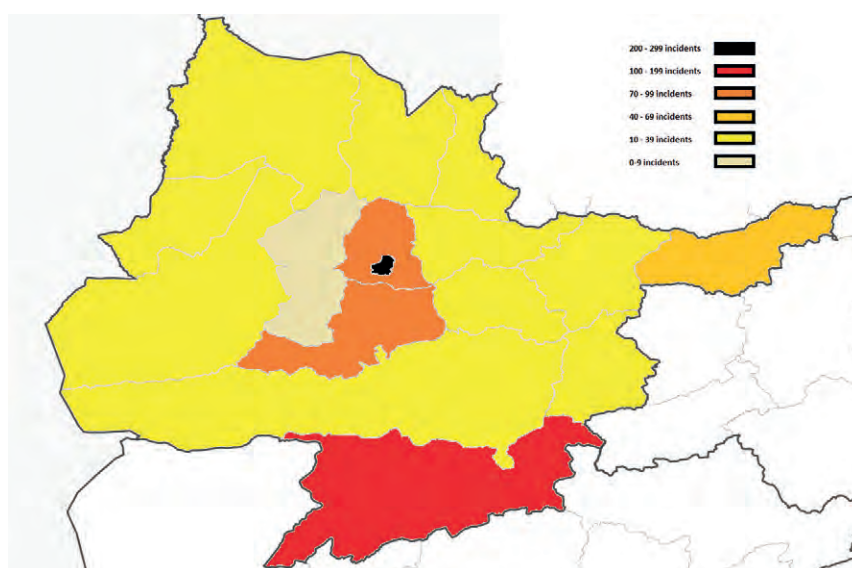


Figure 34: Herat, security incidents (Jan - Aug 2015)

According to a study by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) : ⁽¹⁶⁰⁰⁾

The hinterland around Herat provides a useful sanctuary for criminal gangs, whose activities often overlap with groups opposed to the central government. The security landscape around the city is not unlike that after the 1979 uprising: a fluid cast of antigovernment groups — some driven by religious fervor, others by criminal intent — laying siege to the city, which is itself the target of periodic attacks. As they did then, such groups make their presence felt along the roads to the west (to Islam Qala) and the south (toward Shindand), where the international military have recruited local militias — initially private companies but now paramilitaries nominally managed by the government — to protect their convoys and installations as well as those of the Afghan security forces. Antigovernment activity reportedly increased significantly in rural districts around Herat in 2014, primarily attacks on political and military interests or those perceived to be associated with the government.

Private security company Edinburgh International (EI) regularly uses the description ‘low levels of violence’ to assess the situation in rural Herat, including ‘small scale clashes’ and ‘sporadic IED activity’. ⁽¹⁶⁰¹⁾ In January 2015 in particular, insurgent activity remained low and mainly limited to insurgent hot spots such as Shindand, Adraskan or Kushke Kohna where militants have proven capable of sustaining low-level IED and checkpoint raids. ⁽¹⁶⁰²⁾ In February 2015, insurgent attacks increased again in Adraskan, Obe and Kushke Kohna, and in almost all cases involved ambushes of police vehicles or other security personnel. ⁽¹⁶⁰³⁾

⁽¹⁵⁹⁹⁾ For more information on the source and the methodology of the maps, see [introduction](#).

⁽¹⁶⁰⁰⁾ USIP, Political and economic dynamics of Herat, 2 April 2015, pp. 34-35.

⁽¹⁶⁰¹⁾ Edinburgh International, Afghanistan Weekly Security Report, 22 October 2014; Edinburgh International, Afghanistan Weekly Security Report, 6 November 2014; Edinburgh International, Afghanistan Weekly Security Report, 13 November 2014; Edinburgh International, Afghanistan Weekly Security Report, 27 November 2014.

⁽¹⁶⁰²⁾ Edinburgh International, Afghanistan Weekly Security Report, 15 January 2015; Edinburgh International, Afghanistan Weekly Security Report, 22 January 2015.

⁽¹⁶⁰³⁾ Edinburgh International, Afghanistan Weekly Security Report, 5 February 2015.

At the end of 2014, officials and civil-society activists complained about growing insecurity in the province due to assassination attempts, kidnappings and a lack of coordination by security forces. ⁽¹⁶⁰⁴⁾ In the fifth cycle of APPRO's monitoring of Women's Security, researchers found an overall deterioration of the security situation in Herat, mainly due to heightened criminality, murder, kidnapping and robberies. ⁽¹⁶⁰⁵⁾ EI claimed in its assessment of two shootings inside the city in the beginning of October that Herat had been known to attract high-profile attacks during autumn in the past. ⁽¹⁶⁰⁶⁾ At the end of October, EI said five assassination attempts on ANP members and local civilians had occurred in the previous 10 days. In the most significant one, two ANP members were killed and nine civilians injured. ⁽¹⁶⁰⁷⁾ In March 2015, officials claimed the situation improved after the arrest of an 8-member kidnapping gang, 15 smugglers, 21 thieves, six murderers and two terrorists. ⁽¹⁶⁰⁸⁾

In December 2014, EI reported that Herat city had been subjected to numerous roadside bombings in the previous seven days. ⁽¹⁶⁰⁹⁾ EI reported that, in beginning of 2015, armed violence was on the rise in villages surrounding the capital, although not necessarily insurgent in origin. ⁽¹⁶¹⁰⁾ At the end of February 2015, Tolo News reported a surge of violence in Herat city in the three previous months, claiming 60 people had died in the previous 45 days from gun violence, without making any distinction between crime-related or conflict-related violence. ⁽¹⁶¹¹⁾ In February 2015, an explosives-laden bicycle went off near a gas station in Herat city, injuring one child. ⁽¹⁶¹²⁾ Around Herat, a suicide bomber chased by security personnel blew himself up before reaching his target, injuring two civilians in the district of Injil in April 2015 and a roadside bomb killed 6 police officers in Guzara in July. ⁽¹⁶¹³⁾ In Herat city, three girls were sprayed with acid when walking to school in July 2015 and over 90 schoolboys became ill after allegedly being poisoned in April 2015. ⁽¹⁶¹⁴⁾ In August 2015, more than 100 schoolchildren fell ill after a presumed gas attack on a girl's school in Injil district. ⁽¹⁶¹⁵⁾ Other victims of targeted violence included a prominent Shiite cleric in November 2014, a tribal elder in August 2015 and a civilian employee of the Department of Labour and Social Affairs near his home in Injil district. ⁽¹⁶¹⁶⁾

According to AAN analyst Fabrizio Foschini, although the security situation has deteriorated in other areas of the province over the past few years, the district of Shindand still accounts for one-third of all security incidents in the province of Herat. A vast district largely populated by Pashtuns, it houses a strategically important military airbase built by the Soviets and reactivated by the US, mainly with Iran in mind. The airbase is now mainly used as a training facility for Afghan pilots. ⁽¹⁶¹⁷⁾ Shindand is described as a 'historic opium growing district'. ⁽¹⁶¹⁸⁾ The district also has two important roads: the ring road connecting Herat with Kandahar, from which a secondary road leads towards Farah. The current situation is described by Foschini as follows: ⁽¹⁶¹⁹⁾

Nowadays, locals report that the government's writ extends only to the district centre and the area around the airbase, plus the immediate surroundings of the few army posts in this vast district. Throughout the years, governance efforts seemed meagre, with a long series of mediocre or outright dishonest officials appointed as district governors. A wide expanse of no man's land where insurgents are able to move freely connects Shindand with restive Posht-e Rud and Khak-e Safed districts of Farah to the south.

⁽¹⁶⁰⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Protest against spiraling insecurity held, 10 December 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, Herat insecurity blamed on weak coordination, 22 December 2014.

⁽¹⁶⁰⁵⁾ APPRO, Afghanistan: Monitoring Women's Security in Transition. Cycle 5, January 2015, p. 30.

⁽¹⁶⁰⁶⁾ Edinburgh International, Afghanistan Weekly Security Report, 2 October 2014.

⁽¹⁶⁰⁷⁾ Edinburgh International, Afghanistan Weekly Security Report, 23-29 October 2014.

⁽¹⁶⁰⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Herat security on the mend, claim public reps, 14 March 2015.

⁽¹⁶⁰⁹⁾ Edinburgh International, Afghanistan Weekly Security Report, 11 December 2014.

⁽¹⁶¹⁰⁾ Edinburgh International, Afghanistan Weekly Security Report, 8 January 2015; Edinburgh International, Afghanistan Weekly Security Report, 15 January 2015.

⁽¹⁶¹¹⁾ Tolonews, Herat police commander goes on the offensive, 26 February 2015.

⁽¹⁶¹²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Herat blast leaves child wounded, 19 February 2015.

⁽¹⁶¹³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Suicide bomber dies on way to Herat City, 1 April 2015; Tolonews, Death toll of Herat IED blast rises to six, 19 July 2015.

⁽¹⁶¹⁴⁾ CNN, Afghanistan: Men throw acid into girls' faces 'for going to school', 4 July 2015; Tolonews, 91 boys hospitalised after being poisoned in Herat City, 11 April 2015.

⁽¹⁶¹⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, More than 100 schoolgirls, teacher poisoned in Herat, 31 August 2015.

⁽¹⁶¹⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Prominent cleric gunned down in Herat, 13 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, Gunmen kill leading tribal elder in Herat, 12 August 2015; UNAMA, Afghanistan Midyear Report 2015, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, July 2015, p. 53.

⁽¹⁶¹⁷⁾ Foschini, F., Classics of Conflict (1): Reviewing some of Afghanistan's most notorious hotspots, 3 July 2015.

⁽¹⁶¹⁸⁾ Edinburgh International, Afghanistan Weekly Security Report, 26 February 2015; Edinburgh International, Afghanistan Weekly Security Report, 5 March 2015.

⁽¹⁶¹⁹⁾ Foschini F., Classics of Conflict (1): Reviewing some of Afghanistan's most notorious hotspots, 3 July 2015.

