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PROFILE OF INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT : AFGHANISTAN

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PROFILE SUMMARY

Insecurity and lack of assistance are major constraints to IDP return

Insecurity and lack of assistance are major constraints to IDP return. Continued instability, poor economic progress and harsh living conditions have meant the huge wave of IDPs returning home in 2002 has not been sustained in the first half of this year. And although officially the number of IDPs in the country has more than halved in the last six months, there has been a significant level of repeated displacement for those attempting to return to their homes. Some 400,000 IDPs returned home in 2002, the majority without any assistance. So far this year, close to 25,000 IDPs have returned with the help of UN agencies and NGOs, mainly from the west and to the north. Upon return many refugees and IDPs found that their homes were either destroyed or occupied by others. The lack of jobs and the general instability in both rural and urban areas means that for many conditions do not satisfy requirements of return in safety and dignity. As a consequence, many have been forced into renewed displacement. Some have been luckier to return to their home areas and have managed to secure some level of sustainable livelihood. UNHCR estimates the current number of IDPs to be around 221,000, most of them nomadic Kuchis and ethnic Pashtuns displaced in the south and west who are unable to return. However, the inability of many returnees to sustain their return in their area of origin and the renewed displacement of both refugees and IDPs in urban and rural areas, may indicate the number of people falling under the definition of an IDP could be much higher than the official figure of 221,000, and closer to 600,000.

Insecurity hampers humanitarian assistance and causes further displacement

Persistent insecurity throughout the country, the weakness or inexistence of a criminal justice system and the absence of any national entity capable of enforcing the rule of law have been major causes of concern for the Afghan people and for the aid agencies since the fall of the Taliban at the end of 2001. In recent months, aid workers have found themselves increasingly the target of attacks by unidentified armed groups, mainly in the south where the brunt of the displaced are located and where most aid is urgently needed. UN and NGO staff pulled out and programs were suspended following the murder of an ICRC staff member in spring 2003 (BAAG April 2003, p.4). Large areas of the southeast are off-limits and the impossibility of gaining access to these areas for assessment and monitoring activities constrain planning and project development. In addition, it reduces the extent of assistance and protection provided to the displaced.

The absence of any national or international force capable of enforcing the rule of law outside of Kabul is and will remain a major impediment for the return of the remaining IDPs, the protection of human rights, agency activities and humanitarian access. The U.S. "warlord strategy", effective in winning the war against the Taliban, has been a failure to date in providing a secure environment outside of the capital (HRW 5 December 2002). As NATO prepares to take over peacekeeping operations in Afghanistan, instability and insecurity in many parts of the country has prompted as many as 80 humanitarian, human rights and conflict prevention agencies to make a joint statement in June, calling for the expansion of the security forces throughout the country (IRIN 18 June 2003).

The U.S. has been deploying Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) teams in the major cities of the country since the beginning of 2003 and will soon establish a presence in the north, near Mazar-i-Sharif (UNAMA 19 June 2003). These PRTs consist of small numbers of combat troops, civil affairs soldiers and civilian US government officials and are designed to "strengthen the presence of the central government, improve security, and facilitate the delivery of reconstruction assistance" (USAID 13 March 2003, p. 1). CARE International has expressed its concern that the PRT strategy was not a substitute for efficient security measures and that the involvement of military forces into the reconstruction process was putting

the aid workers at risk by blurring the line between NGOs and military personnel (OCHA 14 January 2003).

Factional fighting in the north between rival warlords and human rights violations by local commanders against ethnic Pashtuns, starting after the fall of the Taliban at the end of 2001, has continued during 2002 and 2003, causing many to flee to the south. The ethnic Pashtuns are targeted for their real or perceived association with the former Taliban, or more often for the control of scarce resources. UNHCR estimates that some 60,000 Pashtuns have fled the north since 2001 (IRIN 18 June 2003).

"Active" IDP caseload vs. "Passive" IDP caseload ?

According to UN statistics the number of IDPs officially on their books more than halved in the first six months of this year. At the end of December 2002, the number of people displaced inside Afghanistan was estimated by UNHCR to stand at 724,000, with the following breakdown : 413,000 in the south, 51,000 in the north, 124,000 in the center, 70,000 in the east and 66,000 in the west (UNHCR 3 January 2003). Five months later, the UN refugee agency, while stating that only some 25,000 IDPs had been assisted to return during 2003, estimated that their "active" IDP caseload included 300,000 persons who remain displaced throughout the country (Inter-Agency Mission, 19 June 2003, p. 1). In early July, after re-registration and profiling exercises, the figure was even reduced to 221,000, 43,000 in the north, 115,000 in the south, 5,000 in the east, 38,000 in the west and 16,000 in the central region (UNHCR 1 July 2003). The main areas of concentration of IDPs are in Zhare Dasht, Panjwai and other settlements in the south, Maslakh and Shaidayee camps in the west, and a number of smaller camps in the north (TISA March 2003, p. 3).

While it appears rather surprising that over 400,000 IDPs disappeared in the last 6 months, the new figure is explained by the UN by the fact that previous figures were largely inflated and did not quite reflect the reality. Also, UNHCR's "active" IDP caseload now focuses on protection cases and destitute victims of drought/conflict in IDP camps and settlements and excludes those who have returned or live in conditions similar to the general population. The report of the Inter-Agency Mission, which took place at the end of May 2003, sheds some light on the issue by stating that "Those who have returned or locally integrated are considered to have attained at least minimal level of self-sufficiency" (Inter-Agency Mission, 19 June 2003, p. 2)¹. It is clear that the UN and the Government work on the very optimistic assumption that once returned, all IDPs reintegrate easily, and the problem is solved.

This clearly runs contrary to evidence and information gathered by Amnesty International in their latest report "Out of sight, out of minds: The fate of the Afghan returnees" where AI emphasizes the importance of and raises concern about the sustainability of the return, both of refugees and IDPs, which is hindered by persistent instability, land disputes and insufficient aid and reconstruction assistance resulting in poor self-sufficiency prospects. Many refugees and IDPs claim that they were not given enough accurate information before returning. Those who could afford to travel have sometimes turned around and left the country once again, while many have ended up in situation of internal displacement. Given the current situation of Afghanistan, the exact number and IDPs and the scope of the renewed displacement is difficult to ascertain with any accuracy, but the figure cited by AI -600,000 IDPs- is likely to better reflect the reality of the situation than the UNHCR figure of 300,000 (AI 23 June 2003).

Nomadic Kuchis and ethnic Pashtuns need alternative solutions to return

The nomadic pastoralist Kuchi currently constitute the single largest IDP group in Afghanistan. They represent some eighty percent of the total "active" IDP caseload as defined by UNHCR. Most of them were displaced from and are located in the southern Pashtun area of Kandahar and Helmand province, while some were displaced from the north and northwest and are in the western camps of Herat (Inter-Agency Mission, 19 June 2003, p. 2) The first group was displaced by drought and the loss of their livestock while

the second fled harassment and human rights violations. Both are facing major problems in returning. Drought is still continuing in the south and security conditions in the north are still not conducive for return. So far assistance has been limited to immediate care and maintenance and local authorities have shown little interest in finding more durable solutions for them, preferring them to return home (UNAMA 7 April 2003).

Ethnic Pashtuns displaced from the north by human rights violations, harassment and forced recruitment constitute the second main group of displaced. They fled to the west and south where they are accommodated in IDP camps. UNHCR estimates that some 60,000 Pashtuns have fled the north since December 2001. Many have returned since, mainly to the northeast, while few have returned to the northwest where continued instability is not providing enough security guarantees to the displaced Pashtuns (IRIN 18 June 2003). A Return Commission for the North² which was set up to look into the human rights abuses and to promote returns, has completed some initial assessments and identified abuses by local commanders. But efforts are still needed to redress these problems and persuade the Pashtun IDPs that conditions are conducive for return (IRIN 5 March 2003).

In camps and soon deprived of assistance

Most of the remaining and easily identifiable IDPs are accommodated in camps, the majority in the south, Zhare Dasht and Panjwai camps, and in the west around Herat, Maslakh and Shaidayee camps. Shaidayee camp hosts some 16,000 IDPs while Maslakh camp has close to 30,000 persons (AlertNet 28 May 2003).

In 2002, HRW documented widespread abuses against IDPs in camps in the north, including forcible relocations, compulsory performance of military support functions, and sexual violence (HRW June 2002, pp. 4-6). While the protection aspects for IDPs in camps seem to have improved since 2002, IDPs in camps are now faced with other threats to their survival.

The national authorities and the international community, mainly UNHCR and WFP, in charge of assisting the IDPs in camps are now slowly phasing out the assistance and have in some camps already stopped the distribution of food. In both IDP camps near Herat, Shaidayee and Maslakh, WFP has stopped its food distribution since April 2003. As a first step, IDPs in Shaidayee camp, which is to be closed in a few months, are being evacuated to Maslakh camp, which will eventually also be closed to force people to return home (AI 23 June 2003, p. 15). MSF has expressed concern that the relocation from Shaidayee to Maslakh camp, which is located further away from Herat, would disrupt the already limited livelihood and employment activities developed by the displaced. The relocation is also likely to affect the mental well-being of IDPs by adding new stress. MSF reported a shift among IDPs in camps near Herat from post-traumatic stress to more chronic mental stress issues (AlertNet 28 May 2003).

While this exit strategy may be justifiable to avoid creating long-term dependency for those who are able to return home and engage in self-reliant activities, there is a risk that the most vulnerable, female-headed households, unaccompanied children, elderly and the disabled will go hungry and left on their own. Amnesty International further reported that the lack of employment opportunities is forcing IDP families to rely on their children for their daily survival. Other coping mechanisms of IDPs in camps include selling the daughters into marriage at a very young age or even selling their child to survive a bit longer (AI 23 June 2003, p. 15-23).

In the south, the Government in close cooperation with UNHCR and on the request of the Pakistan authorities, has in August 2002 established a new camp, Zahre Dasht west of Kandahar, in an effort to empty the Chaman camp on the border, also known as the "waiting area" because of the security threats posed by the presence of so many people near the Pakistani border. The close to 20,000 residents of Chaman camp are offered the choice between repatriation to Afghanistan, either to Spin Boldak camp of Zahre Dasht, or seeking refuge across the border (UNHCR 20 May 2003). Many are reluctant to move to

the new camp where employment opportunities and water supplies are scarce. In Spin Boldak, MSF and UNICEF are offering assistance, but health problems are reportedly increasing and schools have closed down, leaving the children with no education (IRIN 19 February 2003).

Returned but still displaced

Since the take over of the country by the U.S. led coalition and the demise of the Taliban in late 2001, close to 2 million refugees and over 400,000 IDPs have returned home at a pace that took everyone by surprise (OCHA 3 June 2003). In a country devastated by 20 years of civil war and a massive bombing campaign in autumn 2001, the return of such a high number of people placed an enormous strain on overburdened infrastructures and scarce resources. The slow recovery of an economy, highly dependent on farming and livestock raising and affected by years of drought, and the generalized instability in up to two-thirds of the country is posing a major challenge to the sustainability of returns. Although food security improved during 2002, compared to 2001, especially in the northwest, life-saving food aid is still needed in the south where the drought has continued and is limiting labour opportunities (RNIS 41 April 2003, p. 41).

According to the head of UNHCR in Mazar-i-Sharif, many people returning have found that their homes were occupied by others. In order to establish a home in rural areas, people need to get permission from the village council or a guarantee to prove ownership of the land and only people originating from the area will get the permission. This means that returnees, refugees or IDPs, cannot freely resettle in areas other than their areas of origin (DIS March 2003, p. 42).

Landlessness and the loss of land and housing during the absence is often a major obstacle to the sustainability of returns and a cause of renewed displacement. To benefit from the assistance of shelter projects, the returnee must either possess a title to land or get his community to vouch for him. In 2002, UNHCR stated that close to 75% of the returnees did not have farmland to which they could return (AI 23 June 2003, p. 26).

Land disputes are rife in Afghanistan today. The absence of any judicial system to settle land disputes means that the most vulnerable, in particular unaccompanied women and those without networks in the community are often left powerless. Social networks are crucial to get protection but also to access land.

In some cases IDPs have been forced into renewed displacement because they could not reach their homes areas because of insecurity on the roads or the physical state of the roads. For those who make it to their home areas, they also may face illegal taxation by local commanders depriving the IDPs of their return package, making their return a little less sustainable. The presence of some 5 to 10 million landmines is another obstacle to return. In rural areas, some 200 people are reportedly killed every month by the explosion of landmines (AI 23 June 2003, pp. 22-23).

Absorption capacity of urban areas reaching its limits

Most of those who returned to Afghanistan during 2002 headed for Kabul and the main cities. It can be assumed that the destination of many IDPs was not very different. The absorption capacity of urban areas, in particular Kabul is reaching its limits. Between November 2001 and November 2002, the population of Kabul has reportedly doubled in size (Washington Post 24 November 2002). The issue of property restitution is also posing a key challenge in urban areas. Some fifty percent of Kabul's population is living in informal settlements or has no supporting documentation and rights of tenure (Inter-Agency Mission, 19 June 2003, p. 14).

As in any post-conflict situation, inevitable trends of urban migration are likely to exacerbate the problems and increase the pressure on the urban infrastructures and the provision of basic services. Donors are reportedly reluctant to fund assistance activities in urban areas to avoid attracting too many people to the

cities. But the reality of urban migration and the absence of economic opportunities in rural areas mean that people are likely to continue returning to the cities. This will require substantial reconstruction efforts, in particular shelter, as well as an expansion of the provision of basic services, like water and health care. A survey conducted last year in Kabul showed that twenty percent of the returnees lived in informal shelters or abandoned buildings and that at least 140,000 persons were in dire need of shelter and relief assistance (BAAG 31 August 2002).

Assistance to IDPs

The government of Afghanistan has adopted a National Return, Displacement and Reintegration Strategy for the year 1382 (2003), based on four core principles to address the IDP issue, (i) respect for the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, (ii) support to the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation to enable it to take progressively more responsibility, (iii) the pursuit of solutions to internal displacement, and (iv) improved inter-agency coordination and cooperation (TISA March 2003, p. 7). The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) has the overall responsibility for the returnee and IDP programme. It chairs the Consultative Group on Refugees and IDPs with support from UNHCR as Secretariat. The main attributions of the CG are to support the MoRR in co-ordinating and facilitating the work related to the return and initial re-integration of Returnees and IDPs (AACA April 2003). Other ministries involved include the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) and the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing (MUDH), who assume responsibility for the reintegration of IDPs within their respective geographic and programme areas (TISA March 2003, p. 4).

The UN Inter-Agency mission that visited Afghanistan during May and June 2003 pointed out that the central government was to be commended for making important efforts to assist the IDPs. The local authorities, on the other hand, were often described as reluctant to engage in discussions that would involve long-term thinking about alternate solutions to return. This was especially true when the option to return was not possible in the foreseeable future as is the case for most of the displaced Kuchis and the ethnic Pashtuns (Inter-Agency Mission 19 June 2003, p. 5). Given the lack of capacity and will of the Afghan authorities to place the interest of these IDPs before their political or economic interest, the international community has a responsibility to make sure that this gap is properly addressed (UNAMA 7 April 2003). UNHCR, the UN agency which has been in charge of coordinating the return and reintegration of refugees and IDPs for the past 16 months, estimated at the beginning of the year that some 300,000 IDPs would return during 2003. However, so far only 25,000 IDPs have returned in the first five months of 2003 and it is difficult to envisage that as many as 275,000 IDPs would return in the second half of the year. Upon returning home, IDPs are entitled to the same assistance package as refugees. It includes food, non-food items and transport³. Other UN agencies involved in assisting the IDPs in Afghanistan include among others WFP, UNICEF, UN-HABITAT, UNDP and UNEPA. Many of their programs are implemented through international and local NGOs.

Updated 1 July 2003

1) While noting that other various estimates on the number of IDPs exists and that the question of when displacement ends is an "highly complex" issue that clearly needs to be addressed in order to determine the real number of IDPs, the recent Inter-Agency mission which visited the country in May-June 2003 opted for the UNHCR figure.

2) The Return Commission is coordinated by the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation and includes representatives from the civilian authorities in the North, representatives of the different factions, a representative of the Afghan Human Rights Commission and representatives of UNHCR and UNAMA.

3)The quantity of food varies depending on family size. 150 kg average per family of 5 persons (3 months ration). Non-food items include 2 m² of hygienic cloth, 2 plastic sheets, and 1 kg of soap per family of 3- 4 persons. Transport is provided for IDPs groups.

CAUSES AND BACKGROUND OF DISPLACEMENT

General

General characteristics of land and people

- Afghanistan has a long history of internal strife due its geographical and ethnic fragmentation

"[F]or decades, Islamic movements, communists and tribal warriors have struggled for control of a nation that is geographically and ethnically fragmented. Afghanistan is still largely a tribal society, divided into many tribes, clans and smaller groups. Considerable variation in the types of terrain, and obstacles imposed by high mountains and deserts, account for the country's marked ethnic and cultural differences. Muslims comprise 99 per cent of the population of Afghanistan, approximately 80 per cent of them Sunni and the remainder Shi'a followers. The Shi'a minority is concentrated in central and western Afghanistan.

The Pashtuns (also called Pathans) are the largest single ethnic group constituting some 40% of the population of Afghanistan. They are predominantly Sunni Muslims and live mainly in the center, south and east of the country. The British-drawn Duran Line of 1893 demarcated the border of modern-day Pakistan and Afghanistan with little or no thought to the Pashtun people who lived on either side.

The Tajiks are the second largest group, whose language is Persian. Most of them are Sunni Muslims, but Shi'a Muslim Tajiks are also found in the West of the country (around and in the city of Herat), and in Kabul.

The Hazaras are of Eastern Turkic origin and followers of the Shi'a Muslim confession using Farsi as their lingua franca.

The Uzbeks and Turkomans are followers of the Sunni Muslim tradition and are ethnically and linguistically Turkic.

Other Afghan Turkic groups include the Kypchak, Kazakh, Aimaq, Wakhi and Kirghiz. The Nuristanis live in the middle of the Hindu Kush mountain range in four valleys, with each valley having its own district language/dialect - Kati, Waigali, Ashkun and Parsun. The Baluchis and Brahuis practise Sunni Islam and their languages are Brahui and Baluchi." (FAS September 1998)

Socio-economic profile of Afghanistan (October 2001)

- Afghanistan ranks among the most destitute countries in the world in terms of human development
- Economic decline has exacerbated the level of poverty and economic hardship throughout the country

"With an average life expectancy of about 40 years, a staggering mortality rate of 25.7 percent for children under five years old, and an illiteracy rate of 64 percent, Afghanistan ranks among the most destitute, war-weary countries in the world in terms of human development.

Seventy percent of the Afghan population are estimated to be under-nourished, and only 13 percent have access to improved water sources.

"In most aspects, Afghanistan is worse off than almost any country in the world. The country's social and economic indicators are comparable, or lower than the indicators for sub-Saharan Africa," said Sakiko Fukuda-Parr, Director of the Human Development Report Office at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Among 187 countries, only seven have lower life expectancy than Afghanistan, including Sierra Leone and Zambia - countries ravaged by HIV/AIDS or armed conflict. One of every four children born alive in Afghanistan will not survive until their fifth birthday.

Only three of the 191 countries surveyed have higher levels of mortality for children under five years: Angola, Niger and Sierra Leone.

Nearly two-thirds of Afghani adults are illiterate, almost 15 percent higher than the average level for least developed countries. Only five countries of 171 surveyed have lower literacy rates than Afghanistan - all are in sub-Saharan Africa.