Regularly during this reporting period, insurgents tried to overrun the Shindand district centre: In November 2014 they attacked the district building, ⁽¹⁶²⁰⁾ in December 2014 the district bazaar, ⁽¹⁶²¹⁾ in May 2015 several security posts in the centre of the district, sparking a large-scale military offensive in the district. ⁽¹⁶²²⁾

According to analyst Foschini: ⁽¹⁶²³⁾

[m]any more residents of Shindand took the road to Herat never to come back. Whoever was ‘an administrator, a teacher, a civil servant or an educated or well-off person,’ as one such professional from Shindand recalled, found it increasingly difficult and dangerous to live in the district. Militants started to target everybody who stood out with kidnapping threats or simply by enforcing a racket. People would get phone calls with threats and requests for money, until everybody with assets had been forced to pay or leave.

Examples from this reporting period include the killing of Shindand’s education director, his son and another member of the education department in December 2014. ⁽¹⁶²⁴⁾ A few days later, police units reported 20 insurgents were killed when they stormed several villages in Shindand and burned all the girls’ schools. ⁽¹⁶²⁵⁾ APPRO reports that in Shindand, many schools have closed. ⁽¹⁶²⁶⁾

In October 2014, EI called Obe and Kushke Kohna ‘hostile districts, [continuing to] experience periodic violence against ANSF and civilian population’. ⁽¹⁶²⁷⁾ The private security company counts the district regularly as one of the hotspots of militant activity with the highest risk level of all Western districts, next to Shindand and Farah’s Bala Boluk. ⁽¹⁶²⁸⁾ Some examples of insurgent activity from the media include: In May 2015, two ALP members were killed in Kushk-e Kohna. ⁽¹⁶²⁹⁾ In June 2015, insurgents launched a large-scale attack on the district of KushkeKohna, taking control of several villages and security posts. ⁽¹⁶³⁰⁾ In the same month, 11 soldiers were killed in an ambush in neighbouring Karukh. ⁽¹⁶³¹⁾

The key districts of Koshan, Chist-e Sharif and Kushk were targeted by militants at the end of October 2015, according to EI. ⁽¹⁶³²⁾ There has been sporadic insurgent activity in ChisteSharif. In February 2015, insurgents attacked a police post, killing several policemen, and in March 2015 a roadside bomb killed several soldiers travelling to Ghor. ⁽¹⁶³³⁾ In August 2015, a roadside bomb targeted an army vehicle in Pashtun Zarghun while travelling towards Herat on the same road. One soldier was killed and another wounded. ⁽¹⁶³⁴⁾

In January 2015, EI reported multiple ambushes against Afghan Border Patrols in Gulran district. ⁽¹⁶³⁵⁾ In August 2015, four border policemen were killed in a similar attack. ⁽¹⁶³⁶⁾

Criminality and abduction along the roads are a significant threat in Herat province, although, according to EI, this is largely a southern phenomenon, principally occurring in Shindand and Adraskan. ⁽¹⁶³⁷⁾ In March 2015, EI reported a rise of targeted abductions in western areas, indicating a wider tactical shift towards kidnap and ransom activity. ⁽¹⁶³⁸⁾ Armed criminality was the biggest problem in Herat city in December 2014, said EI, leading to regular motorcycle

⁽¹⁶²⁰⁾ Tolonews, Taliban attack building in Herat district, 4 November 2014.

⁽¹⁶²¹⁾ Tolonews, Taliban attack Shindand, 11 December 2014.

⁽¹⁶²²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Fresh violence erupts in Herat city, 12 May 2015; Tolonews, Taliban attack Herat district, 12 May 2015; Tolonews, Reinforcement troops drive back Taliban from Shindand, Herat, 21 May 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Shindand fight ends killing 23 rebels, 21 May 2015.

⁽¹⁶²³⁾ Foschini, F., *Classics of Conflict (1): Reviewing some of Afghanistan’s most notorious hotspots*, 3 July 2015.

⁽¹⁶²⁴⁾ Tolonews, Education Director among 3 killed in Herat, 8 December 2014.

⁽¹⁶²⁵⁾ Edinburgh International, *Afghanistan Weekly Security Report*, 18 December 2014.

⁽¹⁶²⁶⁾ APPRO, *Afghanistan: Monitoring Women’s Security in Transition. Cycle 5, January 2015*, p. 30.

⁽¹⁶²⁷⁾ Edinburgh International, *Afghanistan Weekly Security Report*, 15 October 2014.

⁽¹⁶²⁸⁾ Edinburgh International, *Afghanistan Weekly Security Report*, 8 January 2015.

⁽¹⁶²⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Shindand fight ends with killing of 23 rebels, 21 May 2015.

⁽¹⁶³⁰⁾ Tolonews, Taliban take control of several villages in Herat, 12 June 2015.

⁽¹⁶³¹⁾ Tolonews, 11 soldiers killed in Taliban ambush in Herat, 29 June 2015.

⁽¹⁶³²⁾ Edinburgh International, *Afghanistan Weekly Security Report*, 22 October 2014.

⁽¹⁶³³⁾ Tolonews, Four policemen killed in Herat Taliban attack, 2 February 2015; RFE/RL, Taliban attacks kill at least seven Afghan police, 2 February 2015; Tolonews, Two ANA soldiers killed in Herat roadside mine blast, 1 March 2015.

⁽¹⁶³⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, School principal shot dead, 3 others wounded in Logar, 3 August 2015.

⁽¹⁶³⁵⁾ Edinburgh International, *Afghanistan Weekly Security Report*, 29 January 2015.

⁽¹⁶³⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 4 border policemen killed in Herat attack, 17 August 2015.

⁽¹⁶³⁷⁾ Edinburgh International, *Afghanistan Weekly Security Report*, 22 October 2014; Edinburgh International, *Afghanistan Weekly Security Report*, 6 November 2014.

⁽¹⁶³⁸⁾ Edinburgh International, *Afghanistan Weekly Security Report*, 12 March 2015.

drive-by shootings. ⁽¹⁶³⁹⁾ EI claimed in March 2015 that over the previous year 100 cases of kidnap for ransom, extortion and targeted assassinations by criminals occurred in the city of Herat. ⁽¹⁶⁴⁰⁾ In July 2015, kidnapping for ransom was still considered a growing problem in Herat. As the kidnapping has no ideological or political reasons victims include the affluent: businessmen, industrialists and politicians. They have fared well in the last decade as the economy soared, ironically thanks to Herat's peacefulness. With the police increasingly occupied with fighting insurgents, criminality and kidnapping has worsened, much to the detriment of the economy. ⁽¹⁶⁴¹⁾ The surge in kidnappings led president Ghani to dismiss the acting governor of Herat province in July 2015. ⁽¹⁶⁴²⁾

Displacement

According to a study by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP): ⁽¹⁶⁴³⁾

Along with other urban centers, Herat continues to absorb migrants from within the province and from farther afield in Afghanistan. Those who resettle from other provinces come in search of security, services, livelihoods, or business opportunities or are displaced due to conflict, drought, or poverty. Since the 1990s, the most vulnerable displaced families have settled on vacant government or private land, though the extent of this squatting is far less than in many other urban centers. All but a handful of internally displaced persons' (IDP) settlements in Herat have been removed or regularized; the largest remaining enclave at Maslakh extends for 264 hectares and is home to at least eighteen thousand people. Efforts are being made to integrate the residents—nearly half of whom were born in the settlement—by providing a limited form of title rights to occupied land and basic services yet allowing for densification to absorb new arrivals. The ability of other displaced communities, such as those at Shaida'e to the east of the city, to resist efforts by the municipality to relocate them sheds light on how 'street power' can at times prevail even among the vulnerable. Whatever influence some of them might have, displaced households in Herat rely primarily on daily wage labor for their livelihoods and, as competition for employment intensifies, may struggle to survive.

In December 2014, UNHCR mentioned IDPs from Moqor, Qadis, Bala Murghab, Ghormach Abkamary and Jawand in Badghis, Du Layna, Shahrak and Firuz Koh in Ghor and Nawad in Helmand, but also from Farah and Kandahar provinces. ⁽¹⁶⁴⁴⁾ Calling Herat 'a bastion of peace', these IDPs set up make-shift camps in surrounding Injil district whereas in the Herat urban area they generally managed to rent houses. ⁽¹⁶⁴⁵⁾ In February 2015, UNHCR stated that the majority of IDPs in and around Herat city lived in makeshift camps, where one month later, UNHCR claimed the majority managed to rent houses, while only some families were assessed as living in makeshift shelters. ⁽¹⁶⁴⁶⁾ Of those identified in April, 'significant parts' of the IDP families were found living in tents or makeshift accommodation. ⁽¹⁶⁴⁷⁾

In its monthly updates on conflict-induced displacement from October 2014 to July 2015, UNHCR did not profile any IDPs from Herat's most volatile district of Shindand. UNHCR identified only some internal displacement from Kushk-e Kohna district into Herat city and surrounding Injil in the beginning of 2015. ⁽¹⁶⁴⁸⁾ School closures and Taliban infighting presumably have prompted many residents of Shindand to flee towards Herat city, but most of them remained unregistered. ⁽¹⁶⁴⁹⁾

Overall, Herat is not a province where high numbers of IDPs originate from, with between 80 and 500 profiled by UNHCR from January to July 2015. All of them came from three districts: Gulran, Shindand and Karukh. ⁽¹⁶⁵⁰⁾

⁽¹⁶³⁹⁾ Edinburgh International, Afghanistan Weekly Security Report, 4 December 2014.

⁽¹⁶⁴⁰⁾ Edinburgh International, Afghanistan Weekly Security Report, 26 March 2015.

⁽¹⁶⁴¹⁾ Globalpost, Afghanistan's Model City Is also Its Kidnapping Capital, 27 July 2015.

⁽¹⁶⁴²⁾ Tolonews, Ghani Visits Herat Amid Chaotic Situation, 27 December 2014.

⁽¹⁶⁴³⁾ USIP, Political and economic dynamics of Herat, 2 April 2015, p. 9.

⁽¹⁶⁴⁴⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, December 2014; UNHCR, Afghanistan Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, January 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, March 2015.

⁽¹⁶⁴⁵⁾ RFE/RL, Displaced afghan families fear winter without food, shelter, 5 December 2014; UNHCR, Afghanistan Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, January 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, February 2015.

⁽¹⁶⁴⁶⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, February 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, March 2015.

⁽¹⁶⁴⁷⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, April 2015.

⁽¹⁶⁴⁸⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, January 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, February 2015.

⁽¹⁶⁴⁹⁾ Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - October 2015.

⁽¹⁶⁵⁰⁾ UNOCHA, Afghanistan : Conflict-Induced Displacement (January to July 2015), 16 September 2015.

After Nangarhar, Herat is a pilot province where the new IDP policy will be implemented. ⁽¹⁶⁵¹⁾

Actors in the conflict

The Taliban shadow governor for Herat is Mawlawi Abdulwali Shuaybkhel, affiliated to the Quetta Shura. ⁽¹⁶⁵²⁾ According to a statement by the Taliban in August 2015, the deputy in charge for Herat is mullah Abdul Manam Mahmud, the Taliban head of Intelligence is haji Abdul Qahir. ⁽¹⁶⁵³⁾

Discussing the situation in Herat's most restive district Shindand, analyst Fabrizio Foschini states: ⁽¹⁶⁵⁴⁾

The recent spate of attacks by insurgents, who apparently tried to storm the district centre, may be connected to the homecoming of Shindand's most prominent local Taliban commander. Nangialay – son of slain Amanullah Khan who used to withstand Ismail Khan's power – reportedly returned from Quetta for the first time in many years last March. Even before the attacks in May, he made it known that he was not planning to lay down arms. In fact, according to locals he even declared himself 'ready to raise the black flag' of Daesh (Islamic State) in case the Taliban leadership opted for a peace deal. With this statement, he is reflecting the stance of many mid-level insurgent commanders who had joined the insurgency because of family or political grievances rather than ideology and who now see the opportunity to seek another organisation's patronage and continue their opposition towards the government.

The ALP project in the home area of Taliban commander Nangialay – Zirkuh, also home to most of the militant and armed groups of the province – has recently been falling apart. Mentored by US forces until the end of 2014, the once 350-strong district ALP was all concentrated in Zirkuh, with its recruitment base split between men with a connection to the family of Nangialay and to other communities. However, no connection was strong enough to preserve them from a war of attrition waged by the Taliban with frequent attacks and targeted killings. It eventually wore them out. According to locals interviewed, the ALP leaders fled to Herat city, and their militia is now 'dead and gone'.

In the beginning of August 2015, two rival Taliban groups clashed with each other in Shindand. The two groups belonged presumably to commander Nangialay and Amruddin. It was suggested that such rival groups usually clash over judicial issues. ⁽¹⁶⁵⁵⁾ Two weeks later, two Taliban groups again clashed in Shindand. This time, the dispute was reportedly over the succession of Mullah Omar. The clash led to the death of 15 fighters. ⁽¹⁶⁵⁶⁾

In April 2015, security personnel arrested several members of a criminal gang involved in smuggling and rape, whose leader admitted to receiving 10,000 Afghans from the Taliban per police officer they killed. ⁽¹⁶⁵⁷⁾ However, the broad perception among APPRO's respondents was that ANP does not take its responsibility seriously in fighting crime and does not respond to reports by community members about criminal cases and activities. ⁽¹⁶⁵⁸⁾ According to a study by USIP: ⁽¹⁶⁵⁹⁾

Insecurity is a major preoccupation today among Heratis of all walks of life. Kidnappings for ransom by criminal gangs, who primarily target members of wealthy or prominent families, continue to be a problem. They, along with murders and robbery, have fostered a climate of fear and mistrust, even middle-class families taking extra precautions. Some neighborhoods are now patrolled at night by youth militias from the communities who are concerned for their safety. Those who can afford to have retreated into gated enclaves. [...] As in other cities, links are alleged between parts of the business and criminal communities in Herat, the latter ensuring a continued demand for protection services on which many businessmen and their families rely.

The reported rearming of militias in and around the city is likely to further complicate a situation that some argue serves the interests of those who wish to demonstrate their indispensable role in ensuring law and

⁽¹⁶⁵¹⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, July 2015.

⁽¹⁶⁵²⁾ UN Security Council, Letter dated 18 August 2015 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council, 26 August 2015, p. 20.

⁽¹⁶⁵³⁾ Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Pledges of allegiance to the new Amir take place throughout Afghanistan, 9 August 2015.

⁽¹⁶⁵⁴⁾ Foschini F., Classics of Conflict (1): Reviewing some of Afghanistan's most notorious hotspots, 3 July 2015.

⁽¹⁶⁵⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, District chief Herat arrested on rape charges, 3 August 2015.

⁽¹⁶⁵⁶⁾ Tolonews, Infighting kills 15 Taliban in Herat, 14 August 2015; Khaama Press, Clash among Taliban militants over Mullah Mansoor leaves 15 dead in Herat, 14 August 2015.

⁽¹⁶⁵⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, A group of terror busted in Herat, 22 April 2015.

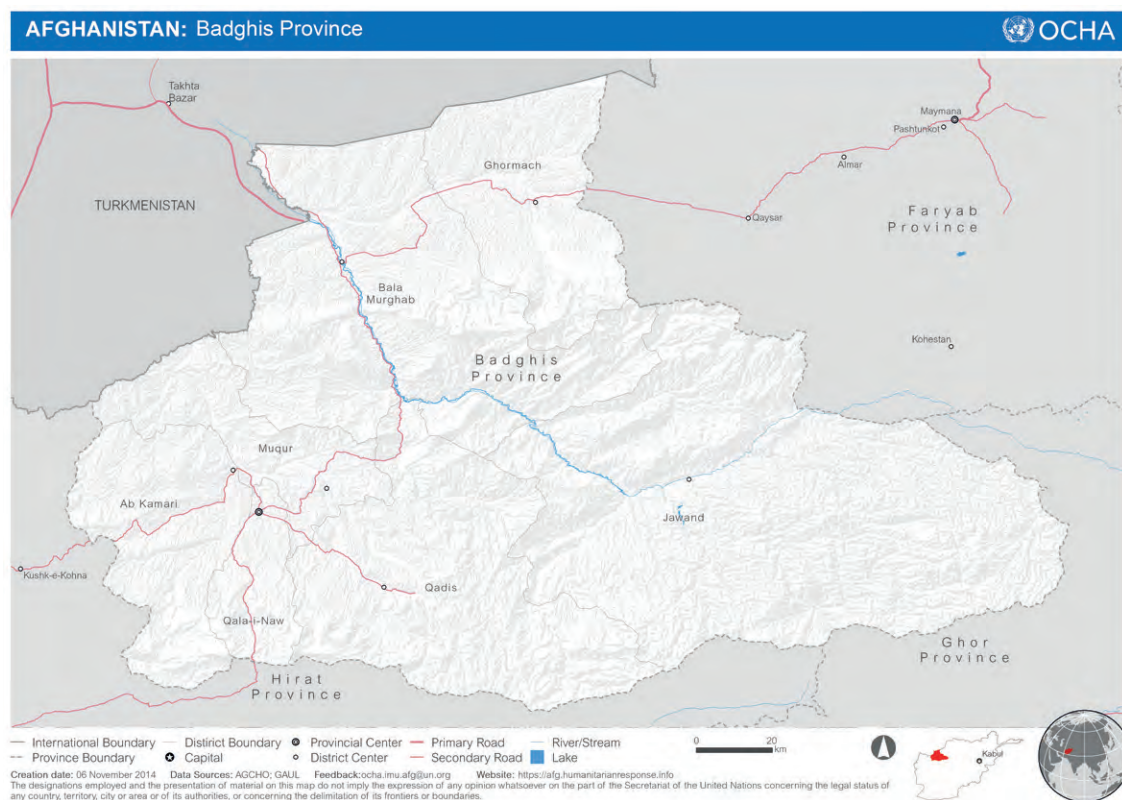
⁽¹⁶⁵⁸⁾ APPRO, Afghanistan: Monitoring Women's Security in Transition. Cycle 5, January 2015, p. 30.

⁽¹⁶⁵⁹⁾ USIP, Political and economic dynamics of Herat, 2 April 2015, pp. 34-35.

order. [...] Ismail Khan has repeatedly claimed that international support for Afghan security forces is ineffective and that only his mujahideen can ensure stability in Herat — a view widely shared among the public given the patchy performance of the police. Rather than protecting the public, however, the rearming of militias is primarily aimed at safeguarding the fixed assets of assorted ex-commanders, politicians, and businessmen. In Herat, as in other cities, urban security has become a direct function of urban wealth.

2.8.2 Badghis

General description of the province



Badghis province is located in northwestern Afghanistan and shares its borders with Herat, Ghor, and Faryab provinces as well as Turkmenistan. The province is mountainous and dominated by the Murghab River in the north and the Hari-Rud River in the south. It has pistachio and cedar forests and springs. ⁽¹⁶⁶⁰⁾ The province is made up of the following districts: Ab Kamari, Balamurghab, Ghormach, Jawand, Muqur, Qadis, Qala-e-Naw. ⁽¹⁶⁶¹⁾ UNOCHA estimated that for 2015 Badghis' population was 495,958. ⁽¹⁶⁶²⁾ The main ethnic groups are Tajik and Pashtun, followed by Uzbek, Hazaras, Turkman, Arab, and Baluch. There are also Kuchi living in Balkh. The district of Bala Murghab is mostly Pashtun; the districts of Ab Kamari and Qala-i Naw mainly Tajik. ⁽¹⁶⁶³⁾

According to the public health department, there are 38 health facilities in the province, including an 80-bed hospital. However, a lack of medicine and doctors was reported. It was also reported that doctors, especially gynaecologists, were reluctant to work because of the security situation. ⁽¹⁶⁶⁴⁾

⁽¹⁶⁶⁰⁾ RRERS, Provincial Profile for Badghis, n.d.; Pajhwok Afghan News, 'Background profile of Badghis province', 2014.

⁽¹⁶⁶¹⁾ UNOCHA, AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries, 25 September 2012..

⁽¹⁶⁶²⁾ UNOCHA, Afghanistan population estimate for 2015, 26 August 2015.

⁽¹⁶⁶³⁾ ISW, Regional Command West, Demographics and Terrain, n.d.; USACAC, Afghanistan Provincial Reconstruction Team Handbook, February 2011, p. 65; AIMS, Badghis District Profiles, 2002.

⁽¹⁶⁶⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Badghis residents without basic health facilities, 22 June 2014.