With less than one-third of children enrolled in schools in 1999, Afghanistan lags catastrophically behind other countries and regions. Only 14 of 172 countries surveyed have lower school enrolment than Afghanistan, which is the only country in the world that bars girls from attending school.

Due to a lack of available estimate of income per capita, Afghanistan has not appeared in UNDP's Human Development Index since 1996. It then ranked as number 169 of a total of 174 countries. The HDI is an annual index produced by UNDP's Human Development Report Office, and is based on indicators for health, education and income." (UNDP 8 October 2001)

"Despite efforts on a number of fronts, political resolution of the conflict remains elusive. Under these circumstances the ailing Afghan economy continues to deteriorate and foster poverty and unemployment. There are few formal-sector employment possibilities, no major rehabilitation or development projects and no major private sector investment to support income. Transit trade with neighbouring countries remains a key sector of the "legitimate" economy. Cross-border trade through Iran and Turkmenistan has expanded as Afghanistan adjusted to the suspension of flights and border restrictions with Pakistan. Trade in narcotics and, presumably, arms constitute the mainstay of the "criminalised" economy.

The recent Taliban reorganisation of the public sector has worsened urban poverty. Several central ministries have downsized - the Ministry of Higher Education by 6,000 employees and the Ministry of Education by 12,000. Female teachers who were no longer allowed to work but were still on the payroll have now lost their incomes. While the redundancies have been implemented, the announced pay increases have not materialised, and the precarious state of public finances has meant that politically weak ministries are in arrears in salary payments.

After relative stability in exchange rates in 1999, the Afghani depreciated more rapidly in 2000. The economy remains open and prices rapidly adjust to exchange rate movements. However, public sector workers with salaries fixed in Afghani, and rural workers with employment contracts that include a fixed cash element, are highly vulnerable to this instability.

The regional drought has emerged as the dominating factor affecting the socio-economic situation in the medium term. It comes at a time when much of the population is already highly vulnerable. Some, particularly in the Central Highlands, have had to sell their assets or go into debt to cope with reduced crop production in 1999 and 2000. Moreover, in the centre and north of the country people have faced conflict and displacement that compound the drought and related problems. Lack of assets and the high level of dependence on agriculture and livestock raising mean that many families have nothing to fall back on. The migration of people from drought-affected areas to urban areas, particularly to Herat, is resulting in fewer and fewer job opportunities." (OCHA 17 November 2000)

"The ongoing conflict continues to affect all aspects of civilian and economic life in many parts of Afghanistan. Significant economic resources are diverted for the continuation of the war at the expense of civilians. Military employment offers an opportunity of economic survival to many young men and their families. At the same time, the absence of effective and legitimate institutions of governance allows the development of large-scale criminalised economic activities, linked in particular to narcotics production and marketing.

The nation's transportation and communication systems, heavy and small-scale industries, education, and agricultural infrastructure are the most seriously damaged sectors. This economic decline has exacerbated the level of poverty and economic hardship throughout the country. Largely dependent on subsistence agriculture, the country has witnessed diminishing income levels, declining food security, and reduced access to essential services. In addition, a wide range of disparities exists between different regions and within each region.

The value of the Afghan currency continued to fall, having severe repercussions on individual purchasing power. Those unfortunate enough to be on fixed salaries and those households lacking male labour power are particularly affected. In addition, due to the 16 percent reduction in the cereal harvest for 1999 the overall food security situation in Afghanistan is expected to deteriorate." (UNOCHA, UNRCO November 1999, pp. 16-17)

Drought and economic disruption in the northeast (December 2000)

"Drought

As throughout the country, the drought had widespread though varied effects. As the north-east is food deficit and, on a regional level, dependent on external imports, on a sub-regional level dependent on internal redistribution of surpluses (eg. Faizabad on Rustaq and Taloqan), and on a local level generally dependent on neighbouring areas or small scale imports, any reduction in production inevitably has far-reaching ramifications. Rainfed cereal crops, which traditionally provide the majority of the region's cereals, were almost totally lost throughout the area. In many areas harvests of autumn wheat produced zero yields (ie. harvesting the same as was sown) or sub-zero yields (ie. harvesting less than was sown). In some areas (eg. parts of northern Takhar) farmers did not attempt to harvest perhaps a third of the cultivated area (a widespread pattern developed of animals being grazed on failed wheat). Spring wheat was a total failure. Whilst respectable yields were obtained from some irrigated areas, many areas experienced reductions in yields of up to two-thirds. Both lowland areas irrigated by main canals, specifically those at the end of water courses, and small upland irrigated areas were similarly affected with many areas having only received a fraction of the required water.

The livestock sector was also badly affected. Pasture at low and moderate elevations was totally burnt and, contrary to initial expectations, high altitude pasture was also affected with only 50-60% of the previous year's growth. The seasonal nomads or kuchis, which traditionally move from the four north-eastern provinces to the Shiwa "ailoqs" or pastures in NE Badakhshan, moved around one month earlier and with much larger numbers of animals than normal (70-80% more than usual) ie. animals entrusted to them by non-kuchis who did not normally send animals to summer pastures but whose lowland pasture had dried out. With reduced growth and increased numbers of animals the carrying capacity of the pastures was quickly exceeded. Kuchis consequently returned to lowland areas, themselves pasture deficient, earlier in the autumn than was normal (many of their areas of origin were also badly affected by the autumn conflict).

See the latest WFP map showing drought-affected areas in Afghanistan, 5 October 2001 [66kb, jpg]

Economic disruption

The regional economy witnessed considerable contraction during the period as a result of a number of factors. Internal production was obviously reduced as a result of the drought, whilst both external import as well as internal trade were severely reduced as a result of the conflict. Additionally, local and extra-local employment opportunities were severely reduced as a result of both the conflict and the drought.

The region depends primarily on two import routes – from Mazar through Taloqan, and from Tajikistan through Ai Khanoum in Takhar (the Ishkashim crossing is insignificant). Both have been badly affected by the conflict. Transportation of food, medicine, fuel, etc. from Taloqan is now blocked, whilst the import of foodstuffs and fuel from Tajikistan was interrupted due to autumn conflict with a resultant increase in basic prices (diesel tripled in price in one month).

Of major concern was the serious reduction in the casual labour market, at district, provincial and regional level, throughout the region, starting at the harvest season which should have been the busiest time of year. Casual labour, both agricultural and non-agricultural, has traditionally compensated for production shortfalls amongst agricultural communities, and has traditionally sustained many chronically food deficit areas (eg Darwaz). Its absence deprived the region of its principal economic safety net. Additionally, the lack of a dynamic urban economy anywhere in the region, its under-developed external trade links, and its physical isolation (movement out of the region is quite restricted) further compounded its vulnerability and further limited its capacity to cope with the impact of the drought and the war." (UNOCHA December 2000)

The Civil War

A history of conflict

"Although its history is marked by international wars and internal conflict, Afghanistan was a united and relatively peaceful country until 1973. Governed by a constitutional monarchy, post-World War II Afghanistan, while among the world's poorest nations, was the site of large projects funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Soviet foreign aid assistance, and other development projects that seemed to be propelling the country slowly forward. By the early 1970s, a small middle class of largely Western-educated intellectuals and professionals emerged to assume leadership positions and push for social and political change. The influence of this segment of Afghan society was, however, confined primarily to the capital, Kabul.

This period ended in 1973 when Mohammed Daoud Khan, a cousin of Afghan ruler Zaher Shah, overthrew the monarchy and created a national republic. The rise of Daoud Khan's government in 1973 marked the end of the post-War era of stability and the beginning of almost three decades of violence.

The Republic survived only five years. In 1978, a small group of Marxists seized power, but its ideology was not well received in Afghanistan, particularly among tribal leaders and the Islamic clergy. Armed resistance erupted in many rural areas as local traditional leaders rejected the Marxist call for such changes as land reform and the emancipation of women.

By 1979, much of Afghanistan was in open revolt and the collapse of the Marxist government appeared imminent. But in late December 1979, the Soviet army entered Afghanistan to support the government. Afghanistan exploded in revolt. What had been a civil war became a war against foreign occupation. From 1980 to 1989, Afghanistan was plunged into a full-scale resistance war against some 100,000 Soviet troops. The resistance was led by various fundamentalist Islamic organisations based in Pakistan and generously financed by Islamic nations and the West, including the United States.

During this period, over five million Afghans fled to Pakistan or Iran, creating the largest refugee population in the world at that time. These refugees included pastoral nomads, peasant farmers and much of

the new middle class. Over one million men were killed in the fighting, creating a large population of widows and female-headed households.

When the Marxist government fell in 1992, the Islamic resistance groups swept triumphantly into Kabul and other major cities. They attempted to create a national government in Kabul based on a loose and unworkable pact among the resistance parties. Afghanistan was ruled for one year by a compromise president, Sheikh Mujadidi, a progressive but ineffectual resistance leader. In 1993, Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani was selected to lead the country in what was supposed to be a revolving presidency among the various militia commanders. The presidency, however, never revolved; Professor Rabbani, a Tajik, ruled until the Taliban threw him out in 1996. President Rabbani's control of Afghanistan was tenuous and at times did not even include all of the capital itself, let alone the rest of the country.

Outside of Kabul, militia warlords carved much of Afghanistan into private fiefdoms based largely on traditional ethnic and tribal divisions. The militias that had fought together against the Soviet army now turned on each other. Pushtun commanders threatened Kabul from the south; Hazara resistance groups held parts of Kabul itself, including the area around the university; and Kabul was bombed more than once by Uzbek groups in the north. The country was again mired in sectarian conflict.

Refugees began returning to Afghanistan from Pakistan and Iran in 1992. Both asylum countries exerted strong pressure on the refugees to return since, as far as they were concerned, the war that had created the refugees was over. In addition, a change in government in Pakistan led to increased pressure on Islamabad to end the 'refugee problem' in Pakistan. Pakistan closed camps, offered incentives to the Afghan refugees to return to Afghanistan, and tried several times to close the border to Afghans seeking entry into Pakistan. But since fighting erupted again, repatriation was largely unsuccessful; many of those who tried to return were forced to leave again as the fighting intensified.

By the mid-1990s, a large internally displaced population had developed. Relief agencies opened several camps for the displaced in the Jalalabad area. Other camps were opened in the area around Mazar-i-Sharif in the north and in Herat in the west, near the Iranian border. These camps housed over 400,000 displaced persons.

Out of this political chaos, a new ultraconservative Islamic movement began to assert control. Called the Taliban, meaning religious students, a group of *madrasa* (Islamic school) teachers and their students seized the southern city of Kandahar and the surrounding provinces in October 1994 (Rubin, 1999). The Taliban appeared to offer Afghanistan a new Islamic movement, free of the corruption and infighting found in the so-called Islamic government at that time. But their un-stated goal was to return Afghanistan to Pushtun rule: most of the Taliban leaders are Pushtun and their movement received much of its support from Pushtun leaders in the Pakistani government.

In the beginning, most non-Pushtun areas of the country resisted the Taliban movement; but by 1998, the Taliban had gained control of most of Afghanistan, including Kabul, and seized control of the government. In the Taliban's push to power, thousands of combatants and civilians were killed. Only small areas in the north and the central mountains remained outside of Taliban control in late 2000." (Farr, G. 1 September 2001 pp. 120-123)

Overview of main displacements (1992-2000)

Number of Displaced by Year, Reason for Displacement, Place and Origin

Period of Displacement	Reason for Displacement	Number of Displaced	Displacement site	Place of Origin
1992-1993	Fear of reprisal from	400,000	Mazar-i-Sharif and	Kabul

	Islamic militias		Jalalabad	
1992-1993	Combat	200,000	Kabul	surrounding provinces
1995	Flight from the Taliban	180,000	Kabul and northern Afghanistan	southern areas
1997	Fighting in the provinces near Kabul and in the north.	600,000	Kabul and Mazar-i-Sharif	Areas near Kabul and in the northern provinces
1998	Fighting in and around Mazar-i-Sharif	50,000	Mountainous areas in the north	Uzbeks and Hazaras living in Mazar-i-Sharif
Summer 1999	Fighting north of Kabul in the Shomali Plain	100,000	Panjshir Valley	Tajiks from Shomali Plain
Fall 1999	Fighting in the Shomali Plain	12,995	Kabul, ex-Soviet embassy compound	Tajiks from Shomali Plain
Fall 1999	Fighting in the Panjshir Valley	100,000	Northern provinces	Tajiks from Panjshir Valley
Fall 1999	Fighting around Talaqan in Takhar Province (a Tajik stronghold)	16,000	Areas around Faizabad	Tajiks from the Talaqan area.
Winter 2000	Fighting in the Hazarajat	60,000	Near Behsud or Pul-i-Khumri	Hazaras and Tajiks from Bamiyan area
Summer 2000	Fighting in Panjshir Valley and Shomali Plain	50,000	Kabul and Panjshir Valley	Tajiks from the Shomali Plain and the Panjshir Valley
Summer 2000	Fighting around Talaqan in Takhar Province	15,000	Badakhshan area	Tajiks from Talaqan area.

Sources: United States Committee for Refugees (USCR), June 2000; United Nations Resident Coordinator Office (UNRCO), March 2000; Bashir/Agence France-Presse (AFP), 7 Aug 2000.

Conflict-induced displacement in 2000

- Displacement occurred from Nahrin and Burqa (Baghlan province) and from Iskhamish (Takhar province) to southern Baghlan and southern Takhar following a Taliban assault.
- More displacement took place around Taloqan with surrounding villagers moving into the town to escape fighting.
- Displacement also occurred northward and to Badakhshan. Additional displacement include movements from Takhar and Kunduz to Dashti-i-Qala, Rustaq and Khoja Bahauddin.
- More people fled to Khoja Bahauddin and Dashti-i-Qala following Taloqan's capture by the Taliban on 5 September 2000 while some others fled to Kalafgan, Farkhar and Keshem (Badakhshan)
- Following the capture by the Taliban of the town of Sang Charak and the Valley of Gosfandi in Sara-e-Pol province in January 2000, 20,000 IDPs evacuated the town and have to rely on local food charity with sub-zero temperatures.

"In northern region/Mazar, there are over 100,000 civilians displaced by drought and/or conflict. This number includes at least 8,900 families (over 53,000 people) displaced by conflict in Kunduz and Baghlan Provinces. Accurate assessments are proving difficult given shifting front lines, as well as old IDP caseloads in the area from 1999. Recent assessments in Faryab indicate that coping mechanisms in some districts are exhausted, and that child mortality is at 5.2 per 10,000." (Office of the UN Co-ordinator for Afghanistan, 19 January 2001)

"A slow but steady influx of families from Shamali to Kabul has been reported in the past few weeks. This influx appears to be much higher than usual in autumn, probably the result of the latest shift of military alliances in Shamali and alarming rumours about new fighting, but also because food is becoming scarcer in the plains." (IASC, 1 December 2000, 34)

"The first movements of internally displaced persons (IDPs) of the summer occurred in early August after a Taliban assault on Nahrain and Burqa (Baghlan Province) and Ishkamish (Takhar Province) in late July. Populations moved primarily into the upland areas of southern Baghlan (e.g. Khost wa Fereng, Andarab) and southern Takhar, as well as some towards Taloqan.

Displacement continued as the Taliban moved eastwards towards Taloqan, when populations from areas west (e.g. Bangi) and immediately north of the city (e.g. Baharak) moved either into the city or northwards. At this stage the first movements of IDPs from Taloqan into Badakhshan (to Keshem and Faizabad) occurred, though numbers were moderate. A higher level of displacement occurred from Archi (Kunduz Province) and Khoja Ghar (Takhar Province), eastwards across the Kokcha River to Dasht-i-Qala, Khoja Bahauddin and Rustaq (Takhar) as conflict spread.

A second large wave north and east from the Taloqan area - into Kalafgan and Farkhar (Takhar) and Keshem (Badakhshan) and to a lesser degree Faizabad - occurred following the final capture of Taloqan on 5 September following over a month's fighting. Many of the IDPs subsequently moved further afield, including some which looped round into Taliban-controlled Taloqan. After the fall of Tangi Farkhar around 1 October the majority of IDPs moved out of Keshem. Further eastwards, increased displacement occurred across the Kokcha River as conflict spread within Khoja Ghar (Takhar), emptying the district. Many of these IDPs, and the host population, subsequently moved within Dasht-i-Qala and into Khoja Bahauddin districts. With few public buildings, the districts of Khoja Bahauddin and Dasht-i-Qala quickly became saturated and large numbers of IDPs consequently remained under soft shelter outside." (OCHA, 17 October 2000)

"Taliban forces in Afghanistan have made further gains in their fighting against the opposition forces of Ahmad Shah Massoud. The Taliban took the town of Sang Charak and the valley of Gosfandi in Sara-e Pol province after several days of fighting, and Mr Massoud's forces also conceded they had lost further ground elsewhere. Meanwhile, a senior opposition commander, Ustad Mohammad Mohaqiq has appealed to the international community to send urgently needed aid to people forced to flee their homes in Sang Charak. He said about twenty-thousand people were homeless, many living out in the open in conditions made awful by the winter weather." (BBC, 28 January 2000)

Conflict-induced displacement in 2001

- 60,000 people displaced in March by conflict in Yakawlang District, in the Hazarajat area.
- In the first three months of 2001, displacement has occurred from parts of Ragh and Shar-i-Buzurg to North Takhar, Kunduz and Pakistan

"There have been repeated denials of humanitarian access to communities in need of assistance, in particular in Hazarajat. Fighting has resulted in the displacement of upwards of 60,000 people and further re-cent displacement of most of the population of Yakawlang District." (OCHA 24 May 2001)

"Northeastern Afghanistan currently has about 100,000 people displaced by fighting in various locations. Over the last three months, displacement due to conflict or drought has occurred from parts of Ragh and Shar-i Buzurg to north Takhar, Kunduz and Pakistan. Those areas where it was possible to continue food for work (FFW) activities throughout the winter produced relatively small numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs)." (OCHA 9 April 2001)

"Over two thousand families from Yakawlang have fled their homes [in March 2001] - due to the unstable security conditions - to safer places in the central region insofar, reports informed. These displaced families have sought refuge in Sartarnuk, Bukak, Jarda, Sia-Dara, Yarbalaq, Rustam, Andar, Zardrang, Suleimani, Ziarat, Sia-Boomak and Bedak areas.

While surveys are ongoing to identify the displaced households, the current figure comes after earlier reports, estimating the IDP toll up to 1500.

Similarly, scores of other families have poured in Yakawlang from the district's surrounding villages, while the conditions of those who stayed behind in Yakawlang has been noted 'appalling'.

Furthermore, other eleven locations for the displaced families from Yakawlang have been identified inside the district itself." (Information & Communication Unit of the Hunger Belt Programme 26 March 2001)

Peace efforts during 2001

"1. Contacts with the Afghan warring sides

2. In the last four months, my Personal Representative and Head of the Special Mission to Afghanistan, Francesc Vendrell, has been in frequent contact with the two warring sides. On the Taliban side, he has held five meetings in either Kabul or Kandahar, with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Wakil Ahmad Mutawakkil. In addition, he has held separate discussions with other Taliban authorities, including the Governor of Kandahar, Mullah Hassan Rahmani, the Minister of Education, Amir Khan Muttaqi, the Deputy Justice Minister, Jalaluddin Shinwari, and Deputy Foreign Ministers Abdul Rahman Zahed and Mullah Abdul Jalil, as well as provincial dignitaries in Jalalabad and Herat, cities that my Personal Representative visited in May.