Description of the violence

From 1 January to 31 August 2015, Badghis province counted 159 security incidents. ⁽¹⁶⁶⁵⁾ Table 32 provides an overview of the nature of the security incidents: ⁽¹⁶⁶⁶⁾

Violence targeting individuals	24
Armed confrontations	110
Explosions	12
Security enforcement	9
Non-conflict related incidents	2
Other incidents	2
Total security incidents	159

Table 32: Security incidents by type, Badghis (Jan – Aug 2015)

The map in figure 35 presents the number of security incidents per district in Badghis province. ⁽¹⁶⁶⁷⁾

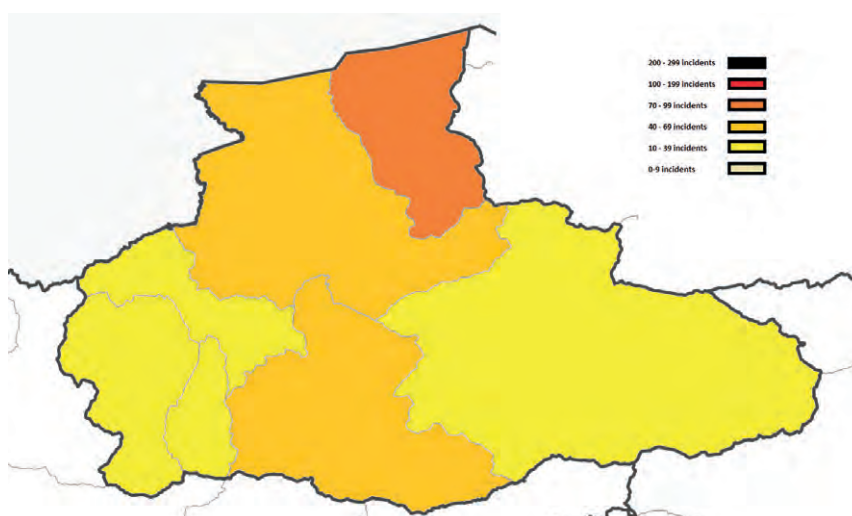


Figure 35: Badghis, security incidents (Jan – Aug 2015)

RFE/RL reported: ⁽¹⁶⁶⁸⁾

Badghis Province has been a hotbed of fighting by Taliban and IMU militants since 2014, and Afghan security forces have launched several offensives since then in an attempt to drive militants out of the province. Those operations usually are launched in response to the seizure of towns or villages by the militants.

In November 2014, fighting between ALP members and insurgents reportedly resulted in civilian casualties. ⁽¹⁶⁶⁹⁾ In the same month, unidentified gunmen abducted six school teachers in Badghis. ⁽¹⁶⁷⁰⁾

UNAMA reported an attack launched by insurgents on 23 March 2015 in Bala Murghab against ANA troops. During the subsequent armed clash, ANA fired mortars causing nine civilian casualties (three killed, including one woman, and six injured, including three women and one boy). ⁽¹⁶⁷¹⁾

⁽¹⁶⁶⁵⁾ The district of Ghormach is not included in the total numbers of different kinds of incidents for the province (total 159), because different sources consider it to be resorting under either the province of Faryab or under Badghis.

⁽¹⁶⁶⁶⁾ For more information on the source of the data and the methodology, see [introduction](#).

⁽¹⁶⁶⁷⁾ For more information on the source and the methodology of the maps, see [introduction](#).

⁽¹⁶⁶⁸⁾ RFE/RL, Afghanistan's New Northern Flash Points, n.d.

⁽¹⁶⁶⁹⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan - Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, November 2014, p. 3.

⁽¹⁶⁷⁰⁾ Khaama Press, Gunmen abduct 6 school teachers in Badghis province, 19 November 2014.

⁽¹⁶⁷¹⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan Midyear Report 2015, Protection of civilians in armed conflict, August 2015, p. 32.

In April 2015, clashes broke out between two rival tribes, with divided allegiance to the insurgents and the government respectively, in the district of Ab Kamari. ⁽¹⁶⁷²⁾ On 22 April 2015, Taliban fighters raided a security checkpost and killed nine ANBP in Badghis. ⁽¹⁶⁷³⁾

On 9 May 2015, the Taliban raided the district administrative centre of Jawand and held it for three days. ⁽¹⁶⁷⁴⁾ On 20 May 2015, more than 200 Taliban fighters launched an assault on border checkpoints in Bala Murghab district. After heavy fighting, ANSF forces managed to repel the insurgents. ⁽¹⁶⁷⁵⁾

In June 2015, insurgents attacked several villages and took control of the district of Ab Kamari. Less than a week later, ANSF launched a counter-offensive. In July and August 2015, ANSF also conducted military operations in Ab Kamari. ⁽¹⁶⁷⁶⁾ It was also reported that armed men diverted health supplies and abducted a humanitarian truck driver. Clinics in Badghis were closed due to the conflict. ⁽¹⁶⁷⁷⁾

The Taliban also reported on clashes with ANSF and Arbaki or local militia, to which it often refers to as 'hirelings'. ⁽¹⁶⁷⁸⁾ It also reported on assaults on ANSF or Arbaki outposts or security checkpoints. ⁽¹⁶⁷⁹⁾

In August 2015, the Taliban attacked ANP in Jawand district, killing seven policemen and 5 civilians. Five insurgents were also killed in the clash. ⁽¹⁶⁸⁰⁾

In the summer of 2015, the Taliban attacked the district administrative centres of Ab Kamari and Jawand. ⁽¹⁶⁸¹⁾

The Taliban reported on killing or capturing Arbaki commanders and fighters as well as ANSF personnel. ⁽¹⁶⁸²⁾ It also reported on ANSF assaults, using mortars or helicopter airstrikes that hit civilian homes and cause civilian casualties in Ghormach. ⁽¹⁶⁸³⁾

Displacement

Between November 2014 and August 2015, UNHCR documented 2,553 families (approximately 13,900 individuals) displaced by conflict in Badghis. Additionally, displacements to Herat city also took place. They were displaced from Ab Kamari, Ghormach, Muqur, Qadis, Bala Murghab, Jawand and areas surrounding Qala-i Naw city. Most of them relocated to Ab Kamari and the centre of Qala-i Naw. Fighting between insurgents and ANSF, extortion, illegal taxation, targeted killings, kidnappings and insurgent threats to those affiliated with the government and intimidation by insurgents were reported as the main reasons for displacement. ⁽¹⁶⁸⁴⁾

⁽¹⁶⁷²⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan - Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, April 2015, p. 4.

⁽¹⁶⁷³⁾ RFE/RL, Seventeen Killed on Eve of Afghan Taliban's Spring Offensive, 23 April 2015.

⁽¹⁶⁷⁴⁾ Khaama Press, Taliban occupy Jawand District in Badghis, 10 May 2015; Tolonews, Taliban Take Control of Badghis's Jawand District: Officials, 10 May 2015; Press TV, Afghan troops liberate district from militants, 12 May 2015; RFE/RL, Afghanistan's New Northern Flash Points, n.d.; Tolonews, Taliban Takes Jawand District, 10 May 2015.

⁽¹⁶⁷⁵⁾ Tolonews, Badghis Border Siege Thwarted After Large-Scale Offensive, 20 May 2015.

⁽¹⁶⁷⁶⁾ Afghan Zariza, Security forces regain control of Ab Kamari district in Badghis; insurgents forced to retreat, 7 June 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, July 2015, p. 5.

⁽¹⁶⁷⁷⁾ UNOCHA, Operational Coordination Team – Badghis Province, Meeting Minutes, 2 July 2015.

⁽¹⁶⁷⁸⁾ Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, 5 including commander killed, 3 wounded, 10 June 2015; Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Fighting extends into 5th day in Badghis, 6 May 2015; Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, 6 killed and wounded in Badghis clash, 5 August 2015.

⁽¹⁶⁷⁹⁾ Islamic State of Afghanistan, Outpost, 4 check posts and 8 villagers liberated in Sang Atish, 23 April 2015; Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Post dismantled in Bala Marghab, 14 gunmen killed, 23 April 2015; Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Post overrun in Badghis, 6 police killed, 29 April 2015; Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Key post overrun in Badghis, equipment seized, 30 March 2015.

⁽¹⁶⁸⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Policemen among several dead in Badghis clash, 16 August 2015.

⁽¹⁶⁸¹⁾ Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - October 2015.

⁽¹⁶⁸²⁾ Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Residents of Aab Garmi declare support for Islamic Emirate, 2 July 2015; Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Key Arbaki commander killed, 2 detained, 30 May 2015; Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Gunman killed in Ghormach, 23 June 2015; Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Hireling imam killed by Mujahideen, 11 July 2015; Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, 3 police, militiaman detained in Ghormach, 8 July 2015; Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, 18 killed and wounded as enemy repelled, 12 August 2015.

⁽¹⁶⁸³⁾ Islamic emirate of Afghanistan, Several civilians injured by enemy bombing, 18 August 2015.

⁽¹⁶⁸⁴⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, August 2015, p. 4; UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, July 2015, p. 5; UNHCR, Afghanistan - Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, April 2015, p. 4; UNHCR, Afghanistan - Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, March 2015, p. 4; UNHCR, Afghanistan - Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, 31 December 2014, pp. 2-3; UNHCR, Afghanistan - Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, November 2014, p. 3.

Actors in the conflict

More than 20 insurgent groups are reported to be active in Badghis, including foreign fighters (Uzbeks, Pakistani). They appeared to be able to gather forces of about 1,000 fighters and also infiltrate neighbouring provinces. It was reported that the district of Bala Murghab became a safe haven for Taliban fighters. ⁽¹⁶⁸⁵⁾

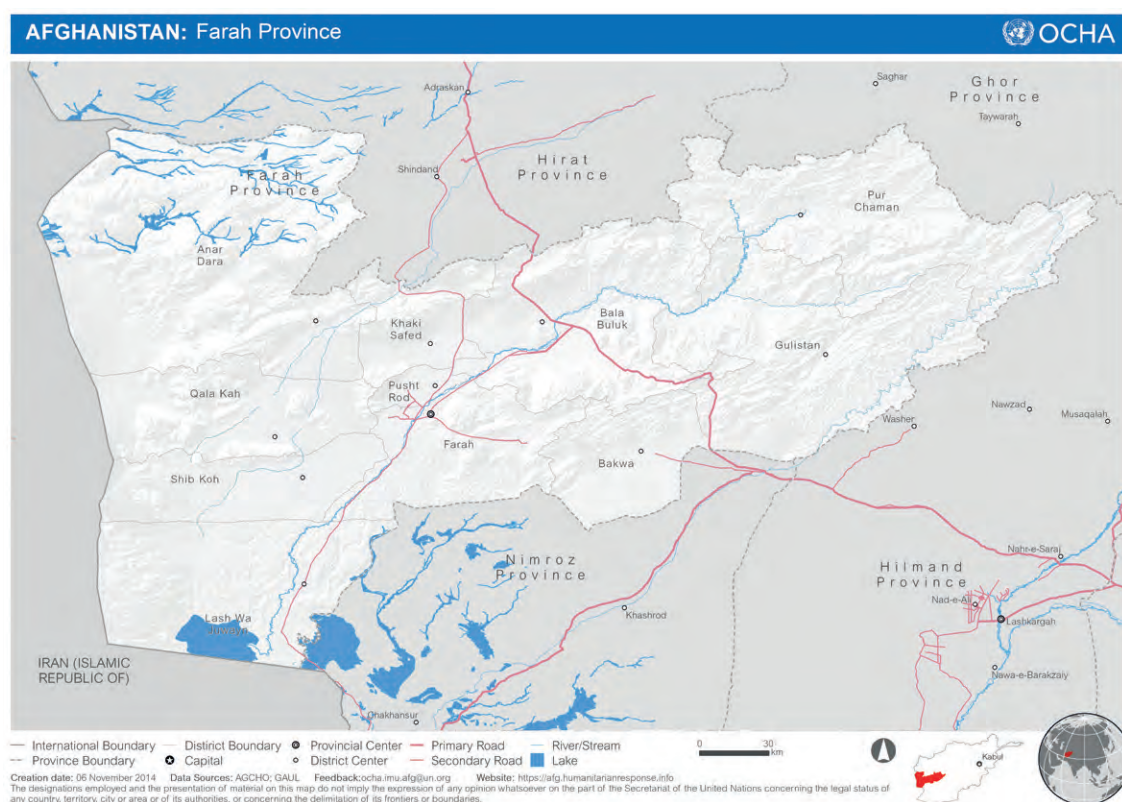
RFE/RL reported that Taliban and IMU fighters from North Waziristan in Pakistan enter Badghis via the easternmost part of Herat province. ⁽¹⁶⁸⁶⁾

The Taliban's local commanders are Nam Haq and Mullah Bismillah. In the province, *arbaki*, or local militias, also play a significant role. For example, Haji Akhtar was an *arbaki* commander in Qadis before he was killed at a checkpoint under his command. ⁽¹⁶⁸⁷⁾ The arrest of another local Taliban commander, Mawlawi Salam, was reported by the Afghan interior ministry. ⁽¹⁶⁸⁸⁾ During the summer of 2015, it was reported that insurgents from the neighbouring province of Faryab moved into Badghis. ⁽¹⁶⁸⁹⁾ Mullah Abdulhakim, aka Abdulqayum, was named Taliban shadow governor for Badghis province. ⁽¹⁶⁹⁰⁾

According to the Taliban, Zaki is a key ANA commander in Badghis who was wounded in clashes with the Taliban. ⁽¹⁶⁹¹⁾

2.8.3 Farah

General description of the province



⁽¹⁶⁸⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Faryab governor warns of insecurity, 18 August 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, 30 rebels killed in Qaisar offensive, 21 April 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, 64 Pakistani rebels sneak into western zone, 6 April 2014; Tolonews, Bala Murghab District in Badghis Province a Safe Haven for Taliban: District Governor, 29 July 2014.

⁽¹⁶⁸⁶⁾ RFE/RL, Afghanistan's New Northern Flash Points, n.d.

⁽¹⁶⁸⁷⁾ Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Residents of Aab Garmi declare support for Islamic Emirate, 2 July 2015; Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Key Arbaki commander killed, 2 detained, 30 May 2015; Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Gunman killed in Ghormach, 23 June 2015; Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Hiring imam killed by Mujahideen, 11 July 2015; Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, 3 police, militiaman detained in Ghormach, 8 July 2015;

⁽¹⁶⁸⁸⁾ Fars News agency, Senior Taliban Commander Arrested in Afghanistan's Badghis, 16 August 2015.

⁽¹⁶⁸⁹⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, July 2015, p. 5.

⁽¹⁶⁹⁰⁾ UN Security Council, Letter dated 18 August 2015 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council, 26 August 2015, p. 20.

⁽¹⁶⁹¹⁾ Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Fighting extends into 5th day in Badghis, 6 May 2015.

Farah is situated in the western part of Afghanistan and is bordered by Helmand, Nimroz, Herat, Ghor and Iran. Approximately half of the territory is semi-mountainous and the other half is flat. ⁽¹⁶⁹²⁾ A main river, Farah River, runs through the province. ⁽¹⁶⁹³⁾ Farah consists of the following districts: Anar Dara, Bakwa, Bala Buluk, Farah, Gulistan, Khaki Safed, Lash Wa Juwayn, Pur Chaman, Pushtrod, Qala Kah, Shib Koh. ⁽¹⁶⁹⁴⁾

UNOCHA estimated Farah's population at 507,405 for 2015. ⁽¹⁶⁹⁵⁾ The population consists of Pashtun, Baluchi and Dari-speaking communities. There is also a Kuchi population in Farah, which consists of about 45,000 individuals in summer and up to 166,000 in winter. ⁽¹⁶⁹⁶⁾

The economic activities in the province are agriculture, minerals, construction stones, opium, cotton, tobacco, honey, silk and handicraft. There is an overall literacy rate of 15%. There is a university in Farah city. ⁽¹⁶⁹⁷⁾

Description of the violence

From 1 January to 31 August 2015, Farah province counted 428 security incidents. ⁽¹⁶⁹⁸⁾ Table 33 provides an overview of the nature of the security incidents: ⁽¹⁶⁹⁹⁾

Violence targeting individuals	99
Armed confrontations	171
Explosions	76
Security enforcement	72
Non-conflict related incidents	5
Other incidents	5
Total security incidents	428

Table 33: Security incidents by type, Farah (Jan - Aug 2015)

The map in figure 36 presents the number of security incidents per district in Farah province. ⁽¹⁷⁰⁰⁾

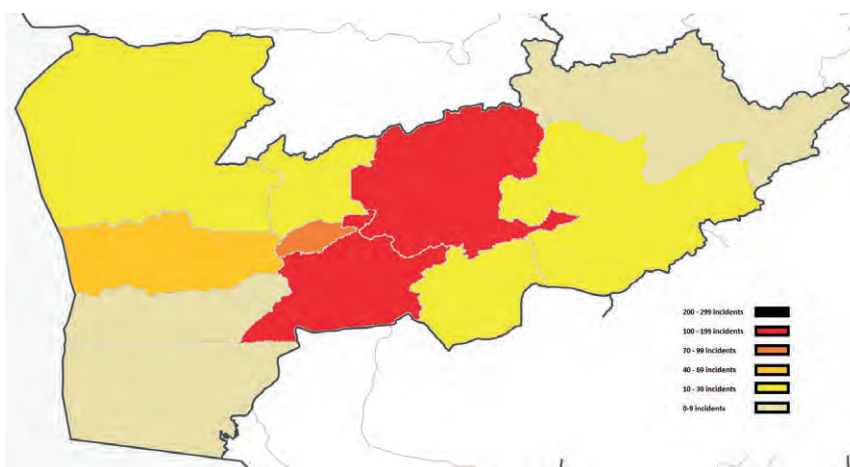


Figure 36: Farah, security incidents (Jan - Aug 2015)

⁽¹⁶⁹²⁾ MRRD, Farah Provincial Profile, n.d.

⁽¹⁶⁹³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, A view of Farah River in western Farah province, 26 April 2014.

⁽¹⁶⁹⁴⁾ UNOCHA, AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries, 25 September 2012.

⁽¹⁶⁹⁵⁾ UNOCHA, Afghanistan population estimate for 2015, 26 August 2015.

⁽¹⁶⁹⁶⁾ MRRD, Farah Provincial Profile, n.d.

⁽¹⁶⁹⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, A view entrance to Farah University in western Farah province [photo], 29 May 2014; MRRD, Farah Provincial Profile, n.d.

⁽¹⁶⁹⁸⁾ The district of Ghormach is not included in the total numbers of different kinds of incidents for the province (total 159), because different sources consider it to be resorting under either the province of Faryab or under Badghis.

⁽¹⁶⁹⁹⁾ For more information on the source of the data and the methodology, see [introduction](#).

⁽¹⁷⁰⁰⁾ For more information on the source and the methodology of the maps, see [introduction](#).

In March 2015, Tolo News reported that six Hazaras travelling through Farah were abducted by unknown gunmen. According to the governor of Farah, it were ANSF soldiers who went missing and it could not be confirmed whether they were Hazaras. ⁽¹⁷⁰¹⁾

In early April 2015, tense fighting between insurgents and ALP was reported in the district of Pusht Rod. ⁽¹⁷⁰²⁾

On 4 April 2015, the Taliban attacked ANSF checkpoints in civilian-populated areas of Pusht Rod using mortars, rockets and heavy machine guns. Four civilians were killed, including two women and one girl; two girls and one woman were also injured. According to local sources, the Taliban executed a mullah accused of supporting the government. In reaction to this attack, an ANSF helicopter opened fire in a civilian-populated area and injured five civilians including one woman and one girl. ⁽¹⁷⁰³⁾ On 10 April 2015, the Taliban organised a Sharia court in the district of Bakwa and executed three men accused of murder. ⁽¹⁷⁰⁴⁾

On 4 May 2015, the Taliban stopped public buses in Khak-e-Safed district, abducted 15 civilians on suspicion of working for the government and beheaded two of them. ⁽¹⁷⁰⁵⁾ Since May 2015, the district of Gulistan is contested by the Taliban. ⁽¹⁷⁰⁶⁾ On 28 June 2015, insurgents abducted the 17-year-old son of an ANP officer in Farah city and killed him. ⁽¹⁷⁰⁷⁾

In the summer of 2015, the Taliban attacked the district administrative centres of Qala-i Kah, Khaki Safed, Bala Buluk and Pur Chaman. ⁽¹⁷⁰⁸⁾

On 30 September 2015, the Taliban claimed to have taken control of the district of Khaki Safed. This might be seen in the context of the larger offensive they launched in the north of the country. ⁽¹⁷⁰⁹⁾