3. On the United Front side, my Personal Representative travelled to Faizabad on 24 May for a meeting with Burhanuddin Rabbani, President of the Islamic State of Afghanistan (ISA). He has also met in Dushanbe, on 23 April and 27 July, the ISA Vice-President and Minister of Defence, Ahmad Shah Massoud, and held talks with the Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs, Abdullah Abdullah, in Brussels on 15 May and in Berlin on 19 July.

4. The extensive discussions with both sides covered a wide range of issues, such as the military situation on the ground, prospects for a ceasefire and a political settlement, the role of the United Nations in future negotiations, the status of UNSMA in the areas under their control, human rights-related issues, the relations of the two warring sides with neighbouring and other countries, the sanctions adopted by the Security Council, their respective political programmes and their vision of how the Afghan conflict might be settled, their reaction to proposals for the convening of an extraordinary *loya jirga* and the role of the former King and contacts with non-warring Afghan groups abroad. In addition, in his talks with the Taliban Foreign Minister, Mr. Vendrell has repeatedly raised the continued presence of Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan and persistent reports of the existence in Taliban-controlled territory of camps where international terrorists are trained as well as issues related to United Nations activities.

5. No talks, direct or indirect, have taken place between the two sides during the period under review. The Taliban have persisted in their refusal to carry out the written agreement of 2 November 2000 to start a

process of dialogue with the United Front, citing what they consider the United Nations lack of impartiality in the adoption by the Security Council of resolution 1333 (2000) of 19 December 2000. The Taliban also refused an invitation by the Government of Japan for the two warring sides to visit Tokyo in May on the grounds that the United Nations would be represented at that meeting.

2. Contacts with non-belligerent Afghans

6. My Personal Representative has maintained an intensive dialogue with relevant Afghan personalities and non-belligerent groups outside Afghanistan that support the convening of a special *loya jirga* and has repeatedly urged them to coordinate their efforts in pursuit of a peaceful political settlement in Afghanistan. On 16 May, he met in Rome with the former King, Mohammad Zahir Shah, and with members of the Rome Process Executive Committee. On 19 May he held talks in London with representatives of the Cyprus Movement for Implementation of Peace in Afghanistan and has also met representatives of the Council for Peace and National Unity in Afghanistan (the so called "Bonn Process"), the National Islamic Front of Afghanistan, as well as other groups and former mujahedin commanders in Peshawar and elsewhere. Most of those groups consider that only a *loya jirga* convened by the former King would have the necessary credibility and support inside Afghanistan.

3. Contacts with concerned Governments

7. In the past few months, my Personal Representative has discussed the situation in Afghanistan with senior Pakistani government officials, including two meetings with the Director-General of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), Mahmud Ahmed, and on various occasions with Foreign Secretary Inam ul-Haque, and Additional Secretaries Aziz Ahmad Khan and Riaz Khan.

8. On 11 April, Mr. Vendrell briefed the Governing Council of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in Vienna on developments in Afghanistan and their implications for the situation in Central Asia.

9. My Personal Representative visited Kazakhstan from 18 to 20 April for discussions with the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, and Foreign Minister Erlan Idrissov and Kyrgyzstan on 7 and 8 May for talks with President Askar Akayev and the Presidential Adviser for International Affairs, Askar Aitmatov. Both Governments expressed their concern about the negative repercussions that the situation in Afghanistan had for their security and reiterated their willingness to be of assistance in the discharge of my good offices and to host intra-Afghan talks under United Nations auspices. In Almaty, the Government of Kazakhstan reiterated its proposal that a special session of the Security Council dedicated to the question of Afghanistan and Central Asia be held in New York at an appropriate time following adequate preparation.

10. Between 13 and 18 June, my Personal Representative paid visits to Turkmenistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran. In Ashgabat, he discussed at length the Afghan issue with President Saparmurat Niazov and with the then Foreign Minister Batyr Berdiyev. In Tehran, he met Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi, Deputy Foreign Minister Mohsen Aminzadeh and other senior officials.

11. On 1 June, my Personal Representative held talks in Washington, D.C., with the newly appointed Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia, Christina Rocca, as well as with other senior officials in the State Department and in the National Security Council. A brainstorming session on Afghanistan organized by the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Weston Park provided an opportunity for further discussions with participants from the "six plus two" group and other interested Governments, in particular with senior British officials.

12. Mr. Vendrell also discussed the need for a comprehensive approach to the Afghanistan conflict with the Foreign Ministers of France, Hubert Vedrine, and of Germany, Joschka Fischer. (UNSG 17 August 2001)

For previous peace efforts see:

"The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security", 19 April 2001, 20 November 2000, 18 September 2000, 16 June 2000, 10 March 2000.

Military developments during 2001

- Intensified fighting since May but no significant territorial gains on either side.

"Fighting between the Taliban and the United Front has intensified since the beginning of May, with neither party yet scoring meaningful territorial gains. The focus remains on Takhar as both warring sides continue to reinforce the main confrontation lines in that strategic north-eastern province. Fighting has also spread to other areas of the country with the return of some commanders once ousted by the Taliban.

In early May, fighting broke out in the Farkhar Gorge, east of Taloqan, the provincial capital of Takhar, with the Taliban forces launching a major offensive on the Chal district and in the Gorge at the beginning of June. The United Front, for its part, launched an unsuccessful attack in late June from Khwajaghar towards Taloqan. The fighting subsided during the first two weeks of July, allowing both sides needed time for regrouping and reinforcement. Fighting resumed south of Taloqan on 19 July but after two days it declined again. The middle and southern part of the confrontation line has also been very tense during the period under review.

[...]

The forces under General Dostum, who returned to Afghanistan in April, are based in Sar-e Pul Province. After launching an unsuccessful attack in Balkh Province, they are now concentrating their military activities in the northern provinces of Badghis and Faryab, so far without much success. The former Governor of Herat, Ismail Khan, arrived in the western province of Ghor in the middle of May and has successfully strengthened his position in that province, cutting off the roads to the provincial capital of Chaghcharan.

The forces of the Hezb-e Wahdat leader, Karim Khalili, have remained active in the central province of Bamyan and kept Yakawlang, the second largest city in the province, which has changed hands several times in recent months, under their control since 11 June. The Taliban have taken up defensive positions east of Bamyan city." (UNSG 17 August 2001 32-36)

For information on the military developments during 2000, see the previous reports by the Secretary General:

"The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security", 19 April 2001, 20 November 2000, 18 September 2000, 16 June 2000, 10 March 2000.

Outside interference in Afghanistan by neighbouring states (December 2000)

- Pakistan provides fighters and logistical support to Taliban. Other "friendly" states include Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates.
- Russia and Iran provide arms and logistical support to UF via Tajikistan.
- Inter-governmental agreements on the ban of arm supply to Afghan warring parties not equipped with efficient enforcement mechanisms
- Interference by neighbouring states is the main factor driving ongoing conflict and displacement

"Human Rights Watch has undertaken extensive research into the support provided to the two major forces who, as of December 2000, were fighting for control of the country: the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA), established by the Taliban movement, and the Islamic State of Afghanistan, headed by the National Islamic United Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan (the "United Front"). By late 2000, the IEA controlled some 90-95 percent of Afghanistan's territory, with resistance continuing in the far northeast and other pockets throughout the north.

Human Rights Watch research in Afghanistan and adjacent countries has identified the major transit routes used to move arms and other equipment, the suppliers, the role of state and non-state actors, and the response of the international community. This memorandum summarizes these findings, setting out basic information concerning the provision of arms, munitions, training, and military advisory assistance-and the systemic violation of the laws of war by all those receiving this assistance. This is presented as the basis for Human Rights Watch's recommendations to the United Nations and states who have influence in Afghanistan to stop the arms flow and other military assistance to all parties to the conflict there.

The principal supplier of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan is Pakistan. Its official denials notwithstanding, Pakistan has assisted the Taliban forces by facilitating the recruitment of fighters, offering military training, and planning pivotal military operations, while allowing arms for the Taliban to transit its territory. The extent of this support, particularly during the Taliban's offensive in the north in late 2000, was criticized implicitly by the U.N. Secretary General in a report to the General Assembly in November. In the report, he expressed his distress that "a significant number of non-Afghan personnel, largely from Pakistani madrassahs, are...taking active part in the fighting, most, if not all, on the side of the Taliban," and that "there also appears to be outside involvement in the planning and logistical support of [the Taliban's] military operations."

Diplomatic observers interviewed by Human Rights Watch in Afghanistan and Pakistan in July and October 2000 have also reported that Pakistani aircraft assisted with troop rotations for Taliban forces during combat operations in late 2000, and senior members of its intelligence agency and army were involved in planning military operations. Private and semi-private agencies in Pakistan, including political parties, religious institutions and business cartels, have provided enormous support to the Taliban with the full knowledge of government officials even when their actions violated Pakistani law. Finally, the Pakistani army has facilitated the recruitment of Pakistani madrasa (religious school) students, including children, to fight with the Taliban.

Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have also provided financial support to the Taliban. At least until 1998, Saudi Arabia provided funds and heavily subsidized fuel to the Taliban through Pakistan. Through their relationship with traders in the UAE and in the Pakistani province of Baluchistan and the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP), the Taliban are also linked with local and provincial administrators and with officials in the UAE who benefit from the vast smuggling networks that link the three countries.

The parties that comprise the United Front obtain arms primarily from Iran and Russia. Iran has provided rockets, ammunition, and mines. Iran has also provided military training to United Front forces. The Russian Federation has enabled the transportation of Iranian aid, while providing considerable direct assistance itself, including crucial support services and, reportedly, helicopters recently. Tajikistan is the principal country through which assistance from Iran and Russia to the United Front transits, including through the joint Russian-Tajik military base at Kulab.

Though there have been numerous agreements by Afghanistan's neighbors and other states involved in the conflict to end arms supplies as part of a larger peace process, none of these agreements has been backed by any enforcement mechanism. On July 21, 1999, at a meeting in Tashkent of the Group of Six-plus-Two, comprising the countries bordering Afghanistan plus the U.S. and Russia, the delegates signed an agreement subsequently known as the Tashkent declaration in which they "agreed not to provide military support to any Afghan party and to prevent the use of our territories for such purposes," and called upon "the international community to take identical measures to prevent delivery of weapons to Afghanistan." Action by the United Nations to bar military support to all parties to the conflict could make effective the

measures agreed previously by some of the states principally responsible for the ongoing flow of training and advisory support, weapons, and other military assistance." (HRW, 15 December 2000)

"The main cause of internal displacement in Afghanistan has been war. At present the principal factor driving ongoing conflict is interference by neighbouring states, most significantly in the form of Pakistani backing for the Taliban. Even if the Taliban were to control all major urban centres in Afghanistan, this would be unlikely to spell the end of conflict: indeed, it could be the signal for a change in the nature of the conflict. From an intra-elite struggle involving perhaps 100,000 armed fighters to a mass ethnic conflict with fighting at a local level between groups of differing ethnic identities. As long as outside interference in Afghanistan continues, the phenomenon of internal displacement and the burdens it places on donors will persist." (William Maley, 1998, p. 158)

For more detailed information on external military support to the Taleban and the United Front see "Fueling Afghanistan's war", HRW, 15 December 2000

The U.S. - Afghanistan war

US ask Taleban to hand over Ben Laden or face military consequences (October 2001)

- Osama Ben Laden prime suspect of September 11 terrorist attacks.
- USA demand that Ben Laden be extradited from Afghanistan or threaten to bomb the country.
- Taleban refuse to hand over Ben Laden but open to negotiation if solid proof is provided.
- USA refuse to negotiate and to follow normal standard in extradition proceedings.

"The terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon of 11th September resulted in an immediate charge by the USA that Osama bin Laden was responsible for the attacks. The USA demanded that the Taliban hand over Osama bin Laden, adding that those regarded to be harbouring terrorists would be targeted by any US military action. The Taliban have indicated their willingness to negotiate on a possible handover, if they are provided with solid evidence of his implication in the attacks. The governments of other Islamic countries have stated that a key factor in any consideration of what support, if any, they would be prepared to lend to the efforts of the USA to respond to the attacks is whether the normal standard of proof that is required in any extradition proceedings is also applied in relation to the request to the Taliban. The US government has stated that it will provide evidence of Osama bin Laden's involvement but, at the same time, is saying that, in order to protect its sources, it is constrained in the information that it can make publicly available. This is placing the various Islamic governments whose support is being sought in a difficult position. They know that they depend on moderate opinion within their populations to support any assistance they may opt to give to the USA and that such moderate opinion could easily be radicalised if people felt that their own government was party to hostile military action by the USA against another Islamic state. Similar considerations apply in Afghanistan where the Taliban could assert that the USA had opted not to comply with the normal requirements of extradition proceedings and had, instead, resorted to force. This would place them in a very strong position to recruit volunteers to fight for them and to enforce conscription. The question of what evidence is provided and whether this is felt to be convincing by moderate opinion within Afghanistan and the wider Islamic world is thus crucial to the outcome of the current tensions between the US, and its allies, and the Taliban." (BAAG 4 October 2001)

US policy in Afghanistan is largely a function of oil (October 2001)

- Control and export of the region's vast oil and gas reserves central in the Afghanistan geo-political equation.
- Afghanistan's geographical position as a potential transit route for oil and gas exports from central Asia to the Arabian sea makes it an important player.
- This oil is non-OPEC, lies in the non-Arab world the population although Muslim is heavily secularised.
- Afghanistan's route is seen as being advantageous as it is close to the Asian markets.

"As the war in Afghanistan unfolds, there is frantic diplomatic activity to ensure that any post-Taliban government will be both democratic and pro-west. Hidden in this explosive geo-political equation is the sensitive issue of securing control and export of the region's vast oil and gas reserves.

The Soviets estimated Afghanistan's proven and probable natural gas reserves at 5 trillion cubic feet - enough for the UK's requirement for two years - but this remains largely untapped because of the country's civil war and poor pipeline infrastructure.

More importantly, according to the US government, "Afghanistan's significance from an energy standpoint stems from its geographical position as a potential transit route for oil and natural gas exports from central Asia to the Arabian Sea".

To the north of Afghanistan lies the Caspian and central Asian region, one of the world's last great frontiers for the oil industry due to its tremendous untapped reserves. The US government believes that total oil reserves could be 270bn barrels. Total gas reserves could be 576 trillion cubic feet. These dwarf the UK's proven reserves of 5bn barrels of oil and 27 trillion cubic feet of natural gas.

The reason oil is so attractive to the US - which imports half of its oil - and the west, is for three reasons. "Firstly it is non-Opec oil," says James Marriott, an oil expert from Platform, an environmental NGO. "Opec has been the bête-noire of the west since its inception in 1960. Secondly, these states are not within the Arab world and thirdly, although they are Muslim, they are heavily secularised."

The presence of these oil reserves and the possibility of their export raises new strategic concerns for the US and other western industrial powers. "As oil companies build oil pipelines from the Caucasus and central Asia to supply Japan and the west, these strategic concerns gain military implications," argued an article in the Military Review, the Journal of the US army, earlier in the year.

Despite this, host governments and western oil companies have been rushing to get in on the act. Kazakhstan, it is believed, could earn \$700bn (£486bn) from offshore oil and gas fields over the next 40 years. Both American and British oil companies have struck black gold. In April 1993, Chevron concluded a \$20bn joint venture to develop the Tengiz oil field, with 69bn barrels of estimated oil reserves in Kazakhstan alone. The following year, in what was described as "the deal of the century", AIOC, an international consortium of companies led by BP, signed an \$8bn deal to exploit reserves estimated at 3-5bn barrels in Azerbaijan.

The oil industry has long been trying to find a way to bring the oil and gas to market. This frustration was evident in the submission by oil company Unocal's vice-president John Maresca, before the US House of Representatives in 1998. "Central Asia is isolated. Their natural resources are landlocked, both geographically and politically. Each of the countries in the Caucasus and central Asia faces difficult political challenges. Some have unsettled wars or latent conflicts."

The industry has been looking at different routes. The Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC) route is 1,000 miles west from Tengiz in Kazakhstan to the Russian Black Sea port of Novorossiisk and came on stream last week. Oil will go by tanker through the Bosphorus to the Mediterranean. Another route being considered by AIOC goes from Baku through Tbilisi in Georgia to Ceyhan in Turkey. However, parts of the route are seen as politically unstable as it goes through the Kurdistan region of Turkey and its \$3bn price tag is prohibitively expensive.

But even if these pipelines are built, they would not be enough to exploit the region's vast oil and gas reserves. Nor crucially would they have the capacity to move oil to where it is really needed, the growing markets of Asia. Other export pipelines must therefore be built. One option is to go east across China, but at 3,000km it is seen as too long. Another option is through Iran, but US companies are banned due to American sanctions. The only other possible route is through Afghanistan to Pakistan. This is seen as being advantageous as it is close to the Asian markets.

Unocal, the US company with a controversial history of investment in Burma, has been trying to secure the Afghan route. To be viable Unocal has made it clear that "construction of the pipeline cannot begin until a recognised government is in place in Kabul that has the confidence of governments, lenders, and our company."

This, it can be argued, is precisely what Washington is now trying to do. 'Washington's attitude towards the Taliban has been, in large part, a function of oil,' argues Steve Kretzmann, from the Institute for Policy Studies in the US. 'Before 1997, Washington refused to criticise and isolate the Taliban because Kabul seemed to favour Unocal, to build a proposed natural gas pipeline from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan to the Pakistan coast.'

In 1997, the Taliban signed an agreement that would allow a proposed 890-mile, \$2bn natural gas pipeline project called Centgas led by Unocal to proceed. However by December 1998, Unocal had pulled out citing turmoil in Afghanistan making the project too risky.

To secure stability for the Afghan pipeline route, the US State Department and Pakistan's intelligence service funnelled arms to the Taliban, argues Ahmed Rashid in his book: *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*, the book Tony Blair has been reportedly reading since the conflict started. Rashid called the struggle for control of post-Soviet central Asia "the new Great Game".

Critics of the industry argue that so long as this game is dependent on fossil fuels the region will remain impoverished due to the effects of the oil industry, which is, says Kretzmann, 'essentially a neo-colonial set-up that extracts wealth from a region. The industry is sowing the seeds of poverty and terrorism. True security, for all of us, can only be achieved by reducing our dependence on oil.' (The Guardian 24 October 2001)

See also: "Pakistan seeks Central Asia gas", BBC, 7 November 2000, "Afghan Pipeline: A New Great Game", BBC, 4 November 1997 and "Taliban in Texas for talks on gas pipeline", BBC, 5 December 1997

People flee major cities to rural areas in fear of U.S. attacks (October 2001)

- An estimated 1 million people were already displaced within the country prior to the U.S. attacks, with 400,000 living in overcrowded camps. A additional 4 million were already internally stuck or stranded.
- Aid should reach those unable to flee to prevent further displacement.
- 1/4 of Kabul's population and 1/2 of Kandahar's population has fled in fear of U.S. strikes. Many have reportedly returned.
- UNHCR estimated that up to 2.2 million people could be internally displaced by March 2002

- Taliban have reportedly prevented people from leaving Afghanistan
- Some 20,000 people stranded at the closed Pakistan border have either crossed into Pakistan or dispersed into other areas in Afghanistan

"Even before the threat of reprisals following the terrorist attacks on the US, hundreds of thousands of people had already left their villages for camps outside major cities, where they had heard that food was available. It is estimated that there are more than one million internally displaced and more than four million internally stranded people within Afghanistan already. An estimated 400,000 people were living in these camps, in squalid conditions with little water, shelter or sanitation. In August, Medecins Sans Frontieres estimated that already 20-40 people were dying each day. Some reports now state that people are beginning to leave this camp and are heading for the Iranian border, in the hope of finding better provision there.

Near the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif, some 200,000 people are thought to be living in camps outside the city. Because of fighting between the Taliban and opposition forces, it is difficult for aid agencies to reach them. It is thought that many will start to head for the borders of neighbouring countries.

(...)

At greater risk however, are those Afghans who remain in their isolated villages, watching their food run out. They have already eaten the grain they had put aside for next year's planting. Many of them will then have no choice but to sit and wait, in the hope that somehow outside aid will reach them.

At this point it is critical to try to enable people to stay in their villages, many of which are completely cut off by snow during the winter. People will therefore only stay if they are sure they have enough food to last through the winter. If they do not stay, there will be a massive exodus of people to the camps, and the humanitarian situation will become much graver.

If people move to camps, it becomes a huge task for them to return to their villages. Their houses may have been damaged or destroyed, no crops will have been planted in their fields, there will be little food around to help them re-establish themselves. Movement to the camps prolongs the effects of the drought, making it even more important that people be enabled to remain in their villages." (ACT 12 October 2001)

"Displacement of Afghans since 11 September 2001:

Initially, the threat of a US-led military strike on Afghanistan and increased Taliban repression caused hundreds of thousands of people to flee their homes, particularly in major cities. A quarter of the population of Kabul and half the population of the southern Afghan province of Kandahar, the headquarters of the Taliban, were said to have evacuated. Prior to the threat, large numbers of people were not fleeing these cities. The already large number of internally displaced persons was estimated to have grown to a total of 1.1 million, which the UNHCR predicted could rise to 2.2 million internally displaced persons by March 2002. While reports indicated that many of those who had left cities have been returning, the huge number of Afghans who were displaced prior to the events of 11 September remain displaced and in great need of assistance.

Reports have indicated that the Taliban have been preventing some refugees from leaving Afghanistan or from moving towards the borders. In one incident, the Taliban reportedly stopped 30 to 40 Afghan families from Herat on their way towards Iran and prevented the men in the families from continuing, saying that they had to join the Taliban forces and fight. It was reported that the women and children in these families turned back as well because they did not want to be separated from their male family members.

Following the most recent displacement of Afghans, Pakistan authorities have strengthened their efforts to prevent new Afghan refugees from entering Pakistan, citing security concerns and their inability to support additional refugees. On 18 September, Pakistan closed its border with Afghanistan, amid reports that the border closure may have in part been due to a US request; the authorities are reportedly allowing only vehicles with Afghan transit goods and Pakistani nationals to enter. It was reported that a group of over 20,000 displaced Afghans who had been waiting at the border with Pakistan near the city of Quetta, despite

reported attempts by the Taliban to stop people from leaving Afghanistan, have either found alternative routes into Pakistan or have moved and dispersed into other areas of Afghanistan.

Despite prior indications that borders would be opened to fleeing refugees in the event of US-led strikes against Afghanistan, President Pervez Musharraf announced on 8 October that the border with Afghanistan would not be opened and that only the sick or infirm would be allowed to enter Pakistan. However, UNHCR is preparing for 1 million additional Afghan refugees in Pakistan.

UNHCR has reported that those crossing into Pakistan are mostly women and children and that refugees have said that men are either staying in Afghanistan or returning immediately after accompanying their families to look after livestock, crops, and property." (AI 9 October 2001)

Displacement has increased since the beginning of the war (January 2002)

- Out of the 1.2 million Afghans estimated to be displaced at the beginning of 2002, the half is believed to have fled after September 11, mainly in Central, South and East regions as a result of the recent conflict.

"[...]

Currently, almost 1.2 million Afghans are displaced inside Afghanistan with the north and west of the country accounting for over 60% of total IDPs. Significant numbers of IDPs do not reside in camps, but are hosted by already vulnerable communities. Camp populations tend to be located near cities. Two camp populations (Spin Boldak in the South, and Makaki/Mile 46 in the West) comprise asylum seekers, who were thwarted by neighbouring countries when they closed their borders.

The reasons for displacement are complex, recalling that prior to events in September significant numbers of IDPs were accommodated throughout Afghanistan. Around one-half of the current caseload is believed to have fled for reasons of drought, or food insecurity, prior to September. Internal displacement increased in Central, South and East regions as a result of the recent conflict. Subsequently, with growing food shortages, more people have left their homes, particularly from Badkhis and Ghor. These IDPs are not expected to return home before the second quarter of 2002, in time for the agricultural season, although food assistance to areas facing current shortages may encourage some to return earlier." (UN 21 January 2002, p. 43)

The post-Taliban era

Anti-Pashtun violence campaign displaces thousands in the North (March 2002)

- Since the fall of the Taliban and the re-emergence of warlords, the Pashtuns are subject to murder, beating and looting in northern Afghanistan.
- The intimidation campaign has forced at least 20,000 to flee their villages.
- Three political factions active in the north are the Junbish-i Milli-yi Islami, Jamiat-e Islami, and Hizb-i Wahdat, drawn largely from the Uzbek, Tajik, and Hazara ethnic groups respectively.
- Since the fall of the Taliban, each group has targeted the Pashtun community in areas under its control, partly in reprisal for these communities' real or perceived association with the predominantly Pashtun Taliban movement, and partly as a result of political competition in northern Afghanistan.

"For ethnic Pashtuns in northern Afghanistan, it is payback time. They are paying for the sins of the Taliban, simply because most of the Taliban leadership were also ethnic Pashtuns. In the past month, Human Rights Watch has visited dozens of Pashtun communities in northern Afghanistan, personally documenting the devastation. We visited village after village that had been stripped bare by ethnic militias who had sometimes even taken the window frames. We found case after case of beatings, looting, murders, extortion and sexual violence against Pashtun communities.

[...]

Parts of Afghanistan today are beginning to look a bit like they did in the 1992-96 period when warlords carved up the country and brutally abused the civilian population. That era gave rise to the Taliban. Some of those same warlords are back in power in northern Afghanistan, and their forces are responsible for most of the abuses against Pashtun civilians in the north. Our research implicated all three major factions – the ethnic Uzbek Junbish party, the ethnic Tajik Jamiat party, and the ethnic Hazara Hizb-i-Wahdat party – in the offenses against Pashtun civilians." (HRW 20 March 2002)

"Armed political factions in northern Afghanistan are subjecting ethnic Pashtuns to murder, beatings, sexual violence, abductions, looting, and extortion, Human Rights Watch said today. The ongoing campaign of violence and intimidation is forcing thousands of Pashtuns to leave their villages.

Over the last four weeks, teams from Human Rights Watch have visited over two dozen villages and communities across northern Afghanistan, from Faryab province in the northwest to Baghlan in the north central mountains. They have documented over 150 separate incidents of violence and looting over the last three months, some of them as recent as this week. The testimony of Pashtuns across this large area was consistent in its depiction of violence, looting, and intimidation at the hands of local commanders.

[...]

The three political factions active in the north are the Junbish-i Milli-yi Islami, Jamiat-e Islami, and Hizb-i Wahdat, drawn largely from the Uzbek, Tajik, and Hazara ethnic groups respectively. Since the fall of the Taliban, each group has targeted the Pashtun community in areas under its control, partly in reprisal for these communities' real or perceived association with the predominantly Pashtun Taliban movement, and partly as a result of political competition in northern Afghanistan. The abuses have also occurred in a broader context of violence by armed groups, in which Pashtuns – lacking political and military power in the north – are acutely vulnerable.

[...]

Human Rights Watch also received testimony about widely prevalent sexual violence and abduction of women in northern Afghanistan. The testimony was especially striking because of social taboos against discussing such issues. While many women were subject to violence due to the general insecurity in the north, Pashtun women seemed especially singled out for attacks. In central Balkh province, Wahdat and Junbish factions targeted Pashtun women for sexual violence, after women in their own communities suffered similar attacks in the past." (HRW 3 March 2002)

"After suffering more than two decades of war in their troubled country, ethnic minorities in northern Afghanistan are now fleeing persecution. Some 20,000 people, mostly Pashtuns, have been forced to flee northern Afghanistan under threat of persecution in the past few days, a UN official said on Wednesday.

"We are concerned about minorities in the north who have been forced to flee, particularly from Kunduz, Baghlan, Takhar, and other areas in the north, predominantly Pashtuns, who are minorities in those areas," said UN official Yussuf Hassan.

While Pashtuns are the majority in the country overall, in northern Afghanistan they are a minority in the mostly ethnic Uzbek and Tajik areas.

"In the last few days we have seen thousands of people fleeing southwards, stranded, I would say, on the Afghan-Pakistani border, nearly 20,000 of them," he said.

These latest victims of the turbulent situation in Afghanistan have fled persecution and violence as old ethnic rivalries return to the surface.

"The story they tell us is that they have been forced from their land, their houses have been looted and the women have been mistreated," he said." (AFP 21 February 2002)

Abuses by armed militias, lack of food and emergency assistance force people to flee in Western Afghanistan (April 2002)

- Findings of this report indicate that local Afghan forces of Uzbek ethnic origin appear to have systematically abused ethnic Pashtuns particularly in western districts that are primarily Pashtun villages.
- The primary reason people are fleeing their homes and seeking humanitarian assistance in the Shaidayee camp for internally displaced persons (IDP), is that food and emergency aid were not available in their home villages.
- A study conducted by Physicians for Human Rights in Shaidayee Camp in Herat revealed that Pashtun families were two to five times as likely to be victims of human rights violations as non-Pashtuns.
- Abuses against civilians in both the Northern and Western regions include rape, harassment, extortion, land seizure, killings, disappearances, beatings, looting and intimidation.
- The Afghan Interim Government appointed an independent commission to investigate alleged ethnically-based abuses against Pashtuns in Northern Afghanistan, however the capacity of the commission has been limited by the power and influence of the local commanders in these areas

"The collapse of the Taliban regime in November 2001 gave the people of Afghanistan hope that after 23 years of war, the international isolation and human rights abuses that they suffered would come to an end. The Bonn agreement, the installation of the Interim Government, the future prospect of democratic reforms and the deployment of international security forces in Kabul, heralded a new Afghanistan and a promise of international support and cooperation. Yet, armed factional groups have continued to commit human rights abuses against civilian ethnic groups, especially in areas where there is little presence of international or local security. The findings of this report indicate that local Afghan forces of Uzbek ethnic origin appear to have systematically abused ethnic Pashtuns particularly in western districts that are primarily Pashtun villages. The study also shows that the primary reason people are fleeing their homes and seeking humanitarian assistance in the Shaidayee camp for internally displaced persons (IDP), is that food and emergency aid were not available in their home villages.

In April 2002, Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) surveyed 509 IDP households in Shaidayee Camp in Herat, Afghanistan. The study revealed that Pashtun families were two to five times as likely to be victims of human rights violations as non-Pashtuns. While it is not clear how many of the abuses were directly ordered by local commanders, violations against ethnic Pashtuns were pervasive enough that commanders and local authorities are likely to be aware of them. Nonetheless, little has been done to insist upon order or to end persecution of the Pashtun. Predominantly Pashtun Afghans associated with the Taliban regime were guilty of many abuses against men, women, and children from minority ethnic groups, and in particular the Uzbeks and Hazaras. It appears now to be the case that some individuals as well as military figures are acting against Pashtun civilians by way of reprisal. Alternatively, some abuses may simply be opportunistic attacks to steal or look for the weakest within a community. Whatever the motivation of the perpetrators, however, the crimes against unarmed ethnic Pashtun families are human rights abuses that set the stage for further ethnic tension within Afghanistan - a development the country can ill afford.

[...]

Civilians in both the Northern and Western regions of Afghanistan have reported human rights abuses in their districts of origin to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and United Nations offices. These

abuses include rape, harassment, extortion, land seizure, killings, disappearances, beatings, looting and intimidation. Many of these violations have been reported by civilians as reprisals against Pashtuns, the Afghan ethnic group most commonly associated with the Taliban regime.

Recently, the Afghan Interim Government appointed an independent commission to investigate alleged ethnically-based abuses against Pashtuns in Northern Afghanistan, which had been documented by Human Rights Watch. However, the capacity of this commission to effectively address violence against Pashtuns in Northern and Western Afghanistan has been limited by the power and influence of the local commanders in these areas. Even with the removal of the commanders who are reportedly implicated in the abuses against Pashtuns in their communities, especially in Faryab, the violations continue under the watch of other commanders who were placed to protect Pashtun villages from such acts.

Despite measures to protect civilian populations, over the last three months a large influx of long-term internally displaced persons (IDPs) have fled to the Herat province in Western Afghanistan from Ghor, Baghdis, Faryab, Farah, and Balkh provinces, and have settled in Shaidayee IDP camp on the outskirts of Herat city. According to UNHCR, many of the IDPs reported that they fled their home villages due to lack of food distribution and the need for emergency assistance. Others, especially Pashtuns, also reported that abuses had occurred in Pashtun villages in many Provinces in the Western Region.
" (PHR April 2002)

See also:

All Our Hopes Are Crushed: Violence and Repression in Western Afghanistan, HRW, 5 November 2002

Cluster bombs contribute to the cycle of displacement (December 2002)

- Cluster bombs and unexploded ordnances hinder return of IDPs
- IDPs are exposed to these bombs are they contribute to a cycle of displacement.

"Cluster bomblets also hinder the return of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). [...] Bomblets and other unexploded ordnance can contribute to delays in organized returns. UNHCR's guidelines require the agency to look at the safety of roads and return areas before sending inhabitants back to their homes. The guidelines focus on the threats from landmines, but because of their similar effect, unexploded BLUs must be treated the same way. UNHCR is also required to discourage spontaneous repatriation in unsafe circumstances. "The need for return 'in safety and dignity' means that UNHCR cannot promote the voluntary repatriation of refugees in patently dangerous situations with the risk of injury or death." By necessitating such precautions, cluster bombs can slow a country's economic recovery and its people's return to normalcy.

[...] Unexploded bomblets also endanger transients unfamiliar with a region's hazards. Two people from the Mazlach IDP camp encountered cluster bomblets while passing through the field west of Ishaq Suleiman: the 61-year-old father died and his 8-year-old son was injured. Although the earlier deaths of two shepherds kept locals away, the victims had no reason to know of the incident. The deadly bomblets not only harm returning refugees but also contribute to a cycle of displacement, forcing those who find their villages too dangerous to join Afghanistan's large number of IDPs." (HRW December 2002, pp. 28-29)

Human rights, public security and the rule of law still not upheld (December 2002)

- Representatives of various factions met in Bonn in December 2001 and agreed on an interim power sharing agreement, creation of new constitution and elections in 2004.
- Despite the agreement, Afghanistan remains a country where violence and the use of force had become the first resort to settle disputes and resolve conflicting claims to power.
- Because of the conscious choices made by key actors, notably Afghan military leaders and the United States, the processes set in motion by the Bonn Agreement are now faltering in key areas such as human rights, public security, the rule of law, and economic reconstruction

"A few weeks after the United States and its coalition partners toppled the Taliban in late 2001, representatives of various Afghan factions met in Bonn, Germany under the auspices of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan to map out Afghanistan's future. After laborious negotiations between Afghan military commanders, representatives of Afghanistan's different ethnic groups, expatriate Afghans, and representatives of the exiled monarch—and under substantial pressure from the United States and other external powers to reach an agreement—the Bonn Agreement was signed on December 5, 2001.

The delegates to the Bonn conference, some of whom had been bitter enemies during the last two decades, made surprising progress. They agreed on an interim power sharing arrangement, the creation of a new constitution, and elections in 2004. Through the Bonn Agreement they set out a schematic roadmap and timetable for establishing peace and security, reconstructing the country, reestablishing some key institutions, and protecting human rights.

Though it was not a comprehensive peace agreement and did not include key provisions, such as formal commitments by Afghanistan's neighbors to respect the country's neutrality (and end outside support to different military factions), most Afghans believed that the Bonn Agreement represented the best chance possible for establishing peace, security, and protection of human rights in Afghanistan. With the participation of so many Afghan factions and the promise of political and economic support from the world's major powers, the agreement offered hope to some of the world's most repressed and abused people. Afghans could finally dream of an end to violence, better living conditions, and a future for their children.

But this hope was tempered by the immense challenges that lay ahead. Virtually all the institutions of a functioning civil society had been destroyed, including the parliament, the courts, much of the civil service, and most of the educational and health systems. Under the Taliban the majority of the population—females—had been denied the right to education and work. The country was littered with landmines. Much of its infrastructure had been destroyed by the shelling, shooting, and neglect that had become the staple of everyday life.

It was beyond the capacity of the Bonn Agreement or any other agreement to provide a short-term remedy for all these problems. At best, reconstruction will take years. It will also take time to develop and nurture a new political culture in which civilian authority will be supreme, national interests will prevail over regional or sectarian ones, and disputes will be resolved peacefully. Even with the formal signing of the Bonn Agreement, Afghanistan remained a country where violence and the use of force had become the first resort to settle disputes and resolve conflicting claims to power.

In spite of the inevitable and predictable obstacles, there was still much that could have, and still can be, achieved, even if at times only in the form of incremental progress. But, because of the conscious choices made by key actors, notably Afghan military leaders and the United States, the processes set in motion by the Bonn Agreement are now faltering in key areas such as human rights, public security, the rule of law, and economic reconstruction." (HRW 5 December 2002, p. 1)

See also:

Final report on the Afghan Interim Authority Fund, UNDP, 20 April 2003

The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, Report of the Secretary-General, 18 March 2003

The Afghan Transitional Administration: Prospects and Perils, International Crisis Group (ICG), 30 July 2002

Forced recruitment, persecution in the north causes displacement and hamper return (April 2003)

- UNHCR report continued arrival of Pashtuns IDPs in the south as a result of harassment and insecurity in the north
- Most IDPs are in the south (350,000) in 6 displacement settlements. 15% of them are Pashtuns
- Psychosocial effect of persecution means that IDPs will reluctant to go back to the north for a while
- Forced recruitment by factional leaders in the north force people to flee.
- There is concern that IDPs returning from the western areas will be exposed to forced recruitment

"The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) maintains that arrivals of internally displaced persons (IDPs) - mostly ethnic Pashtuns - in the south of the country as a result of harassment and insecurity in the north are continuing.

"We do have protection cases, human rights cases of Pashtuns coming from the north, still in small numbers, but continuing," Maki Shinohara, a spokeswoman for UNHCR, told IRIN in the Afghan capital, Kabul.

There are hundreds of thousands of IDPs throughout Afghanistan today, about 350,000 of whom are in the south, most of them in six displacement settlements in Kandahar and Helmand provinces.

"What is notable is that there are still people arriving at these settlements, fleeing harassment and insecurity from the northern provinces of Faryab, Jowzjan and Badghis," Shinohara said, noting that in the second half of March, 45 families had arrived at the livestock market in Kandahar, joining some 100 displaced families already there.

According to UNHCR some 15 percent of IDPs in the south are Pashtuns from the north, who might not be able to return in the near future.

"In some specific provinces of the north where there is factional fighting going on, there are some local commanders who have been confiscating land illegally, not only from Pashtuns - there have been others affected too - but mainly Pashtuns," Shinohara said, noting that the working group of the Return Commission in the north, composed of local authorities and the Afghan Human Rights Commission, was trying to make headway in identifying areas for possible return, and would then visit the displaced Pashtuns in the south with concrete proposals.