Displacement

Between November 2014 and August 2015, UNHCR documented 1,518 families (approximately 9,300 individuals) displaced by conflict to Farah city or its surroundings. They originated from Bala Buluk, Khaki Safid, Pusht Rod, Bakwa, Qala-e-Kah, Anar Dara or the surroundings of Qala-i Naw. Armed clashes between ANSF and insurgents and generalised violence were reported as the main reasons for the displacement. ⁽¹⁷¹⁰⁾

It was reported that in April 2015 an additional 250 families were displaced within the district of Pusht Rod, due to tense fighting between insurgents and ALP. According to UNHCR, a large part of them were families of ALP members. ⁽¹⁷¹¹⁾

Actors in the conflict

The situation in Farah has developed in recent years into a fierce fight between the government institutions and insurgent groups. For example, in 2012, Zmaray Farahi, an NDS chief, was ambushed and killed on a main road. A previous provincial chief of police, Abdul Samad-e Shamsuddin, has also been under attack. ⁽¹⁷¹²⁾

In 2013, the Taliban named Mulla Aminullah Akhonzada 'Jihadi leader' in the province of Farah. ⁽¹⁷¹³⁾ In 2015, Mullah Mohammad Ibrahim was identified as Taliban deputy 'shadow' governor for the province. He was reportedly killed in October 2015. His predecessor, Mullah Sultan, was killed in a US drone attack on the Farah-Herat highway. ⁽¹⁷¹⁴⁾

⁽¹⁷⁰¹⁾ Suroush, Q., Hazaras in the Crosshairs? A scrutiny of recent incidents, Afghanistan Analysts Network, 24 April 2015.

⁽¹⁷⁰²⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan: Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, June 2015.

⁽¹⁷⁰³⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan Midyear Report 2015, Protection of civilians in armed conflict, August 2015, pp. 33, 57 and 79.

⁽¹⁷⁰⁴⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan Midyear Report 2015, Protection of civilians in armed conflict, August 2015, p. 58.

⁽¹⁷⁰⁵⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan Midyear Report 2015, Protection of civilians in armed conflict, August 2015, p. 59.

⁽¹⁷⁰⁶⁾ LWJ, Taliban controls or contests scores of districts in Afghanistan, 5 October 2015.

⁽¹⁷⁰⁷⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan Midyear Report 2015, Protection of civilians in armed conflict, August 2015, p. 63.

⁽¹⁷⁰⁸⁾ Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - October 2015.

⁽¹⁷⁰⁹⁾ Roggio, B., District in western Afghanistan falls to Taliban, group claims, 30 September 2015.

⁽¹⁷¹⁰⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, August 2015, p. 4; UNHCR, Afghanistan conflict-induced internal displacement monthly update, July 2015, p. 5; UNHCR, Afghanistan: Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, June 2015, p. 5; UNHCR, Afghanistan - Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, May 2015; UNHCR, Afghanistan - Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, April 2015, p. 4; UNHCR, Afghanistan - Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, 31 December 2014, pp. 2-3.

⁽¹⁷¹¹⁾ UNHCR, Afghanistan: Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, June 2015, p. 5.

⁽¹⁷¹²⁾ Foschini, F., A War of Attrition in Farah Province, 13 March 2013.

⁽¹⁷¹³⁾ Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, The area of Mujahidin's influence has expanded, 24 March 2013.

⁽¹⁷¹⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban's deputy shadow governor for Farah killed, 11 October 2015.

In August 2015, Mawlawi Baz Mohammad was named as Taliban provincial shadow governor for Farah. The Taliban is said to have a ‘quick reaction force’ operational in Farah, Herat and Nimroz with a strength between 200 and 500 fighters. A former Taliban commander, Abdul Rauf Khadem, was said to have travelled to Iraq in October 2014 and has become loyal to IS. Upon his return he reportedly collected followers from the Taliban in Farah province by paying them large sums of money. ⁽¹⁷¹⁵⁾

The UN reported that clashes between Taliban and IS groups occurred in Farah, but on a lower scale than Nangarhar. ⁽¹⁷¹⁶⁾

2.8.4 Ghor

General description of the province



Ghor province is located in western Afghanistan and shares borders with Herat, Badghis, Faryab, Sare Pul, Bamiyan, Uruzgan, Helmand and Farah provinces. The province consists of 10 districts: Chaghcharan, Charsadra, Dawlatyar, Du Layna, Lal Wa Sarjantal, Pasaband, Saghar, Shahrak, Taywara, Tulak. ⁽¹⁷¹⁷⁾ The provincial capital is Firozkoh, formerly known as Chaghcharan. ⁽¹⁷¹⁸⁾ The province is estimated to have 690,296 inhabitants in an area of 38,579 square kilometres. ⁽¹⁷¹⁹⁾

Obaid Ali (AAN) stated that ‘[t]he Taimani and Firuzkohi [tribes of the Chahar Aimaq] are considered the largest and most influential, but there are a great number of smaller groups, most of them of Tajik origin.’ Contrary to Tajik traditions in other parts of the country, tribal adherence is, among Tajiks in Ghor, more important than ethnicity. According to Ali, most Tajik tribes in Ghor are at war with each other. ⁽¹⁷²⁰⁾

The province is very mountainous and characterised by small isolated villages which are generally inaccessible during winter. A road connecting Herat in the west with Kabul in the east cuts through the province. The province is relatively

⁽¹⁷¹⁵⁾ UN Security Council, Letter dated 18 August 2015 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council, 26 August 2015, pp. 8-9, 20.

⁽¹⁷¹⁶⁾ UN Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 1 September 2015, p. 6.

⁽¹⁷¹⁷⁾ Humanitarian Response, AFGHANISTAN: Admin Level 3 Boundaries, 25 September 2012.

⁽¹⁷¹⁸⁾ Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - October 2015.

⁽¹⁷¹⁹⁾ UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Population estimate for 2015, 26 August 2015; Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - October 2015.

⁽¹⁷²⁰⁾ Obaid, A., “You must have a gun to stay alive”: Ghor, a province with three governments, 4 August 2013.

isolated, located 480 kilometres from Kabul and 386 kilometres from Herat. ⁽¹⁷²¹⁾ This road is inaccessible for most traffic for five months of the year. Ghor is considered one of the most underdeveloped provinces of Afghanistan. ⁽¹⁷²²⁾ The province has a rural and tribal society and literacy is very low. ⁽¹⁷²³⁾ President Ghani appointed a new governor for Ghor in June 2015, Seema, one of the rare female provincial governors in Afghanistan. ⁽¹⁷²⁴⁾

Due to its proximity to areas producing large amounts of opium, Ghor is the main transit route for opium from north to south. Kakori village in Pasaband is said to house the biggest opium market of Ghor. ⁽¹⁷²⁵⁾ Seasonal labourers working in Helmand's poppy fields brought the expertise and Ghor's opium cultivation is quickly expanding. ⁽¹⁷²⁶⁾

Description of the violence

According to a source in Kabul, the security situation in Ghor deteriorated from October 2010, when hundreds of Taliban fighters from Helmand found shelter in Ghor by escaping a large-scale ISAF operation. The Taliban is now seen as relatively active in eight of Ghor's 10 districts, most of them bordering with volatile Helmand, Farah, Badghis, Faryab and Uruzgan provinces. Chronic tribal rivalries in this province are another major problem which has left dozens of people dead and hundreds displaced. ⁽¹⁷²⁷⁾

According to the same source: ⁽¹⁷²⁸⁾

As the Province is dominated by warlords and their supporters, often in the form of IAGs [Illegal Armed Groups], there is little or no accountability for past or present violations. The rule of law is extremely fragile. Local activists and those involved in human rights promotion are under enormous pressure, including threats, from warlords and their supporters.

Landinfo's sources describe Ghor as a province with little government presence and a rising insurgent activity. ⁽¹⁷²⁹⁾ According to analyst Obaid Ali, Ghor has become a very unstable province because there is an abundance of weapons and local tribal leaders or warlords rule small areas and want to protect their territory and tribal honour. The five largest illegal armed groups operate in the provincial capital, Chaghcharan, and in the districts of Pasaband, Charsada and Du Layna. These districts are transit points for opium between Helmand and Faryab. These and other smaller groups rule their respective areas and are heavily involved with the government-appointed rulers. According to Ali, some of these warlords are even members of the provincial High Peace Council. ⁽¹⁷³⁰⁾ Another driver of insecurity is rampant unemployment. Many young people do not have a job, even if they are educated. Many consider either joining the insurgents, or engaging in criminal activity. ⁽¹⁷³¹⁾

From 1 January to 31 August 2015, Ghor province counted 116 security incidents. ⁽¹⁷³²⁾ Table 34 provides an overview of the nature of the security incidents: ⁽¹⁷³³⁾

⁽¹⁷²¹⁾ MRRD, Ghor Provincial Profile, n.d.

⁽¹⁷²²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Introduction of Ghowr Province, n.d.

⁽¹⁷²³⁾ WFP, Provincial Profile. Ghor, n.d.

⁽¹⁷²⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Ex-Lawmaker Seema replaces Rehmati as Ghor governor, 28 June 2015.

⁽¹⁷²⁵⁾ Obaid, A., "You must have a gun to stay alive": Ghor, a province with three governments, 4 August 2013.

⁽¹⁷²⁶⁾ Obaid, A., "As easy as growing potatoes": How formerly 'poppy-free' Ghor is at risk of becoming an important player in Afghanistan's opium business, 4 November 2013.

⁽¹⁷²⁷⁾ Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - October 2015.

⁽¹⁷²⁸⁾ Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - October 2015.

⁽¹⁷²⁹⁾ Landinfo, Temanotat Afghanistan Sikkerhetsoppdatering, 9 January 2014, pp. 15-17.

⁽¹⁷³⁰⁾ Obaid, A., "You must have a gun to stay alive": Ghor, a province with three governments, 4 August 2013.

⁽¹⁷³¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Jobless Ghor youth ponder swelling Taliban's ranks, 28 March 2015.

⁽¹⁷³²⁾ The district of Ghormach is not included in the total numbers of different kinds of incidents for the province (total 159), because different sources consider it to be resorting under either the province of Faryab or under Badghis.

⁽¹⁷³³⁾ For more information on the source of the data and the methodology, see [introduction](#).