"Objectively, even if the situation might be OK for the people to come back, having the experience of being harassed out of their homes or the experience of fleeing from them, does take some time for the people themselves to be convinced and confident enough to go back," Shinohara said, adding that UNHCR was encouraging dialogue between the villagers as well as with the authorities in the north. "It's basically up to the authorities to regain the trust of their people and to work on solving the problems which are displacing people," she said." (IRIN 15 April 2003)

"The senior human rights advisor and the political advisor of UNAMA said that forced recruitment is currently taking place in the northern areas of Afghanistan.

An international source advised that the extent of forced recruitment is on the increase and should be seen in the context of the tension between the various factions in the northern region. The source has received reports indicating that the forced recruitment during the months of August of September 2002 took place particularly in the provinces of Sar-e-Pul, Jowzjan, Balkh and Samangan.

According to the source, forced recruitment is carried out in different ways. Firstly, it was reported, in late August young men were picked up from the street in Sar-e-Pul. Many of these were working for national NGOs. According to the source, forced recruitment is carried out by both sides - by the Junbesh as well as by the Jamiat forces. It is said that Atta has ordered 1000 new recruits to be found for the forces in the Balkh province, while Junbesh are recruiting especially in Samangan and Jowzjan. Other forms of forced recruitment consist of the commandant going to the villages where he negotiates a sum of money in exchange for men. Amounts as high as 10-20 million. Afghani per person have been reported, (approximately between USD 220 and 445 per person). In some instances higher amounts have been mentioned. If the families are unable to pay, the young men are picked up. There are also reports of physical violence in the form of beatings of families.

According to the source, the local community often helps the family to pay. There are also examples of some families in an IDP-camp in the Samangan province having recently been asked to supply 20 recruits, but they only supplied three and sent the rest of the young men in the camp away from the area to another IDP-camp in the Kandahar region (Spin Boldak). There are rumours that forced recruitment involves people as young as 12-13 years, but according to reports, verified by the source, it was actually young men aged between 18 and 20 years.

The source also said that in May 2002, a decree was issued by the president about military service, which according to this decree, must take place voluntarily. However, according to the source it seems unclear whether this decree has come into force, and how it is to be implemented in practice.

Finally, the source expressed concern, that the Pashtuns currently returning from western countries might become a primary target for forced recruitment in the northern regions. The source emphasized that there have not as yet been any examples of this happening, but that it is an issue, which gives cause for general concern.

According to CCA, forced recruitment to the Jamiat forces in Takhar province is also currently taking place. According to the source, these are forces belonging to the commandant Daoud, who is based in Kunduz. CCA has received reports that families, who refuse to supply a recruit, instead must pay 4 million Afghani (about USD 85)." (DIS March 2003, pp. 27-28)

Continued fighting and insecurity are the most serious challenge to peace and return (June 2003)

- AI contends that Afghanistan is a country to which most refugee and IDP returns should be considered unsustainable, mainly because levels of security are not adequate, access to shelter, water and employment are very limited and the absence of rule of law puts human rights at risk.
- Insecurity is as prevalent in the urban centres of Afghanistan as it is in the countryside
- Landmines kill 200 people every month in rural areas.
- Afghans in many parts of the country remain unprotected by legitimate State security structures.
- Rivalries between factional leaders worsened in the west during 2002.

- In early 2003, there has been increased activity by elements hostile to the Government and to the international community in Afghanistan
- Insecurity severely threatens the fragile peace in the country, increases the possibility of more people being displaced, prevents returns of the population to their areas of origin, and undermines the authority of the new government.
- Delivery of aid is threatened by rising insecurity in many areas, which has resulted in increases in direct attacks on humanitarian aid workers and Afghan civilians

"Amnesty International believes that Afghanistan is not a country that has crossed over into a post-conflict situation, and therefore is one to which most refugee and IDP returns should be considered unsustainable. At a basic minimum, a post-conflict situation would be characterized by adequate levels of security in the majority of the country, access to adequate shelter, access to food and potable water, access to employment, the rule of law and due regard for the human rights of all persons, including in particular those of vulnerable groups. In contemporary Afghanistan, these conditions are not being met for the vast majority of Afghans, including refugees returning to their country of origin who are especially vulnerable, having been uprooted for protracted periods of time.

The security situation in Afghanistan has steadily deteriorated in 2003. Attacks targeted at foreigners, such as the murder of an International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) staff member in Uruzgan province in March 2003, have led to a withdrawal of NGO and UN staff, in particular international staff, from aid projects throughout the south of the country. Humanitarian aid workers and de-mining teams have also been the target of attacks in other parts of the country. Growing insecurity over the last months has meant that up to two-thirds of the country is not readily accessible to international aid agencies to conduct relief and monitoring exercises. UN agencies in the south have recently had to request armed escorts in order to be able to travel with some measure of security. This insecurity is as prevalent in the urban centres of Afghanistan as it is in the countryside. As the pace of reconstruction in Afghanistan slows, and the living conditions of most ordinary Afghans fails to improve, many are turning to extremist forces, such as a revitalized Taliban now active in the south-east and east, to express their disappointment in the present administration and its foreign backers. US-led military action along Afghanistan's border with Pakistan has been the cause of further deaths and consequent resentment of the presence of foreigners. On 9 April, eleven civilians, including seven women, were killed when a US bomb hit their house on the outskirts of Shikin, Paktika province. In Kabul there has been a sharp decrease in the level of security experienced by Afghans and members of the international community.

There has also been an upsurge in factional fighting amongst rival regional and local commanders across Afghanistan. In early April, fighting between the forces of Abdul Rashid Dostum and Ustad Atta Mohammed in Maimana city, Faryab province, killed up to eight civilians. In Imamsahib district of Kunduz, a group of Uzbek returnees from Pakistan complained that local Turkmen militia allied to the *Jamiat-e-Islami* faction had kidnapped eight people, including five women, in order to force the community to give up their land. Processes of disarmament and demobilization have to date been largely ineffectual.

Between 5 and 10 million landmines and unexploded ordinances continue to litter the countryside, killing an estimated 200 persons every month. The Special Representative of the Secretary General in Afghanistan noted recently that "The issue of security in Afghanistan cast a long shadow over the whole peace process there and, indeed, over the whole future of the country." Furthermore, public confidence in the police, including in Kabul, is very low, with the police being responsible for human rights abuses including torture and arbitrary detention." (AI 23 June 2003, pp. 21-22)

"20. Security remains the most serious challenge facing the peace process in Afghanistan. Security must be improved to allow the re-establishment of the rule of law, ensure the protection of human rights, promote the reconstruction effort and facilitate the success of the complex political processes, including the development of the new constitution and the holding of free and fair elections. Afghans in many parts of

the country remain unprotected by legitimate State security structures. Criminal activity by armed groups has of late been particularly evident in the north, east and south, and in many areas confrontation between local commanders continues to contribute to instability.

21. During the reporting period, rivalries between factional leaders worsened in the west when the forces of Herat's Governor, Ismael Khan, clashed with those of a local commander, Amanullah Khan, in Shindand in late 2002. In January 2003, fighting broke out in the province of Badghis between forces loyal to Ismael Khan and the local Governor, Gul Mohammad.

22. In Kandahar, rivalries over local power and tribal dominance came to a head when forces belonging to the Governor, Gul Agha, from the Barakzay tribe, tried to disarm police under the command of General Akram, from the Alokozai tribe. The dispute over responsibility for law and order in the city was resolved after the intervention of tribal leaders.

23. Sporadic acts of terror continue to occur all too frequently. The worst of these in recent months was on 31 January, when a bus drove over an improvised mine near Kandahar, killing 12 passengers. In late December 2002, in Kabul, an explosive device was thrown into a car carrying two United States plain-clothed soldiers and their interpreter, injuring them. In a separate incident, also in Kabul, two Afghans were killed and two foreign aid workers were injured when a grenade was thrown into a crowd of people outside an International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) base. An ISAF national interpreter was killed on 7 March while on patrol, when an improvised, remote-controlled explosive device detonated as his vehicle passed.

24. Reports from several sources in the first months of 2003 point to increased activity by elements hostile to the Government and to the international community in Afghanistan. There were signs that remnant Taliban groups and factions loyal to Gulbuddin Hikmatyar were trying to reorganize in the south-eastern and eastern border areas. There has also been an increase in the number of attacks against the personnel and assets of international and non-governmental organizations, particularly in the border provinces of Nangahar, Khost, Kunar, Paktya, Paktika, Kandahar and Helmand. In December 2002, two grenades were thrown into the compound of the Gardez office of UNAMA, and in February 2003 an explosive device detonated outside the office in Kandahar of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and another was thrown into the office compound of the International Organization of Migration (IOM) in Kunduz. Over the reporting period there has also been a series of unexplained explosions in Jalalabad that resulted in no casualties. Attacks against coalition forces continued to occur, resulting in numerous injuries and one fatality.

25. UNAMA and United Nations agencies are taking precautionary measures to ensure the security of staff, such as limiting non-essential movements around the country. Although travel or activities have been suspended for two or three days in specific cases and places, security has not yet deteriorated to a level that would require a cessation of local operations. Security assessments will be made on an area-by-area basis, and should operations in any one area have to be curtailed, those in other areas of Afghanistan should not necessarily be affected." (UN Secretary-General 18 March 2003, pp. 7-8)

See also:

"Afghanistan: Aid organisations call for strengthened security", IRIN, 18 June 2003

"Afghanistan: NATO to take over command of ISAF", OCHA, 17 April 2003

On the Precipice: Insecurity in Northern Afghanistan, Human Rights Watch (HRW), June 2002

Some refugees returning home are forced into internal displacement (June 2003)

- Many of the remaining 600,000 IDPs are unwilling or unable to return.
- Many refugees have become internally displaced upon return to Afghanistan and are still looking for durable solutions.
- Some refugees returning from Pakistan have found that their homes were occupied by a rival ethnic group and they have been forced to set up informal settlements.
- Less than 10 percent of Afghanistan's road infrastructure is paved and some IDPs have ended up in situation of renewed displacement because they could not reach their homes areas.

"For many of the estimated 600,000 IDPs in Afghanistan, return to their homes or places of origin remains a distant dream. IDPs in Kabul city, in the north and in the west of the country are either unable or unwilling to return. In addition, there are large groups of, mainly Pashtun and Kutchi IDPs in southern provinces that are similarly unable to return to their homes in the north. UNHCR has noted that "many of the reasons that have caused people to become internally displaced in Afghanistan are similar to those that have resulted in them seeking refuge abroad. In the same vein, many of the solutions to internal displacement are similar to those for refugees." To this could be added the fact that many refugee returnees have been forced into a situation of internal displacement upon their return to Afghanistan and, therefore, are still in search of a durable solution to their displacement. Amnesty International interviewed a group of Ismaili IDPs originally from Doshi district, Baghlan province, who had returned from Pakistan in 2002 only to find their land occupied by people from a rival ethnic group. Having been prevented by threats of violence from reclaiming their land, the Ismailis have been forced to set up informal settlements on government-owned land in Pul-i-Khumri.

[...]

The security situation encountered by many returnees on the road to their place of origin or preferred destination is very precarious. Less than 10 percent of Afghanistan's road infrastructure is paved, which has meant that much of the road system is prone to flooding and often impassable during periods of rain. Much of Ghor province in the west of the country was unreachable for this reason during early 2003, and there were frequent reports of fatalities involving vehicles carrying returning refugees and IDPs being washed off the dirt track roads.

Amnesty International has also received reports of IDPs ending up in renewed displacement because of their inability to reach their villages/places of origin. In one case, a group of IDPs were forced to remain displaced within an informal settlement in Chaghcharan city, a main urban centre in Ghor province. They had been transported up to this point by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) but had then been unable to make their way to their villages due to the terrible road conditions." (AI 23 June 2003, pp. 13-14)

Natural disasters

Alarming regularity of natural disasters in Afghanistan (1998-2001)

- A severe drought has hit Afghanistan in 2000, affecting mainly the southwest but also other parts of the country.
- Between June 2000 and June 2001, it is estimated that half of the population will be affected, 3-4 million severely and 8-12 million moderately.
- The local authorities have assisted in the displacement of population away from the drought-affected areas.
- As the drought continues, it is likely that people will start to migrate to urban centres.

- On June 12, 1999 a forest fire in the Kunar province displaced 3,000 persons.
- On 11 February 1999, an earthquake struck the provinces of Wardak and Logar, affecting about 18,600 families.
- Following an earthquake on 30 May 1998, affecting the districts of Rustaq, Chah-Ab and Shar-e-Buzurg, some 4,000 persons were killed, 17,000 families affected and 16,000 homes damaged or destroyed.
- On 4 February 1998, the Rustaq district in Takhar Province was struck by an earthquake that affected 24 villages, killing about 2,300 persons and destroying around 8,000 houses.

Natural disasters occur with alarming regularity in Afghanistan. During the last three years, the country has been affected by three major earthquakes and one forest fire. The country is currently experiencing its worst drought since 1971.

"About 12 million Afghans are affected by drought, three to four million severely. The extremely low level of precipitation has destroyed almost all the rain-fed crops and decimated the livestock. The cereal deficit has exceeded 2.3 million tons, more than double that of the previous year. As the next harvest is not expected before May 2001, emergency food will be required to assist people who are dependant on rain-fed agriculture as well as other vulnerable populations. Failure to assist these people will result in large scale internal migration as well as to neighbouring countries" (OCHA 17 November 2000)

"Afghanistan is currently in the grip of the worst drought since 1971. The winter 1999-2000 witnessed much less snowfall than 1998-1999, which was itself a drought year. With both rain and snowfall down, less water is available in the rivers and in the water table. In particular, those areas at the end of water chains will be most severely affected. Unlike Pakistan, Afghanistan does not receive summer rains. It is thus probable that there will be no rain until late 2000 (if the rains do not fail again). The next chance for a normal crop from rain-fed areas will not be until 2001 because the vast majority of the cultivated land produces only one crop per year.

While initial assessments showed southwest Afghanistan to be the most affected area, it is now confirmed that the whole country has been severely affected. Long-term intervention will be required by the international community to alleviate the effects of the drought on the most vulnerable population groups. Preliminary results of the WFP/FAO crop assessment survey show that rain-fed crops in the north failed almost completely. The Central Highlands are also seriously affected.

The people most affected are rain-fed wheat producers whose crop, normally harvested between May and July 2000, has almost totally failed. These include 2.5 million rain-fed wheat farmers in northern Afghanistan. A preliminary estimate suggests that between now and June 2001 at least half of the population of Afghanistan may be affected by drought, three to four million people severely and another eight to twelve million moderately. Livestock owners, especially kochis, are the second most affected group.

The water table has been decreasing and continues to drop in all urban areas in the country because the aquifers have not been sufficiently recharged. Urban residents across the country rely largely on shallow hand dug wells for drinking water. These are increasingly going dry. Although some of the cities have piped water supply schemes, which tap into deeper aquifers, most systems have fallen into disrepair and do not cover large segments of the population. Where they have the means, people are deepening their wells. Those unable to afford this are relying on neighbours and public wells often at considerable distances from their homes. This problem is worse in rural areas, where distances to safe drinking water are long. While serious all around the country, the problem varies in intensity in different districts.

(...)

[Regarding population movements related to this drought] it should be borne in mind that kochis, as nomads, migrate every year along traditional routes. At issue during this drought stricken year is the nature

of those movements, which have in some cases occurred earlier than usual, and which, due to the widespread area of the drought, may cause more economic stress or fuel conflict among both kochi and non-kochi families. The local authorities in southern Afghanistan have assisted in the evacuation of several thousand families from the Registan areas by truck over the last four months. While benign in intention, this movement may have interrupted traditional coping mechanisms. As the situation stands, several hundred of those families have taken refuge around Kandahar City. There is also the likelihood of migration of non-kochi families. In May, there have been reports of two to three trucks of displaced people daily leaving severely drought-affected districts such as Dai Kundi and Sharistan. In particular, people who have experienced total crop failure and who have no alternative income are selling remaining household goods and leaving rural areas. They intend to migrate to the towns in search of work or to reach neighbouring Pakistan or Iran. Already, migration of people from drought affected areas is exacerbating employment problems in the southwest.

(...)

Clearly, as the drought deepens and the number of families left without assistance increases, there is a risk of population movements towards the urban centres despite the strategy to try to keep families where they are. If this occurs, it may be necessary to set up facilities to provide assistance especially in Kandahar, Mazar, Jalalabad, and Kabul. Food, shelter, and potable water will be needed for such drought-related IDPs." (UNOCHA, 1 June 2000)

A forest fire, which erupted on June 12, 1999 in the forests of the Sholake Valley in the Kunar province and was reported extinguished on 6 July, affected around 12 villages and displaced about 3,000 people. (Deutsche Presse Agentur 19 June 1999; UNOCHA 6 July 1999)

On 11 February 1999, an earthquake struck the provinces of Wardak and Logar, affecting about 18,600 families and causing massive destruction of rural homes and infrastructure over a wide area. (UNOCHA 25 February 1999)

Following an earthquake on 30 May 1998, affecting the districts of Rustaq, Chah-Ab and Shar-e-Buzurg, some 4,000 persons were killed, 17,000 families affected and 16,000 homes damaged or destroyed. The situation of the affected population was further exacerbated by the lack of appropriate shelter, water sanitation and health facilities. (UNOCHA 24 July 1998)

"In February 1998, an earthquake shook the province of Takhar in northeastern Afghanistan. Killing almost 5000 people and leaving 20,000 homeless, this was one of the most severe natural calamities to have hit Afghanistan in recent years. The situation of the survivors is exacerbated by the winter climate and remote location; and Afghanistan's civil war. Although the area of the earthquake has been largely spared the consequence of the 18-year conflict, there is no national structure left to render assistance. Supplies have been brought across front lines and across the border from neighboring countries Tajikistan. Before the earthquake, Takhar was controlled by the northern coalition opposed to the Taliban government. A temporary cease-fire enabled access for some aid agencies but it is unlikely that this will hold. Thus, victims of this natural disaster find their fate tied to the civil war, with assistance and protection compromised." (William Maley, 1998, p. 158)

Locust infestation in northern Afghanistan (May 2002)

- Most affected provinces are Baghlan, Samangan and Qunduz.
- Severe drought has fostered locust infestation in northern Afghanistan destroying thousands of hectares of land.
- More than half of the agricultural land infested in some provinces.

- 110,586 hectares covered by the WFP food-for-work programme to eliminate locusts in the Baghlan, Samangan and Kunduz provinces.
- Problem to be worse next year, with fears of about 70 percent of land in Baghlan becoming infested.

"Farmers in Northern Afghanistan are fighting a silent enemy. Afghanistan's bread basket, hit hard by three years of drought and many years of war, is finally blooming with crops and relative peace - but is threatened by hundreds of millions of locusts marching across fields and mountain slopes.

More than 200,000 hectares of farm land have been infested, with up to 70 percent of crop production and the livelihoods of some four million people at risk. Together with farmers, national plant protection experts, non-governmental organizations and international agencies FAO has launched a US\$1 million campaign to combat the worst locust plague to hit Afghanistan in the last 30 years. Out of the nine provinces, three are most seriously affected (Baghlan, Samangan and Qunduz)." (FAO May 2002)

"Locust infestation in northern Afghanistan has been "particularly bad" this year due to the ongoing severe drought, the worst in 30 years, UN officials told IRIN. "Thousands of hectares of land were destroyed, leaving many farmers without food for the next few months," Ghulam Hassan, WFP's senior assistant in the northern city of Mazar-e Sharif said. He added that the locust problem had always existed, but efforts by international agencies had been diverted to aid distribution, in response to huge food shortages in the war-torn region. UN officials said the perennial problem had been exacerbated by the dry weather, and the response had not been quick enough. The WFP regional public affairs officer, Khaled Mansour, told IRIN that "the programme was a little late, but we could not put resources in at the time".

The insects usually confine themselves to desert land between Kunduz and Baghlan, but the dry weather at the start of the year prompted them to migrate into the northern provinces in search of food. Billions of eggs hatched in March, and the locusts stayed in the area to feed off the fields. According to aid workers, more than half the agricultural land was infested in some provinces. To make matters worse this year, due to lack of seed and water brought about by the three-year drought, farmers had only planted half the land they would normally have cultivated. Moreover, many of them had enhanced their vulnerability by extending the boundaries of the land they cultivated to the edge of the desert areas already infested by locusts, Hassan said.

In March, with the help of national and international NGOs, WFP carried out a food-for-work programme to eliminate locusts in the northern region. Some 8,000 Afghan labourers worked in fields for a month, collecting locusts and burying them in ditches. This labour-intensive method was chosen as an alternative to spraying crops with chemicals, which were potentially harmful to the population. A total of 110,586 hectares were covered by the programme in the Baghlan, Samangan and Kunduz provinces, and five kilograms of wheat were distributed to the workers for each hectare cleared.

"There is lots of manpower, so this was the best option," Mansour said. He maintained that WFP's aim was to employ the local community in the interest of the farmers. "Afghanistan is not a country where farmers can be left to their own devices; they can't do it alone," he said, adding that they were hoping to repeat the programme next year to avert "a serious disaster" for the farming community.

However, WFP said the problem was far from over. "There are still pockets of locusts. It is impossible to get rid of them all," Hassan explained. This was evident in Baghlan, where only 40 percent of the locusts had been destroyed, leaving many farmers short of food. It has been predicted that the problem will be even worse next year, with fears of about 70 percent of land in Baghlan becoming infested. Hassan said billions of eggs had been laid, which were due to hatch next March, threatening to bring about an even more disastrous harvest in the summer. WFP officials say locusts lay pods, each containing about 50 eggs, and that 450 pods were found on every square metre of land this year. Hassan said it was easier to kill locusts soon after hatching when they were still wingless and unable to move fast." (IRIN-CA 28 June 2001)

Drought in its fourth year in a row (May 2002)

- Despite some rains in the north and the west, the drought will not be over at least until the Spring of 2003.
- Even though, it will take years of rain and assistance before Afghanistan fully recovers from the drought.
- The continuing threat of drought poses a serious risk for rural-urban drought displacement.

"In the summer of 2001, the United Nations World Food Program (WFP) described the three years of drought in Afghanistan as the 'worst in decades' (WFP 2001: 2). Sharp decreases in rainfall threatened Afghanistan's rain-fed agriculture sector (*lalmi*), prompted widespread losses in livestock holdings and reduced water available for irrigated agriculture (*daimi*). Meat, dairy, poultry, fruit and vegetable products have generally disappeared from the Afghan diet because of the drought, seriously exacerbating underlying vulnerability to micronutrient deficiencies, such as scurvy.

[...]

Despite encouraging spring rains in the north and the west, the drought in Afghanistan is not over and will not be at least until the spring of 2003. Even as this historical drought cycle breaks, it will take years (if not decades) of good rains and continued assistance before individuals, households and communities fully recover from the drought. In the meantime, the continuing threat of drought poses a serious risk for rural-urban drought displacement, especially in the coming summer months. Throughout Afghanistan, households have not only lost their farms and gardens, but also their ancestral orchards and vineyards, their livestock assets (cows and goats for milk, sheep and goats for wool, camels, donkeys and horses for transportation, oxen for animal traction), their savings and their wealth. Some possessions are gone forever, such as the heirlooms passed from one generation to the next, but sold in recent years because of desperate needs for cash. Families have also lost a multitude of daughters given prematurely into marriage.

Winter precipitation patterns in Afghanistan are divided into two seasons. The first season (*chellah kalan*) of gentle rains and heavy snows is believed to be the most important for replenishing aquifers and underground water catchments. This season failed in key areas of Afghanistan, most notably the mountains of the Hazarajat. This region should be snowbound from November-April in years of average snowfall. Due to the failure of the snows, roads and mountain passes (e.g., O-Nay Pass in Wardak) remained open and accessible all winter, including to 2WD taxis and mini-buses. In a 27 March interview, the Bamyan Municipality reported that the snow pack on Baba Mountain should be ten meters at key passes. This year the snows reached only twenty centimeters.

[...]

The second season of winter precipitation (*chellah khord*) is believed to consist of harder rains with a high degree of run off. This season produced reasonable amounts of precipitation in the north, west and select other areas, prompting widespread speculation by farmers (and some relief and development workers) that the drought had broken. Farmers in the north in particular have done all they can in order to plant wheat, including going even further into debt in order to finance the planting season. Where farmers were able to obtain seeds, either through relief programs or from the market, animal traction was the most important constraint on the areas sown. For example, in Sar-e-Pul only 30% of the land was reported planted despite encouraging spring rains because of a lack of adequate animal traction. Because of the lack of snow fall in the mountains it is premature to predict the end of the drought anywhere in Afghanistan." (Feinstein International Famine Center May 2002, pp. 29-32)

POPULATION PROFILE AND FIGURES

General

Who are the IDPs in Afghanistan ? (June 2003)

- Due to the continued drought, the nomadic pastoralist Kuchi currently represent the single largest IDP group, most of them located in the southern Pashtuns areas of Kandahar and Helmand province. Some Kuchis have been displaced due to human rights violations in the north and northwest and are accommodated in camps in Hirat.
- Most of the other IDPs are Pashtuns displaced by human rights violations and fear of persecution due to their real or perceived association with the former Taliban.
- Some 50,000 IDPs are considered to live in Kabul, but it is difficult to distinguish IDPs from urban poor, economic migrants and refugee returnees who have settled in Kabul and other large towns in search of employment.
- A distinction is made between principal internal displacement and secondary internal displacement in Afghanistan. The second category includes pastoral nomads, repatriated Afghans and those displaced by natural disasters.
- In defining the IDPs, it should be taken into account that some IDPs have resettled with friends or families but that they are still as vulnerable as other IDPs. Furthermore, the mobile nature of the Afghan society adds to the problem of defining who is an IDP. Nomads, for instance could sometimes be included in the IDP category.

"While the majority of drought-affected IDPs in the north and west were able to return when adequate rainfall was experienced last year and excellent rains occurred this year, in the south and southeast drought conditions continue to prevail and drought-affected IDPs, consisting predominantly of the nomadic pastoralist Kuchi, currently constitute the single largest IDP group. The largest displaced Kuchi population is currently located in the southern Pashtun areas of Kandahar and Helmand provinces. A sizable number of Kuchi are also displaced from the north and northwest and are in the Hirat camps, however, they were not displaced by drought but due to human rights violations. The remaining non-Kuchi IDPs are all protection cases, most but not all being Pashtun, who are unwilling to return to their homes in the north and northwest for fear of retribution for alleged Taliban association and/or due to human rights violations because of their ethnicity. There have been significant IDP returns in the northeast but protection problems remain in the Kunduz area.

The displaced population residing in urban areas has been difficult to define and to address their protection and assistance needs. In the greater Kabul area it is estimated there are around 50,000 persons that can be considered as IDPs. However, a considerable number have returned to Hazarjat and the Shomali plains and UNHCR's current 'active' caseload is estimated at around 15,000. It is difficult to distinguish IDPs from urban poor, economic migrants and refugee returnees who have settled in Kabul and other large towns in search of employment. In order to better understand this phenomenon an analysis of the different waves of displacement into and out of Kabul over the past two and a half decades of conflict would be helpful. While a significant number of IDPs have found at least minimal livelihoods outside of camp-like situations and survive at levels similar to the rest of the urban poor, it should be emphasized that this recent spontaneous local integration remains fragile and many urban IDPs remain vulnerable to further displacement from loss of livelihoods." (Inter-Agency Missions 19 June 2003, p. 2)

"In defining internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Afghanistan, a distinction is made between principal internal displacement and secondary internal displacement (NRC 1998):

Principal internal displacement - victims of conflict who chose to remain in Afghanistan rather than flee to neighbouring countries.(...) It also includes people displaced due to blockades that have prohibited free movement and the flow of goods. The resulting economic insecurity has forced many of these people to leave their homes. This group faces the loss of property rights, access to land and livelihoods.

Secondary internal displacement - this includes other groups, such as:

pastoral nomads, estimated in 1979 to number 800,000. Nomads normally fall outside the definition of IDPs and some nomadic groups, such as the Zala Khan Khel, opted for external exile. Others remained in Afghanistan but were prevented by land-mines and other war-related factors from exploiting traditional pastures. Some nomads have relocated to the lands and property of other displaced groups, complicating and even prohibiting the return of those with traditional rights;

repatriating Afghan refugees who returned from Pakistan and Iran between 1992 and 1993, and who have been prevented by ongoing conflict from returning to their homes; and
those displaced by natural disasters: for example, two earthquakes devastated areas in the provinces of Wardak and Logar in February 1999 destroying the homes of an estimated 100,000 people.

[...]

[But] problems arise in defining the displaced due to the following:

The difficulty in determining at what stage a person should no longer be classified as displaced. Resettlement in Kabul or with friends or relatives does not mean that coping mechanisms and self-reliance have been re-established and that the physical and psychological effects of displacement have disappeared.

The need to determine why people become displaced. A number of people leave because of the protracted nature of the conflict and their inability to feed their families. This situation is exacerbated due to the mobile nature of Afghan society discussed below. Since these people sometimes do not go far, leave in small numbers and stay with friends, they are not considered to be displaced.

Forcing a distinction between different groups such as nomads and other displaced groups. Nomads face a disruption in their means of livelihood and are not always able to resume their lives. Arbitrarily excluding nomads is rather simplistic. (WFP, October 1999)

Global figures

Between 221,000 and 600,000 IDPs as of June 2003

- As of June 2003, UNHCR figures show an "active" IDP caseload estimated at 221,000 IDPs countrywide. 38,000 in the west, 43,000 in the north, 16,000 in greater Kabul, 5,000 in the east and 115,000 in the south
- Amnesty International estimated that there are 650,000 IDPs left in the country as of June 2003.
- There is a clear need for more accurate IDP figures. One of the main problem is identifying those who have returned to urban areas and are still vulnerable.
- 1/3 of the displaced are in collective settlements or camps.

There seems to be some disagreements about the remaining number of IDPs in the country as of mid-2003. Various sources give various estimations ranging from 221,000 to 600,000.

Information gathered by an Inter-Agency mission conducted in Afghanistan during May and June seem to suggest that UNHCR -the UN agency in charge of coordinating the return and reintegration of refugees and IDPs for the past 16 months- is now considering a working figure of an 221,000 "active" IDP caseload. It isn't quite clear what the term "active" means, but it is assumed that this category only includes those in camp-like situations and excludes the many IDPs unable to return and who live in precarious conditions in the cities, namely Kabul where large number of IDPs are reportedly stuck without any solution in sight. Amnesty International in their latest report underscored the problem of sustainability of the return that occurred in 2002 and in the second half of 2003, both for returning refugees and IDPs, and stated that some 600,000 persons remained displaced.

Click [here](#) to see a UNHCR map, dated June 2003, showing the IDP caseload by district and region (pdf 440 kb) and also the related statistics on the number and location of IDPs.

"Due to the situation in contemporary Afghanistan, it has been difficult to obtain accurate numbers of returns to Afghanistan. What is clear, however, is that in stark contrast to the sizeable return from neighbouring states in 2002, the numbers of people returning to Afghanistan during spring 2003 were significantly lower, due in no small part to the conviction of many refugees that they would be unable to return in conditions of safety and dignity. UNHCR announced on 6 June 2003 that around 158,000 Afghan refugees had so far been assisted to return to their country of origin during the first five months of 2003. Of these 115,000 had returned from Pakistan, while 43,000 had come back from Iran. In the same period in 2002, UNHCR had assisted in the return of over 815,000 people. The overwhelming majority of these returns were from Pakistan and Iran, which in total continue to host over 3 million Afghan refugees. An estimated 650,000 IDPs remain displaced inside Afghanistan. Around 25,000 IDPs returned to their places of origin in the first five months of 2003. By the end of June 2002, in comparison, around 400,000 IDPs had returned to their places of origin." (AI 23 June 2003, p. 6)

"The current IDP population is estimated by UNHCR at around 300,000 of which some 200,000 remain dependent upon WFP food distribution. Of this total, approximately 50,000 are located in the west, some 40,000 in the north, around 50,000 in the greater Kabul area, and the balance of 160,000 in the south. These numbers have been substantially reduced from a peak of around one million at the time of the Taliban's ouster. Return movements are continuing, albeit at diminishing rates, from the Hirat camps and within the north. Those that have returned or locally integrated are considered to have attained at least a minimal level of self-sufficiency." (Inter-Agency Missions 19 June 2003, pp. 1-2)

"The displaced population in the south of Afghanistan, at 350,000, remains extremely high. Most of these are in the provinces of Kandahar and Helmand, where the capacity of the aid community to assist has been severely curtailed by the adverse security situation. Pushtuns are continuing to arrive in the south, fleeing harassment and violence at the hands of the other ethnic groups in the northern provinces of Faryab, Jozjan and Badghis. This displaced Pushtun population represents about 15% of the total IDP population in the south. The balance are nomadic Kuchis displaced by the drought.

The total IDP population in Afghanistan now stands at 600,000, a reduction of over half a million as compared with 2002. This reduction largely arises from an easing of the drought. Thus, around 10,000 IDPs left Maslakh and other camps near Herat in February and March for their areas of origin. However, many IDPs have indicated in recent surveys that they wish to remain in and around urban areas because of the better income-earning opportunities available." (BAAG April 2003, p. 7)

"There are an estimated 600,000 internally displaced people throughout Afghanistan, half of whom are in the southern provinces. About 220,000 of the displaced population are in collective settlements or camps throughout the country. Their main reasons of flight are drought, but there are also those who cannot return because of insecurity and/or harassment." (UNAMA 30 March 2003)

"There are approximately 480,000 internally displaced persons in Afghanistan, most of them in the south. Families generally feel compelled to move because of discrimination, extortion, taxation, drought conditions, and purely economic motives. Although the internally displaced person situation has stabilized somewhat, families are still moving from the north and other already displaced families continue to move in search of assistance. The return of internally displaced persons to their home communities will depend on an improvement in the drought-affected areas, the resolution of land disputes and political developments in the north." (UN Secretary General 18 March 2003, p. 14)

"During 1381/2002 most attention has understandably been focused on the huge scale of refugee return from the neighbouring countries. This however, substantial IDP returns have also occurred in the northern, central, western and eastern parts of the country. Concentrations of IDPs totalling in the region of 600,000 continue to be found scattered across much of southern Afghanistan, around Herat in the west, and in parts of the north.

[...]

The main areas of concentration of IDPs are in Zhare Dasht, Panjwai and other settlements in the south, Maslakh and Shaidayee camps in the west, and a number of smaller camps in the north." (TISA March 2003, p. 3/8)

Number of IDPs at the end of 2002

"[...] there are still some 700,000 IDPs throughout the country. The displacement problem is particularly acute in southern provinces, where an estimated 400,000 people are scattered after leaving their communities due mainly to the severe drought as well as ethnic tension in the north.

Regional breakdown of IDPs

North	51,000
South	413,000
Centre	124,000
East	70,000
West	66,000
Estimated total	724,000

" (UNHCR 3 January 2003)

"It is variously estimated that around five million Afghans remain displaced, either internally (some 1 million) or as refugees in neighbouring countries and elsewhere (nearly 4 million). These numbers have been generated over the past two decades in three basic phases. Whereas in the 1980s, large displacements resulted from the Soviet invasion and the ensuing war, internecine conflict was the main cause during the 1990s. Over the past four years, displacement has been a consequence of the effects of a prolonged and severe drought, that was most acute in the western and northern regions, and continuing internal conflict between Taliban and Northern Alliance forces along the north-eastern frontline and in various pockets in the central and highlands regions.

Prior to September 11, 2001, the number of IDPs was estimated by UNOCHA at some 900,000, with particularly heavy concentrations of newly displaced persons in the north and west. Their number is believed to have risen as a result of the conflict during October and November 2001 to around 1.2 million – much of the increase being experienced in the central and southeastern regions and along the Pakistan border. However, given the fluidity of the situation over the past six months, and the protracted absence of international observers, these numbers are but crude and largely unverifiable estimates.

Attempts are now underway to ascertain more reliable statistics on IDPs through registrations conducted by IOM and UNHCR and their partner NGOs. The present paucity of detailed/verifiable information on IDPs continues to constrain the planning and response capacity of humanitarian actors supporting return movements and/or providing in-situ assistance to the displaced. Furthermore, it hampers the capacity of agencies to provide timely and objective information to IDPs concerning conditions in areas of potential return.

Rapid assessment exercises and the production of detailed district profiles are currently ongoing in potential areas of return using standardized survey instruments. When completed, these assessments will generate much of the urgently required information at regional, provincial and district levels, including such data as: population numbers, places of origin, time/length of displacement, ethnic group, conditions of vulnerability, assistance needs in areas of displacement and prospects and expectations for return. However, the exercise appears to be carried out at varying intensities and sometimes with diverse methodologies and/or actors in each region." (IDP Unit-OCHA 28 March 2002, pp. 2-3)

Characteristics of displacement

"The distinction between 'conflict-induced' and 'drought-induced' IDPs is an oversimplification of Afghanistan's complex internal displacement problem. Many drought-induced IDPs may not have become displaced had conflict not undermined their normal support capacities. Moreover, the overall national food-security crisis has created widespread levels of acute vulnerability where the only survival strategy is to become 'local' IDPs at or near internationally assisted IDP camps. Indeed, one of the overriding concerns expressed by almost all humanitarian actors is the dilemma they face in providing even the most basic levels of assistance to IDPs in the knowledge that such assistance will likely create new IDPs drawn from among local vulnerable populations. This situation is compounded by the fact that in many areas IDPs are living with host families who are equally destitute and in need of assistance. Moreover, in many cases, IDPs living with host families are not included in registrations and, by extension, in food and NFI distributions.

Notwithstanding the above, an important distinction must be made between those able to return to areas of displacement caused by conflict (where mines are one of the primary constraints to return) and those that were displaced by drought (where the availability of agricultural inputs and the vagaries of climate are the primary constraint). Hence, in much of the south, southeast and central regions, returnees require a basic provision of shelter kits and mine action in their villages in order to re-establish themselves, while in the north and west, return is a much more uncertain and precarious challenge given the risk that ameliorated drought conditions may only be a temporary phenomena." (IDP Unit-OCHA 28 March 2002, p. 3)

Afghanistan Information Management Unit (AIMS)

Monitoring IDP movements and numbers in Afghanistan has proven extremely difficult for obvious reasons. The absence of systematic and complete information about IDP populations compromises the effectiveness of the assistance to IDPs. In the context of an improved UN response, the Afghanistan Information Management Service has recently been established.