Violence targeting individuals	26
Armed confrontations	49
Explosions	28
Security enforcement	11
Non-conflict related incidents	1
Other incidents	1
Total security incidents	116

Table 34: Security incidents by type, Ghor (Jan - Aug 2015)

The map in figure 37 presents the number of security incidents per district in Ghor province. ⁽¹⁷³⁴⁾

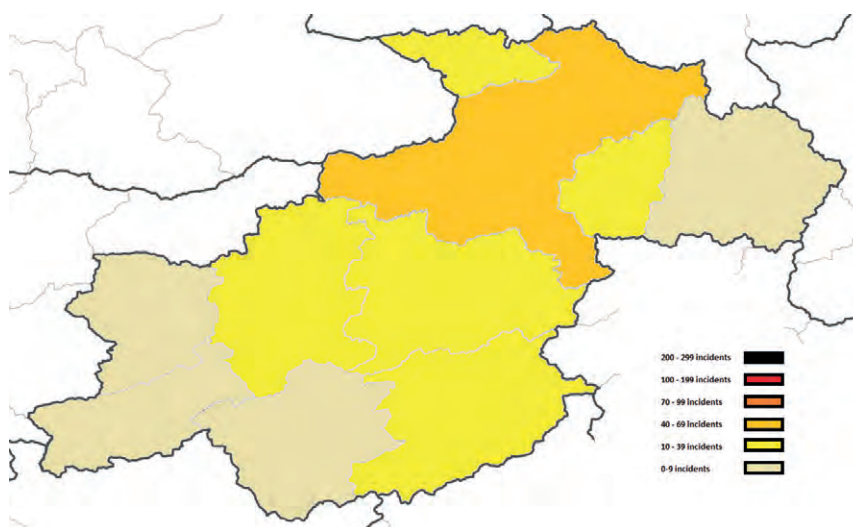


Figure 37: Ghor, security incidents (Jan - Aug 2015)

In Chaghcharan, an intense tribal conflict is taking place, with militias fighting each other in and around the capital. Major armed clashes occurred in the district in April, August and early September 2015. ⁽¹⁷³⁵⁾ Insurgents are said to be in control of certain outskirts of the provincial capital, where they openly collect *ushr* and *zakat*. ⁽¹⁷³⁶⁾

Charsada continued to see heavy clashes in this reporting period. In October 2014, the killing of a local jihadi commander sparked violence between two rival groups. ⁽¹⁷³⁷⁾ The commander, Ahmad Murghabi, was a former jihadi and later Taliban commander, who switched sides to the government and since presumably formed an ALP group with his men. He was therefore targeted by the Taliban. His death sparked violence between former and current Taliban in Charsada district, where his followers killed many presumed Taliban, torched their houses and kept many more hostage. ⁽¹⁷³⁸⁾ Eventually, the Taliban had to leave the area and flee to Faryab. ⁽¹⁷³⁹⁾ In January 2015, however, insurgents ambushed security personnel on their way to the provincial capital. In the ensuing firefight, many civilian homes were hit and a rocket fell on one, injuring two inhabitants, a woman and child. ⁽¹⁷⁴⁰⁾ In May 2015, the Taliban again launched a major attack on the district centre of Charsada in what officials claimed to be the bloodiest attack in Ghor in 13 years. ⁽¹⁷⁴¹⁾ At the same time, insurgents from Helmand launched attacks on security forces in Pasaband district, but were repelled. ⁽¹⁷⁴²⁾ The exact number of civilian casualties is unknown; during the military campaign to expel the insurgents that lasted for days, Pajhwok reported of only one civilian casualty. ⁽¹⁷⁴³⁾ Officials also claimed

⁽¹⁷³⁴⁾ For more information on the source and the methodology of the maps, see [introduction](#).

⁽¹⁷³⁵⁾ Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - October 2015.

⁽¹⁷³⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Hundreds of foreign insurgents lead, train Taliban in Ghor, 5 August 2015.

⁽¹⁷³⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Jihadi leader's death sparks deadly clash, 18 October 2014.

⁽¹⁷³⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban infighting claims 12 lives in Ghor, 19 October 2014.

⁽¹⁷³⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Local group expels Taliban in Ghor, 21 October 2014.

⁽¹⁷⁴⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Civilians harmed in Charsada fighting, 11 January 2015.

⁽¹⁷⁴¹⁾ Khaama Press, Taliban attack Chaharsada district in Ghor, 11 May 2015; Tolonews, Over 100 insurgents killed as troops reclaim Ghor district, 16 May 2015.

⁽¹⁷⁴²⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 40 rebels dead, over 100 wounded in Ghor showdown, 15 May 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, ANA soldier, 2 policemen dead in Ghor firefight, 14 May 2015.

⁽¹⁷⁴³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban pushed back in Charsada fight, Khatibi, 12 May 2015.

only one civilian was killed and his home robbed by insurgents, while more than 100 insurgents were killed, 30 injured and 50 arrested. ⁽¹⁷⁴⁴⁾ According to press sources, the government forces relied heavily on air support. ⁽¹⁷⁴⁵⁾ A civil-society activist from Ghor explained to Pajhwok Afghan News that all roads to Charsada were heavily mined and only Taliban supporters could travel on them. ⁽¹⁷⁴⁶⁾

In February 2015, the district of Tulak saw an unusual incident. Several villages were attacked and looted by about 150 armed men who, according to a local politician, belonged to both the Taliban and an illegal armed group. According to several sources the district's attorney was also involved in the attack. The incident was sparked by a local dispute between two tribes. ⁽¹⁷⁴⁷⁾

In October 2014, about 300 insurgents stormed several villages in Du Layna, firing scores of rockets, according to local officials. ⁽¹⁷⁴⁸⁾ In March 2015, two civilians were killed in an insurgent attack on a police checkpoint between Du Layna and Shahrak. ⁽¹⁷⁴⁹⁾ In April 2015, two people riding a motorbike were shot by unknown gunmen in Du Layna and seven police officers were injured by a roadside bomb in Saghar district. ⁽¹⁷⁵⁰⁾ Analyst Thomas Ruttig stated that the attacks on the district centre of Taywara and heavy fighting in Du Layna were simply not publicised in the media. ⁽¹⁷⁵¹⁾ In May 2015, a local transport vehicle drove over a PP-IED in Pasaband district, killing eight civilians and injuring two others as they were en route to the provincial capital to obtain passports for the Hajj pilgrimage. ⁽¹⁷⁵²⁾ An airstrike in Pasaband killed at least 25 insurgents in June 2015. ⁽¹⁷⁵³⁾ A major clash between tribal militias occurred in Shahrak district in July 2015. ⁽¹⁷⁵⁴⁾

Residents of Du Layna and Pasaband complained in June 2015 that the Taliban threatened pro-government residents though they never received any government support. ⁽¹⁷⁵⁵⁾ A major stand-off occurred between insurgents and the ANSF during two weeks in July and August 2015, with the intention of cutting off the road connecting the provincial capital with Herat. During that period, residents were prevented from moving around. ⁽¹⁷⁵⁶⁾

There were targeted killings and abductions in this reporting period; for example a judge was killed in the capital in November 2014 and a district education officer was killed in Sanghar in January 2015. ⁽¹⁷⁵⁷⁾ In April 2015, a polio worker was abducted on his way to a clinic in a Taliban-controlled area of Chaghcharan district. He was released after the mediation of tribal elders. ⁽¹⁷⁵⁸⁾ In April 2015, two students were killed by unknown gunmen on their way from school to home in Du Layna. ⁽¹⁷⁵⁹⁾ Also in April, the son of the Shahrak education official was abducted from his father's house and later murdered. This killing sparked the arrest of two local commanders and four others. In a so-called 'kangaroo trial' ⁽¹⁷⁶⁰⁾ held by a local militia leader, three of the six were ordered to be killed. ⁽¹⁷⁶¹⁾ In May 2015, members of a pro-government armed group abducted 18 civilians they believed to be affiliated with the Taliban. Earlier the same day, the Taliban had abducted a member of the education department in Charsada district and it appeared that the Pro-Government Forces abducted civilians they believed to be affiliated with the Taliban in order to secure the release of the member of the education department. Through the mediation of local elders, both sides released their hostages on 31 May. ⁽¹⁷⁶²⁾ In July 2015 another judge was targeted on his way home by an IED on a bike. He and three other officials sustained injuries. ⁽¹⁷⁶³⁾ Also in July, the district police chief for Du

⁽¹⁷⁴⁴⁾ Tolonews, Over 100 insurgents killed as troops reclaim Ghor district, 16 May 2015.

⁽¹⁷⁴⁵⁾ Afghanistan Times, Taliban pushed back in Ghor, governor, 15 May 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, 40 rebels dead, over 100 wounded, 15 May 2015.

⁽¹⁷⁴⁶⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Hundreds of foreign insurgents lead, train Taliban in Ghor, 5 August 2015.

⁽¹⁷⁴⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Large group of gunmen plunder Ghor houses, 17 February 2015; Afghanistan Times, Gunmen plunder houses, beat locals in Ghor, residents, 17 February 2015.

⁽¹⁷⁴⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Rebel commander among 6 killed in Ghor, 6 October 2014.

⁽¹⁷⁴⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 5 including civilians dead in Ghor, Faryab attacks, 14 March 2015.

⁽¹⁷⁵⁰⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 4 killed, 10 injured in Ghor, Farah incidents, 7 April 2015.

⁽¹⁷⁵¹⁾ Ruttig, T., The Second Fall of Musa Qala: How the Taleban are expanding territorial control, 3 September 2015.

⁽¹⁷⁵²⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan. Midyear Report 2015. Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, August 2015, p. 47.

⁽¹⁷⁵³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Civilians among 29 dead in Ghor, Baghlan incidents, 8 June 2015.

⁽¹⁷⁵⁴⁾ Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - October 2015.

⁽¹⁷⁵⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Rebels harass, loot pro-govt residents in Ghor, 8 June 2015.

⁽¹⁷⁵⁶⁾ Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - October 2015.

⁽¹⁷⁵⁷⁾ Tolonews, Unknown gunmen shot dead a judge in Ghor, 3 November 2014; Pajhwok Afghan News, District education officer shot dead in Ghor, 17 January 2015.

⁽¹⁷⁵⁸⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan. Midyear Report 2015. Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, August 2015, p. 24.