"The Afghanistan Information Management Service (AIMS) is a joint venture between UNOCHA and UNDP, reporting directly to the UN Coordinator for Afghanistan. It is comprised of two components, the Humanitarian Information Center for Afghanistan (HICFA) and the Project Management Information System (ProMIS). The primary objectives of AIMS in 2002 are to support the humanitarian intervention in Afghanistan; to provide guidance to operational and strategic decisionmaking; and to mainstream effective information management practices into the reconstruction and development work of future Afghan administration and the international community." (UN 21 January 2002, p. 60)

The following documents are available on AIMS website and are updated on a regular basis:

- Raw IDP data (Excell 400 kb), click here to download the sheet (last updated in Feb 2002)
- Map showing known IDP concentrations (161 kb pdf)
- Map showing IDP population aggregated to district (149 kb pdf)
- Map showing IDP aggregated at Province level (150 kb pdf)

"Note: The information held on the AIMS database is compiled from the best available sources and is updated daily. However the database includes ONLY known point locations of IDPs that have been verified in the field and geocoded. The accuracy of this information obviously depends on the participation of partner organizations. The database does NOT include estimated positions and numbers of IDPs. As a result the database is accurate but incomplete." (AIMS)

Total number of IDPs as of mid-October 2001 and projected displacement

According to OCHA up to 1,000,000 people were displaced either by conflict or drought before the September 11 events in the U.S.

*Kabul: 100,000 IDPs
Herat and the West: 200,000 IDPs
Kanduhar and the South: 200,000 IDPs
Mazar-I-Sharif and the North: 500,000 IDPs*

At the end of September the threat of the U.S. attacks had started to trigger population movements away from most urban areas towards remote villages and border regions. Eastern and central regions have been particularly affected (OCHA 3 October 2001). As of October 19, the total number of IDPs (displaced by conflict and/or drought) is estimated at 1,160,000 (DFID 19 October 2001)

*The military campaign started on October 7 has created new population movements of uncertain scale so far. Recent reports have described increasing number of people fleeing the military strikes and arriving at Iran or Pakistan borders that only the women, children and elderly are allowed to cross. A number of camps have been set up along the borders but within Afghanistan territory to accommodate the displaced.
(Click the map below for a full scale U.S. Government map showing the IDP situation as of 29 October 2001. (pdf 296 kb))*



With the borders with all neighbouring countries being closed it is projected that over 1,000,000 persons will be further displaced bringing the total displaced population to an estimated 2,250,000 (see "Projected Displacement in and around Afghanistan - Planning figures", UNDP, 28 September 2001)

The total number of vulnerable people in need of humanitarian assistance and protection inside and outside of Afghanistan is estimated at 7,500,000 people

Populations in need of humanitarian assistance/protection
(All figures should be treated with caution)

Refugees in Iran pre-11 September	1,500,000
Refugees in Pakistan pre-11 September	2,000,000
Refugees elsewhere in region pre-11 September	195,000
New refugees in Iran since 11 September	No estimates available
New refugees in Pakistan since 11 September	20,000
New refugees elsewhere in region since 11 September	1,000
Current estimated Internally Displaced (IDPs)	1,160,000
Current estimated Internally Stranded (ISPs)	4,150,000
Subtotal	5,331,000
UN projected further IDPs/ISPs	2,200,000
Projected Vulnerable Total	7,500,000 (rounded)

Source: Department for International Development (UK), 19 October 2001

Table 1: Summary of Vulnerable Population

Regions	Currently Vulnerable			Projected Additional Vulnerable	TOTAL VULNERABLE	Refugees among the Total Vulnerable	
	IDPS	Others	Total			Refugees	Countries
North-East (Faizabad)	100,000	200,000	300,000	50,000	350,000	50,000 40,000	Tajikistan Pakistan
Central (Kabul)	100,000	900,000	1,000,000	500,000	1,500,000	320,000	Pakistan
Hazarajat (Bamyan)	60,000	600,000	660,000	200,000	860,000	30,000	Iran
North (Mazar)	500,000	900,000	1,400,000	600,000	2,000,000	30,000 25,000 100,000	Iran Turkmenistan Pakistan
South (Kandahar)	200,000	500,000	700,000	310,000	1,010,000	400,000 100,000	Pakistan Iran
West (Herat)	200,000	700,000	900,000	300,000	1,200,000	240,000 25,000	Iran Turkmenistan
East (Jalalabad)	0	350,000	350,000	250,000	600,000	140,000	Pakistan
Total	1,160,000	4,150,000	5,310,000	2,210,000	7,520,000	1,500,000	
Total Planning Figure			5,300,000	2,200,000	7,500,000	1,500,000	

Source: WFP 1 October 2001

Total number of IDPs as of April 2001: 300,000-400,000

- As of April 2001, the total number of conflict-induced IDPs is estimated to range between 300,000 and 400,000
- UNHCR estimates that 16,000 IDPs are sheltered in the ex-Soviet Embassy, another 55,000 to 60,000 spread over Kabul and approximately 50,000 IDPs in the Panjshir Valley.

The UN estimates that the total number of people displaced at the end of 2000 ranges between 600,000 and 800,000 persons and includes displacement caused by drought and conflict, (IRIN 5 March 2001 / UNOCHA 6 April 2001). The total number of conflict-induced IDPs at the end of 2000 was estimated to range between 300,000 and 400,000. (UNICEF 8 March 2001; USCR 2 February 2001; IRIN 8 February 2001). Included in the conflict-induced figures are an estimated 100,000 people displaced since 1999 such as those in Kabul, the Panjshir valley or northern Hazarajat (Office of the UN Coordinator for Afghanistan 19 January 2001)

It should be noted exact figures have been very difficult to obtain due to several reasons. Distinguishing between drought and conflict-induced displacement has not been easy especially in regions such as Mazar-e-Sharif or Kabul where both groups of victims are mixed together. Internally displaced are

integrated with host populations making identification difficult to the extent that some members of the local population have also been known to masquerade as IDPs in order to obtain assistance. The frequent movement of IDPs has also complicated estimates. (OCHA 17 October 2000)

Finally ongoing displacement and limited access to needy populations in several regions of Afghanistan (i.e. Dar-e-Suf), due to bad weather or volatile security conditions, further complicate the task of getting a comprehensive picture of the situation in terms of figures.

Total number of conflict-related IDPs in Afghanistan by region as of February 2001

Takhar and Badakshan province : 84,000 + 10,000 (Tajik-Afghan border)
Mazar-e-Sharif : 53,000
Panjshir Valley : 75,000 + 10,400 (new arrivals Takhar)
Kabul: 16,000 + 60,000
Jalalabad : 2,600
Hazarajat: 5,000

Total: 316,000 IDPs

(USCR 2 February 2001)
(Office for the UN co-ordinator for Afghanistan 19 January 2001)
(WFP 4 August 2000, 25 August 2000)
(UNHCR, 14 July 2000)
(IASC 1 December 2000)
(IRIN 8 February 2001)

"(...)straight addition shows that about 470,000 people have left their homes, the preponderance of whom are internally displaced inside Afghanistan. In addition, the totals represent only new IDPs and do not include at least 100,000 old IDPs from 1999, such as those in Kabul, Panjshir, or northern Hazarajat, or the many layers of displaced people over the years who have sought safety in Kabul. Moreover, these totals do not take into account all displacement that is likely to have occurred, such as within remote districts to other remote districts (e.g. Ghor); into urban centres but outside of camps (e.g. Herat); or into Iran. Therefore, this total number of IDPs/refugees should be assumed to be reasonably accurate for now, and if anything, on the low side." (Office of the UN co-ordinator for Afghanistan 19 January 2001)

According to UNHCR figures, the number of IDPs at the beginning of July stands as follows:

16,000 IDPs staying in the ex-Soviet Embassy compound in Kabul
55,000 to 60,000 registered IDPs in Kabul, spread out in the city, staying with relatives, etc.
Approximately 50,000 IDPs (7,568 families) in the Panjshir Valley. These figures exclude IDPs in the areas of Gulbahar, Jabulsara and Char-I-Kar (UNHCR, 14 July 2000)

Total number of IDPs at the end of 1999: 500,000-700,000

- According to USCR's estimates, the number of IDPs at the end of 1999 ranged from 500,000 to 750,000.
- UNHCR estimates that some 259,000 newly displaced persons in 1999 were still in need of aid and protection at the end of the year.
- OCHA estimates the total number of IDPs to be around 1,200,000 at the end of November.

"The number of internally displaced Afghans is unknown. In recent years, Taliban offensives in northern Afghanistan have displaced hundreds of thousands of people. Many are thought to have returned home as the lines of battle shifted from their home areas to new ones. Camps for displaced persons in Jalalabad that once housed more than 120,000 people are now closed. Yet most of Kabul's present population is displaced. A survey of Kabul's population carried out by the ICRC found that 83 percent of those interviewed had been displaced from their homes at one time or another.

During the year, more than 350,000 people were newly displaced, particularly from Bamiyan and other areas of Hazarajat (115,000), Darae Souf near Mazar-i-Sharif (50,000), the Shomali Plains north of Kabul (170,000), and Taloqan (16,000). Many of those who fled, perhaps as many as 150,000, later returned home, but some 200,000 remained displaced. Based on the number newly displaced in 1999 who were still displaced at year's end and on the number displaced in Kabul and other areas from previous years, USCR estimates the number of internally displaced persons to be 500,000 to 750,000." (USCR, June 2000)

According to UNHCR's figures, some 259,000 newly displaced persons in 1999 were still in need of aid and protection at the end of the year. (UNHCR, June 2000)

"[I]n addition to the existing concentration of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in urban areas - which are estimated at over one million - the fighting in 1999 has resulted in a further wave of displacement. Civilians have often been the direct targets of conflict and have had no option but to flee. This has meant that more than 200,000 additional people have lost their livelihoods and are reliant on either international assistance or help from fellow Afghans for their survival." (UNOCHA, UNRCO November 1999, p. 17)

Total number of IDPs at the end of 1998: 540,000-1,000,000

- The main displacement during the year occurred following fighting due to significant Taliban advances into the northern provinces.
- Based on an estimated 60,000 people outside Kabul, 360,000 people displaced in Kabul, and an estimated 120,000 displaced people living at Sar Shahi camp, USCR estimates the total number of IDPs between 540,000 and 1,000,000
- In a report on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan to the Commission on Human Rights on its 55th, it was stated that there were more than 2,000 000 internally displaced persons in the end of 1998

During 1998, the Taliban forces made significant advances into the northern provinces of Afghanistan.

"Informed observers estimate that hundreds of thousand of Afghans besides those at Sar Shahi are internally displaced, but no reliable statistics regarding them exists. [...]

The U.S. State Department's estimate of the number of displaced persons in Afghanistan was 300,000 in 1998, but other sources believed the number could be a million or more. The International Committee of the Red Cross provided relief assistance to approximately 60,000 people outside Kabul, and reported that there were about 360,000 people displaced in Kabul.

If the above 420,000 people are added to the 120,000 displaced people living at Sar Shahi camp, the minimum number of internally displaced persons in Afghanistan would be 540,000. USCR therefore estimates that the total number of internally displaced Afghans in 1998 was no less than 540,000 and as high as 1 million." (USCR 1999, p. 123)

In the report on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan to the Commission on Human Rights on its 55th session by Mr. Kamal Hossain, Special Rapporteur, it was stated that there were more than 2,000 000 internally displaced persons in the end of 1998. (Commission on Human Rights 24 March 1999, para 17)

For further information on the Massacre in Mazar-i-Sharif in August 1998, see Human Rights Watch, Afghanistan: The Massacre in Mazar-i-Sharif [External link]

Geographical distribution

Eastern region overview (October 2002)

- 68,000 IDPs registered in the eastern region, most of them in Nangarhar region.
- Majority of IDPs are returning.
- Some 5,000 IDP families still living in Hisashahi camp as of March 2002.
- Although UNHCR has started a voluntary repatriation program, many are not able to return due to security problems in the area of origin.
- Some 3,000 registered IDPs are living in Jalalabad with an additional 42,000 unregistered IDPs

"There are some 68,000 registered IDPs in the eastern region, of whom 62,000 are in the province of Nangarhar, 4,000 in Konar and 1,800 in Laghman. Aid workers say the IDPs are keen to return to their places of origin. "The IDP situation is improving in the eastern region as the trends show that the majority of people are returning," Tennant said.

Hisarshahi camp, the biggest in the eastern region, used to host up to 100,000 IDPs (15,000 families) when it was first established in 1994, following fighting between Mujahidin groups in and around the Afghan capital, Kabul. UNHCR along with international NGOs such as the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan, the Islamic Relief Agency and a local NGO, Hewad, have been assisting displaced Afghans at the camp.

In March 2002, UNHCR carried out a population survey at the camp, finding that there were nearly 5,000 families left there, of whom more than half wanted to return home. Most of them were of Pashtun ethnic origin from Kabul, Nangarhar, Laghman and Takhar.

In response to the IDPs' wish to return to their home regions, UNHCR started a voluntary repatriation programme, under which they were provided with transport, wheat and plastic sheeting. However, between 30 and 50 families were arriving at the camp every week up until May. They were from Takhar, Konduz and Baghlan provinces, where ethnic Tajiks predominate.

Although there have reportedly been some improvements in the situation for Pashtuns in these provinces, following intervention by a commission formed by Karzaï's government, and international criticism, it is likely to be some time before these families feel that the situation is sufficiently secure for them to return - if ever - according to aid workers.

There are now some 247 new families registered at the camp, with another 34 unregistered. 'Our strategy is to give them emergency assistance, but it will be limited, as this cannot continue forever,' said Tennant. She added that her counterparts in the northern city of Mazar-e Sharif were identifying the problems in Takhar, because the displaced families said they did want to return if security improved. 'A proposal for a return commission to be set up in the north has been put forward to ensure returnees' safety,' she said.

In addition to the IDPs at the camp, there are 3,000 registered IDP families living in Jalalabad city, who fled their homes over the past few years due to factional fighting and the drought. However, there are an estimated 42,000 additional unregistered IDP families in the city, of whom some 18,000 would return, according to UNHCR. The refugee agency also plans to assist these people in returning to their home provinces." (IRIN October 2002)

Southern region overview (April 2003)

- An estimated 350,000 IDPs are spread over six camps in Kandahar and Helmand province.
- IDPs are still arriving in the south due to insecurity in the north.
- Almost one half of Afghanistan's IDPs live in Southern Afghanistan.
- Many of the IDPs and returnees are concentrated in camps in the south of Kandahar province.
- The Iranian government finally closed the two IDP camps of Mekaki and Mile 46 in Nimruz province on 8 May 2002.

"There are an estimated 350,000 internally displaced persons in southern Afghanistan, most of them in six settlements in Kandahar and Helmand provinces. People are still arriving in these settlements after fleeing harassment and insecurity in the north - from Faryab, Jawzjan and Badghis provinces." (UNHCR 17 April 2003)

"Almost one half of Afghanistan's IDPs live in Southern Afghanistan, with the majority being drought displaced. A large proportion of these come from the Ethnic Kuchi population, traditionally nomadic pastoralists whose livelihoods have been decimated by the drought and conflict. Many of the IDPs and returnees are concentrated in camps in the south of Kandahar province. This includes about 40,000 people waiting in the Chaman 'no man's land' area, hoping to cross into Pakistan. They have been refused entry and it is hoped that they will be relocated to about 10 community-based settlements in Kandahar province (WFP 31/05/02). There are also estimated to be about 44,000 IDPs in five camps at Spin Boldak. The situation in the Spin Boldak camps is currently uncertain due to the withdrawal of the main NGOs from the camp. The UNHCR has stepped in for a period but suffers from its own funding constraints. The hope is that many of the camp residents will return to their areas of origin but many feel currently unable to do so as a result of continuing insecurity and loss of livelihoods. It has also been noted that there is considerable persecution of ethnic Pashtuns, which make up the majority of the IDPs in the south, and they are unlikely to return until it is clear that they are able to do so safely (UNHCR 26/06/02). The RNIS has not received any recent nutritional reports on the area but the nutrition situation is thought to be precarious.

The Iranian government finally closed the two IDP camps of Mekaki and Mile 46 in Nimruz province on 8 May 2002. The camps had been just one kilometre inside the border with Iran and were established because Iran would not open its borders to Afghans seeking refugee status. At their height, the camps housed approximately 10,500 people. The IDPs have since returned to their places of origin." (RNIS No. 38 July 2002, p. 46)

"[There are] about 7,300 families, or some 65,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Spin Boldak's five makeshift camps. The first is run by the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY). The other four are: Sheikh Abdul Rashid Al Makhdam, Islamic International Relief Organisation, Al Akhter and Al Rashid - all named after various Arab charities and individuals who are managing the camps, because the hardline Taliban rulers did not allow the UN and Western aid agencies to manage the crisis, keeping it away from the eyes of the world until their fall in mid-December.

Most of the IDPs living in these camps are Pashtun nomads and farmers from the southern Afghan provinces of Kandahar, Zabol and Nimruz, who, along with most of their counterparts throughout the country, are victims of the severe central Asian drought - well into its fourth year now. There are also IDPs in the camps from western and northern Afghanistan - places as far away as Konduz in the north." (IRIN 13 March 2002)

Western region overview (August 2002)

- It is estimated that as of August 2002, some 100,000 IDPs might be staying in 5 camps in and around Herat.
- IDPs remained inadequately informed about the voluntary nature of the return
- Taliban recruitment efforts in Herat and around have caused movements of population (among them IDPs) out of Herat.
- Severe drought has caused massive displacement in western Afghanistan in western Afghanistan, with people moving mainly to Herat where 90,000 IDPs are sheltered in 6 camps.
- 2000 IDPs arrive in Herat on a weekly basis and this flow is expected to increase with the melting of snow.

"Although the total number of IDPs in the [western] region is hard to determine, some estimate that more than 100,000 might be staying in the five camps in and around Herat after more than 80,000 of them returned to their villages - mostly in the three provinces of Herat, Badghis and Ghowr - in an International Organisation for Migration (IOM) assisted return programme over the past four months.

IOM now believes that the total number of displaced people in Maslakh, the largest displacement camp in western Afghanistan has halved from the estimated 118,000 registered in February. Earlier the population estimates there ranged from 200,000 to 300,000. IOM manages all the camps in Herat. Shaidayee, a smaller camp, housed more than 20,000 people in early July, while the Minaret camp in the centre of Herat city accommodated up to 400 families. With Rawzabagh officially closed, some IDPs continue to live in the Rawashan and city transit camps.

Conditions in the camps are not encouraging. While most of the camps have mud houses instead of tents, the stench of human faeces permeates the air. Diarrhoea and respiratory diseases are common in the crowded environment. But Maslakh, named after the once functional slaughterhouse near the camp, has always been a symbol of Afghan suffering - long before 11 September 2001.

"The overall situation has improved in the last few months, compared to the beginning of the year," Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) country manager for the western and southern regions in Afghanistan, Stefano Savi, told IRIN.

"At the beginning of the year corruption, discrimination, violence and food distribution undermined security and protection of the population, especially in the Maslakh camp," he added.

Raising further concerns, Savi said that although security improved after the changes to the management of the security and a decrease in the number of displaced, IDPs remained inadequately informed about the voluntary nature of the return. "They don't know much about their areas of origin, where enough assistance is not being provided," he said. (IRIN 16 August 2002)

"Shaidayee camp was originally established by UNHCR in October 1996 and as of March 27, 2002, had 4,588 registered families (25,149 individuals).⁵ At the time of the study (March 29, 2002), 551 families were registered as "New Arrivals" (having arrived within the last three months) in Shaidayee camp. A section of the camp was opened for new arrivals on February 10, 2002 due to overcrowding of the more established IDP camps in the area including Mazlakh and Rawza Bagh camps.

The camp, directly off of the main road going to the eastern districts of Karuch, Obbeh, and Chesht-e-Sharif of Herat Province, is in the midst of a dry desert basin without any natural water source. Water is adequately supplied to the camp by chlorinated, hand pumped ground wells. Traditional pit latrines are used by adults, however, the children continue to defecate around the camp in some of the pits made by the removal of dirt for traditional housing. The International Organization of Migration (IOM) served as camp

administrator. Médecins sans Frontières (Holland) assists on initial health screening of all new arrivals and health care for the camp population. Security is provided by the local commander Ismael Khan's militia, primarily at checkpoints at the beginning and end of the main road in front of the camp.