⁽¹⁷⁵⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Students among 8 dead in fresh bout of violence, 8 April 2015.

⁽¹⁷⁶⁰⁾ This name is used for an informal and locally organised trial with few guarantees for a fair trial, often resulting in harsh and unlawful punishments.

⁽¹⁷⁶¹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Kangaroo trial: 3 men executed on murder charges, 21 April 2015.

⁽¹⁷⁶²⁾ UNAMA, Afghanistan. Midyear Report 2015. Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, August 2015, p. 62.

⁽¹⁷⁶³⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Judge among 4 wounded in Ghor bombing, 8 July 2015.

Layna was targeted by an IED that injured only civilian bystanders. ⁽¹⁷⁶⁴⁾ In the same month, five workers on a school construction project were abducted by insurgents in Pasaband. ⁽¹⁷⁶⁵⁾

In June 2015, the military commander responsible for the region, ANA colonel Shoaib Bakhshi from Panjshir, was killed by rockets in an ambush on his vehicle in Du Layna or Pasaband, depending on the reporting. ⁽¹⁷⁶⁶⁾ The incident happened in an operation to free the road connecting Pasaband and the provincial capital Firozkoh. That road had been blocked by insurgents for one week at that point. ⁽¹⁷⁶⁷⁾

Ghor's human rights department stated that, in January 2015, 152 civilians were killed in the province and another 148 injured in 2014. The department blamed in the first place local warlords followed by militants and other powerful groups for the civilians' casualties. ⁽¹⁷⁶⁸⁾ Civilians suffer in many ways from the absence of a strong government, rival local commanders and thriving insurgents. For example, four children were killed, and a fifth injured, when an IED went off while they were herding their flock in July 2015 and insurgents looted and burned several houses in Dawlatyar in August 2015. ⁽¹⁷⁶⁹⁾ According to analyst Obaid Ali, citizens are being harassed by warlords on a daily basis. ⁽¹⁷⁷⁰⁾

Displacement

Between January and July 2015, between 500 and 1,500 people were displaced in Ghor province. ⁽¹⁷⁷¹⁾ In this reporting period, conflict-induced displacement took place from different districts in Ghor to the provincial capital and district centres Shahrak and Du Layna, but also to neighbouring provinces, mainly Herat. Districts of origin were most notably Shahrak, Du Layna and Chaghcharan. Reasons for displacement were: generalised violence, armed conflict between insurgents and ANSF and inter-tribal conflicts, as well as intimidation, threats, kidnapping and targeted killing of those affiliated to the government and extortion and forced recruitment by insurgents. ⁽¹⁷⁷²⁾

Actors in the conflict

According to a source in Kabul: ⁽¹⁷⁷³⁾

Ghor province was under the control of Jamiaat-e Islami and Hezb-e Islami parties until the ouster of the Taliban. Since Hezb-e Islami was not very influential among the population, some of its members joined Jamiat. Many of the illegal armed groups (IAG) in most parts of Ghor are seen as a key force in fighting insurgents. Reports from the ground suggest that often Afghan National defense and Security Forces cooperate with IAGs in fighting Taliban in districts, such as Pasaband, Charsada, Dawlatyar, etc.

The Taliban shadow governor is Mawlavi Abdulkhalik, affiliated to the Quetta Shura. ⁽¹⁷⁷⁴⁾

According to Ghor's Human Rights Department, there are 182 illegal armed groups in Ghor, with more than 9,000 armed men. Local officials acknowledged the presence of 4,500 armed men. ⁽¹⁷⁷⁵⁾ The Taliban is believed to have about 3,000 to 3,500 combatants there. ⁽¹⁷⁷⁶⁾ Officials have claimed that foreign insurgents have established a major training facility in Charsada district, leading insurgents from Ghor, Faryab and Sar-e Pul and training them

⁽¹⁷⁶⁴⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, District official survives bomb attack, alleged robbers held, 14 July 2015.

⁽¹⁷⁶⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, 5 construction workers kidnapped in Ghor, 29 July 2015.

⁽¹⁷⁶⁶⁾ Khaama Press, Colonel Shoaib Bakhshi martyred in Ghor, 14 June 2015; Tolonews, ANA commander in Ghor killed in Taliban ambush, 14 June 2015.

⁽¹⁷⁶⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, ANA commander dead in Ghor attack, 14 June 2015.

⁽¹⁷⁶⁸⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Illegal armed men constant threat for Ghor security, 9 January 2015.

⁽¹⁷⁶⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Ghor IED explosion claims lives of 4 children, 24 July 2015; Pajhwok Afghan News, Rebels in Ghor torch civilian houses and harvest, 11 August 2015.

⁽¹⁷⁷⁰⁾ Obaid, A., "You must have a gun to stay alive": Ghor, a province with three governments, 4 August 2013.

⁽¹⁷⁷¹⁾ UNOCHA, Afghanistan : Conflict-Induced Displacement (January to July 2015), 16 September 2015.

⁽¹⁷⁷²⁾ UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, November 2014; UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, December 2014; UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, January 2015; UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, February 2015; UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, March 2015; UNHCR, Conflict-induced Internal Displacement Monthly Update, April 2015.

⁽¹⁷⁷³⁾ Anonymous source specialised in security in Afghanistan, emails and briefing, July - October 2015.

⁽¹⁷⁷⁴⁾ UN Security Council, Letter dated 18 August 2015 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council, 26 August 2015, p. 20.

⁽¹⁷⁷⁵⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Illegal armed men constant threat to Ghor security, 9 January 2015.

⁽¹⁷⁷⁶⁾ Obaid, A., "You must have a gun to stay alive": Ghor, a province with three governments, 4 August 2013; Pajhwok Afghan News, Number of child soldiers in Ghor on the rise, 23 August 2014.

in bomb-making. The Taliban, which is said to be in control of the whole of Charsada and Dawlatyar, is also openly recruiting in these districts. ⁽¹⁷⁷⁷⁾

According to Obaid Ali, ANSF lacks the manpower and is ill-equipped to control these two main actors. ANP is said to have only 1,400 men. Neighbouring provinces Herat and Faryab have 4,000 and 5,500 ANP members, respectively. The province also has a modest ALP programme, with some 200 men for Du Layna and Pasaband districts only. ⁽¹⁷⁷⁸⁾ The total number of ANSF is said to be only 2,500. ⁽¹⁷⁷⁹⁾ In this disadvantaged position, police are said to be more loyal to their tribes and often refuse to operate against their kinsmen. ⁽¹⁷⁸⁰⁾

⁽¹⁷⁷⁷⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Hundreds of foreign insurgents lead, train Taliban in Ghor, 5 August 2015.

⁽¹⁷⁷⁸⁾ Obaid, A., "You must have a gun to stay alive": Ghor, a province with three governments, 4 August 2013.

⁽¹⁷⁷⁹⁾ Pajhwok Afghan News, Policemen among 45 killed in Ghor battle, 28 August 2014.

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Annex 2: Terms of Reference

The goal of this report is to provide security-related information relevant for international protection status determination (refugee status and subsidiary protection).

An important goal of this report is to provide details on a regional, provincial or even district level.

The content of the report should contain information on the following topics:

General description of the security situation

Introduction

Short history of the conflict(s)

Parties to the conflict

State's armed forces (army, police, intelligence...)

Components

Tasks/roles

Numbers in total

Casualties

Defecting (as indication of strength/weakness)

Armed groups (pro-government, opposition...)

Components

Level of organisation

Numbers in total

Casualties

Defecting (as indication of strength/weakness)

International military forces (transition)

Armed confrontations (trends)

As intro to regional chapter

E.g., fighting tactics, attacks, military operations, guerilla

Use of weapons

Both qualitative and quantitative

Geographical overview of the security situation

transition to next chapter; demonstrate clear geographical differences between level of violence

use of maps, e.g. *UNOCHA*; *USAID*; *University of Texas*; *University of Columbia*

urban/rural

Impact of violence on state ability to secure Law & Order

Government institutions

Court system

Rural/urban divide

Refugees and returnees

Detailed regional description of the security situation

Description that goes into regional details, e.g. per province, district, cities...

Level of detail depending on province but some consistency needed.

By region/province, possibly with separate focus on some contested areas:

First distinction per region: (Cf. UNAMA)

North

North East

West

Central

Central Highlands

South

South-East

Then per province

Try to define zones within province when describing levels of violence

Some provinces are safer, so need less detail. Other provinces need more detail.

Short description of the province

Terrain (short); main roads

Urban areas

Population (including numbers); ethnicity (indicative, no real figures, qualitative)

Map (UNOCHA) with districts, roads and neighbouring provinces

Quantitative data

Number of incidents

Number of victims (death and injured)

Civilians

Military staff/fighters

Humanitarian organisations

Number of population displacements

Direct impacts of violence

Overview of **major/significant incidents** in the province

Frequency of the incidents

Anti-government **elements active** in the region

Weapons and tactics used

Depending on occurrence of information, refer to chronology

Insofar as possible: info on type of weapons / tactics: targeted vs indiscriminate

Only effective use of violence, not potential, e.g. cache of weapons found

Examples may relate to:

Bombings

- Artillery and mortars
- Air raids
- Massive bombings

Explosives

- Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs)
 - roadside bombs (VOIED, RCIED)
 - car and suicide bombs (VBIED, BBIED)
- Landmines

Shootings

- Direct confrontations/ground battles
- Snipers
- Death squads and executions

Guerrilla attacks/asymmetric warfare/multiple and complex attacks

Surprise attacks/sweeps/raids

Siege

Terre brûlée

Intimidation and threats

Checkpoints/freedom of movement

Kidnappings

Limitations to participation in public life

Forced recruitment

Illegal taxation

Sexual violence as a war strategy

Lootings

Criminal activities related to the conflict (e.g. in case of breakdown of law and order)

Targets

If info available differentiates between, e.g.:

Civilian targets and population

Military targets

Government infrastructure

Humanitarian organisations

Affected areas

If info available differentiates between, e.g.:

Urban areas and dwellings

Crowded/public places

Markets, shops

Schools

Places of worship and recreation

Hospitals

Cultural property

Roads and transport systems

Roads

Airfields

Stations

Secondary impact of the violence (directly linked to violence; excluding e.g. natural disasters, corruption, cultural issues, etc.)

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