The older IDP section consists of traditional shelters made of sun-dried mud bricks. New arrivals have been given large IOM standard, white tents that have a zippered opening in both the front and back. All domiciles (mud huts or tents) are placed in a grid system and are well organized and mapped. Distribution centers for food and non-food items are scattered through the camp and easily accessed by dirt roads. The main road in front of the camp has a bus stop for buses coming and going to other provinces as well as into Herat city. A bazaar has been established along this road by some of the IDPs where fruits, vegetables, candy, music cassettes, clothes, and other various items are sold." (PHR April 2002)

For more detailed information at the district level, see UNHCR Sub-Office Western Region District Profiles for the following provinces: Badghis, Farah, Hirat

Central region overview (October 2002)

- No IDP camps in central Afghanistan, most are in urban areas, mainly Kabul.
- 170,000 left in the central region according to UNHCR

"In central Afghanistan, there are no longer any camps for IDPs, most are now squatting wherever they can find a desolate building in urban areas like the capital, Kabul. [...]"

The two main camp in the region now stand empty. IDPs voluntarily left them - one in the Panjshir valley and the other at the former Soviet compound in Kabul - to return to their places of origin, according to UNHCR.

According to the refugee agency, in the central region there was now a trend for IDPs and refugees to return to their areas of origin, unless their homes were located in insecure places or drought-affected areas. However, aid workers say displacement could continue. 'If there is continuing displacement, it will be towards the end of the year when people run out of food in areas where the harvest and crop was bad,' Felipe Camargo, head of the UNHCR central region sub-office in Kabul, told IRIN.

UNHCR carried out a survey in the central region at the start of 2001 to determine the amount of food assistance needed for IDPs, and established that there were about 347,000 IDPs, most of them in Kabul. Of these some 242,000 were expected to go home, Camargo said. Following the most recent count, UNHCR concluded there were around 170,000 IDPs left in the central region. Camargo said there were still serious concerns over the conditions the IDPs were living in. 'Water and sanitation are our key concerns,' he said, noting that many IDPs were occupying houses in Kabul demolished during fighting and unfit for habitation.

Raising the point that large numbers of refugees were returning to the central region, he said there could be further displacement if more houses were not built. 'The population of Kabul is expected to double in the next year or so, and there is an urgent need for the international community to realise this,' he said. 'Without proper housing Kabul will be full of slums in a very high earthquake-prone area.' Shelter, he said, was the number-one priority. 'Only after providing shelter can we think about giving them access to education and health.' " (IRIN October 2002)

For more detailed information at the district level, see UNHCR Sub-Office Central Region District Profiles for the following provinces: Bamyan, Ghazni, Kabul, Kapisa, Logar, Parwan, Wardak

Vulnerable groups

Kuchis IDPs, the largest of Afghanistan's displaced population, need alternate solutions (June 2003)

- Kuchis represent some 80% of the current displaced population, most of them were displaced by drought and loss of livelihood..
- Return of the displaced Kuchis to the desert is very unlikely in the near future.
- Their nomadic lifestyle raises the question of where they have their "area of origin".
- Any return movements would first require rebuilding their herds.
- Drought has turned nomads or Kuchis into beggars and IDPs.
- Early 1980's Afghanistan's nomadic population was estimated to be 2.5 million, scattered across the country in almost all the provinces.
- Drought and insecurity have disrupted the migration routes, destroyed pasture and decimated livestock herds, leaving the Kuchi not just without livelihoods but bringing to an end a traditional way of life, with the majority being forced to settle in makeshift camps along major highways.

"The displaced pastoralists, and others displaced by drought and loss of livelihoods, are by far the largest of Afghanistan's displaced population, constituting about eighty percent of the current IDP population. There are two Kuchi groups who have been most affected. The first migrate in and around the Registan desert in the southern part of Kandahar and Helmand provinces while the second migrate between the mountainous areas of the interior during the summer and the lower valleys during the winter. The first group are the largest and most vulnerable group as their potential return to the desert is, for the majority, unlikely in the foreseeable future. In addition, they are not regarded by either the local authorities or local populations as part of the communities among which they are currently displaced. Indeed, some authorities claim that many of the Registan Kuchi have closer ties to Pakistan and thus should seek assistance on the other side of the border. Such claims highlight the question of where do nomadic pastoralists have their 'areas of origin'.

Given that the greater majority of the displaced Kuchi have lost all their livestock, and that their traditional livelihoods were wholly dependent upon these animals, any return movements would first require rebuilding their herds. While return to normal rainfall conditions, the replenishment of water tables and the rehabilitation of wells will be important precondition for a return to pastoral livelihoods in the south, any major re-stocking programme would be a very expensive undertaking. It might also be a technical problem as some experts suggest that there would not be enough healthy female animals in the region. Thus, unless support and services can be provided to rebuild their traditional livelihoods and return to a nomadic existence, alternate solutions will need to be found so that a large majority of Kuchi not remain 'internally stuck' at their present locations." (Inter-Agency Missions 19 June 2003, p. 10)

"Afghan nomads or Kuchis, once a proud community of herd raisers and merchants, have been turned into destitute farmers, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and beggars by the ongoing drought in the region.

[...]

Habibullah Rafi, director of the Afghanistan Cultural Centre in Pakistan's northwestern city of Peshawar told IRIN that nomads were an important part of Afghanistan's ethnic patchwork. 'These livestock raisers have a considerable share in shaping the history and society of the country. These sturdy have their areas of origin but they move, chasing pastures and water in different weathers,' he said.

In the early 1980's Afghanistan's nomadic population was estimated to be 2.5 million, scattered across the country in almost all the provinces. Hundreds of thousands of them are desperately trying to preserve their way of life during the fourth year of the worst regional drought in living memory.

Many fail and end up trying to get work as labourers in areas such as Helmand and Kandahar where irrigation allows crops to grow. Those without work beg on the dusty streets of the region's towns. Traditionally nomads depend on livestock raising but they also engage in trade along ancient migratory caravan trails east and north of the central Hindu Kush mountains." (IRIN 20 March 2002)

"A minority group that has generated considerable concern is the Kuchi, traditional traditional nomads who follow traditional livestock migration routes in search of grazing. The drought and insecurity have disrupted the migration routes, destroyed pasture and decimated livestock herds, leaving the Kuchi not just without livelihoods but bringing to an end a traditional way of life, with the majority being forced to settle in makeshift camps along major highways." (ACC/SCN July 2001 pp. 42-43)

Displaced women are extremely vulnerable (June 2003)

- Unaccompanied women and female-headed households have found it particularly hard to eke out a living upon their return
- Displaced women without shelter are more vulnerable to the severe Taliban restrictions on freedom and rights of women.
- Since women are defined by their relationship to a male member of their family, displaced females who have no male relative present are particularly vulnerable.
- Close male relative offer protection to displaced women by marrying them.
- Displaced women tend to form groups to survive but traditional Afghan society views unattached women, especially those living together, as sinful.

"Unaccompanied women and female-headed households have found it particularly hard to eke out a living upon their return. Farah returned to Mazar-i-Sharif in February 2003 along with her four children. Her husband was dead, and she was finding it very hard to support her children with the little money she got from doing odd jobs such as sewing. A group of Hazara women living as IDPs on the outskirts of Mazar-i-Sharif stated that their husbands had very insecure access to wage labour in the city, as a consequence of which they were unsure whether they would have enough money to buy food for the family from one day to the next. Situations of vulnerability are heightened when, as is the case with several families in contemporary Afghanistan, one man is the sole supporter of up to five female-headed households. These are usually female relatives whose husbands have either died or gone missing (most of the latter have lost contact with their families after having gone in search of employment). The access of one man to employment, therefore, in many cases has a direct bearing on the security and well being of several women and their children." (AI 23 June 2003, pp. 24-25)

"The Taliban government has imposed a strict version of *Sharia*, Islamic law, on the country, prohibiting a wide range of public activities. Many of these prohibitions are particularly designed to restrict the freedoms and rights of women. Under this interpretation of Islamic law, women are prohibited from most jobs, often from going to school and, in some cases, from leaving the home. Women who violate these restrictions can be punished severely and their families held responsible for their behaviour. Women must be veiled in public and must restrict their movements outside their homes. Displaced women who have no shelter in which to maintain their privacy are doubly disadvantaged.

Even before *Sharia* was imposed, the patriarchal society of Afghanistan required that women depended on close male relatives to survive. Now, women are not allowed to appear in public with men who are not close relatives. This restriction has created particularly severe problems for widows who have no male family members to help or protect them. Since women are defined by their relationship to a male member of their family, displaced females who have no male relative present, either because the men stayed behind, were arrested, or were killed are particularly vulnerable. A widow's brother or close male relative of her deceased husband will often protect her by marrying her, as men are permitted four wives under Islamic law. This form of protection has increased among the displaced population and among Afghan refugees, though it is by no means a complete solution to women's considerable problems.

The Taliban also interpret Islamic Law to forbid unrelated men and women from being in close proximity. This has led to problems with males trying to help displaced women. In 1998, three women and their three children, all suffering severe malnutrition, were attempting to drive to a feeding centre where they could receive food. Their van was stopped at a Taliban checkpoint and the male driver was taken and badly beaten for having allowed one of the mothers to sit in the front seat. The mothers and their children were forced from the vehicle. They never reached the feeding centre (Shorish-Shamley, 2001).

In an effort to help themselves, women gather informally in groups, or cooperatives. These groups are modeled on the traditional living arrangements in Afghan society, where women live much of their lives apart from men in groups related by birth or marriage. In the traditional household compounds, sisters, sisters-in-law, mothers, grandmothers, daughters, and, in some cases, multiple wives form tight bonds and develop informal networks outside the home.

Displaced women in desperate situations form similar bonds. In these groups of unrelated women, food and other resources are shared and labour is divided: some women look after children while other women search, or beg, for food. Since women beyond their childbearing years are somewhat freer to move around in public, they represent the group in society. Some groups number only a few women; others can include more than two dozen people, including children.

These groupings can, however, be the source of new problems: traditional Afghan society views unattached women, especially those living together, as sinful. They are assumed to be prostitutes. Why else, the traditional thinking goes, would they have no men with them? While there have been reports of prostitution among displaced women, evidence suggests that it is a rare occurrence." (Farr, G. 1 September 2001 pp. 132-135)

PATTERNS OF DISPLACEMENT

General

Pashtuns fleeing the ethnic tensions in the north and Kuchis fleeing the drought end up as displaced in the south (October 2002)

- Half of the 60,000 IDPs living around the town of Chaman fled the drought and the warfare in the south, most of them are Kuchis, while the other half fled ethnic tensions in the north and are Pashtuns.
- A few tens of thousands managed to get through to Pakistan where they were hosted in refugee camps.
- Some 25,000 could not cross the border and were stuck in a no man's land, on the border but on the Pakistani side.
- Another 35,000 are dispersed over 5 camps around Spin Boldak and are IDPs.

"Since October 2001, over 60,000 Afghans have been living around the town of Chaman on the southern Pakistan-Afghan border. Half of them fled because of the drought and the warfare in the south. Many of these are Kuchis. The other half comes from the north. These are Pashtuns, trying to escape the ethnic tensions that erupted shortly after the war against terrorism began. Uzbeks and Tajiks took revenge on the local Pashtuns because they suspected them of supporting the Taliban. The Pashtuns fled towards the south, where their tribe is in the majority, and ended up in the border area along with the Kuchis; looking for help and protection.

The first group, a few ten thousand, were lucky. Though Pakistan had officially closed the border it was still allowing a lot of Afghans through. These were taken to various official refugee camps on the Pakistani side of the border, where they received the help they were entitled to. MSF runs health programs in two of these camps: Rhogani and Lande Karez.

Another group of around 25,000 Afghans were less fortunate when they attempted to cross the border at Chaman in February 2002. They were stopped and since then have been stuck in a piece of no man's land, practically on the border but just on the Pakistani side. They have been living in a chaotic camp where it took a long time to organize assistance. MSF was present there from the very start to provide the people with medical support (vaccinations, basic healthcare) and to tackle malnutrition among the children.

Then, there is a third group of some 35,000 Afghans on the Afghan side of the border, dispersed over five camps around Spin Boldak, near Chaman. As they are still inside Afghanistan, they are not official refugees but internally displaced persons. MSF runs a health clinic in Spin Boldak." (MSF 7 October 2002)

See also:

"AFGHANISTAN: IDPs continue arriving in the south", IRIN, 15 April 2003

"AFGHANISTAN: Special report on displaced people in the south", IRIN, 19 February 2003

Human rights abuses and lack of food distribution force people to flee in the west to Herat (April 2002)

- Since January 2002 a large influx of long-term IDPs have fled to the Herat province in Western Afghanistan from Ghor, Baghdis, Faryab, Farah, and Balkh provinces.

- Most recent IDPs have fled their home villages due to lack of food distribution and the need for emergency assistance, while others-especially Pashtuns-have fled abuses and persecution.

"Despite measures to protect civilian populations, over the last three months a large influx of long-term internally displaced persons (IDPs) have fled to the Herat province in Western Afghanistan from Ghor, Baghdis, Faryab, Farah, and Balkh provinces, and have settled in Shaidayee IDP camp on the outskirts of Herat city. According to UNHCR, many of the IDPs reported that they fled their home villages due to lack of food distribution and the need for emergency assistance. Others, especially Pashtuns, also reported that abuses had occurred in Pashtun villages in many Provinces in the Western Region." (PHR April 2002)

People flee the main cities to seek refuge in rural areas in fear of U.S. bombing (October 2001)

- Unknown number of people have fled the main cities in fear of U.S. reprisals.
- UNHCR estimated that up to 2.2 million people could be displaced inside Afghanistan by March 2002

"Population flows outside of Afghanistan are still limited in numbers. Many reports indicate that a growing number of people are moving towards rural areas, but the UN does not have confirmed figures at this time" (OCHA 10 October 2001)

"During the first half of 2001, IDP camps sprang up in the vicinity of almost every bigger city of Afghanistan. Hardest hit were Herat, Kabul and Mazar, but even smaller centres started having IDP camps, places where hungry families hoped to be more visible and accessible by aid agencies. Estimates go up to 2,000,000 IDPs uprooted from rural areas all over Afghanistan. It is also known that impoverished urban dwellers resorted to shift their homes from urban slums to IDP camps in order to obtain food.

In the first days and weeks after the 11th of September, there are speculations that many of these IDP camps were left by a part of their inhabitants. There was great initial fear of being too close to urban targets of an American military attack, but there was also little reason to stay in IDP camps with aid agencies having sharply reduced or even stopped their food distribution. In September, UNOCHA's compiled data indicated 1,160,000 internally displaced. The events of the last days may have triggered further movements from urban to rural areas.

All internal movements are very difficult to predict. If, on one hand, the fear for the air-strikes is pushing people towards rural areas, on the other hand, the effects of widespread hunger may also cause short distance movements of weak village people in the opposite direction, hoping to find access to food in nearby towns.

Completely unpredictable are movements caused by fighting between opposition and Taliban troops and by the notorious habit of looting once combatants are leaving or taking over cities and villages. There is fear that disintegrating Taliban militias will also be increasingly out of control of Taliban commanders." (Intersos 10 October 2001)

"Initially, the threat of a US-led military strike on Afghanistan and increased Taleban repression caused hundreds of thousands of people to flee their homes, particularly in major cities. A quarter of the population of Kabul and half the population of the southern Afghan province of Kandahar, the headquarters of the Taleban, were said to have evacuated. Prior to the threat, large numbers of people were not fleeing these cities. The already large number of internally displaced persons was estimated to have grown to a total of 1.1 million, which the UNHCR predicted could rise to 2.2 million internally displaced persons by March 2002. While reports indicated that many of those who had left cities have been returning, the huge number

of Afghans who were displaced prior to the events of 11 September remain displaced and in great need of assistance." (AI 9 October 2001)

The pattern of displacement follows the pattern of fighting (September 2001)

- Early 1990s many fled Kabul in fear of reprisal and settled around Mazar-i-Sharif and Jalalabad while others fled the provinces to Kabul for the same reasons.
- Mid-1990s, people moved north to flee Taliban advances.
- In 1996 Taliban captured Jalalabad and Kabul and people, mostly non Pushtun, fled both cities to seek refuge around Mazar-i-Sharif.
- July 1998 Taliban captured Mazar-i-Sharif and massacred civilians and displaced from the Hazara ethnic group.

"The pattern of displacement follows the pattern of fighting. In the early 1990s, after the marxist government fell and the resistance militias returned to Afghanistan, those who feared reprisal from these groups, largely because of complicity or suspicion of complicity with the Marxist government, fled the capital. With the Pakistani border closed, many who were displaced from Kabul went north to the area around Mazar-i-Sharif or south to Jalalabad, where large camps were set up for the displaced. During this period, many people from the provinces who feared retribution flooded into Kabul.

By the mid-1990s, when the Taliban movement began to expand out of the Kandahar area, displaced people moved north, fleeing the Taliban advance. As the Taliban approached Kabul in 1995, people again fled the capital, only to return shortly thereafter when the Taliban forces were temporarily defeated. But in September 1996, the Taliban captured Jalalabad, a principal city and the site of two large camps for the displaced. Most of these people were forced to move again. In the following weeks, the Taliban pushed into Kabul. The capital, and thus the government of Afghanistan, fell to Taliban control on 27 September 1996 and a mass exodus out of the capital ensued.

Those who fled Kabul in the autumn of 1996 were largely non-Pushtun minorities who feared retribution from the Pushtun-based Taliban. With the southern and eastern parts of Afghanistan under Taliban control, many of those fleeing Kabul moved north into the Tajik areas or to the Uzbek area around the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif.

After capturing Kabul, the Taliban forces continued to press north creating another wave of displacement. Displaced persons, now mostly Tajiks, were forced to continue to flee north, although some sought refuge in Kabul itself. By July 1998, the Taliban forces took the city of Mazar-i-Sharif.

The capture of Mazar-i-Sharif had great strategic and symbolic importance. The city had become the headquarters of the Taliban opposition and was an important stronghold for non-Pushtun groups. Its capture meant that Taliban forces controlled almost all of Afghanistan. After Mazar-i-Sharif was captured, Taliban forces massacred thousands of civilians including many displaced persons, who were members of the Hazara ethnic groups.

The displaced populations in Afghanistan now have very few options. The main escape routes to the south and east are under Taliban control and the borders into Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan are closed. Although some have fled west to the city of Herat, that city is also under Taliban control. Some have voluntarily moved to Kabul to live with relatives; others have been forcibly relocated by the Taliban, to compounds in the capital. The few areas not under Taliban control are the Tajik areas in the north-east and in the high central mountains of the Hazarajat. Yet even in these areas, the Taliban are slowly gaining control." (Farr, G. 1 September 2001 pp. 123-126)

Four major patterns of displacement (October 1999)

- The momentum of displacement increases with the fear and terror that follows each fighting.
- Collective fear, fear of reprisal, house-to-house search, checking operations, recruitment of young conscripts cause people to move.
- Recently, in the Panjshir Valley, evacuation preceded the attacks.
- The areas most affected by displacement are the strategically important ones
- Over the last 20 years, 4 major patterns of displacement have emerged: movement towards the mountains nearest to the area abandoned; refuge to major cities; refuge in Pakistan and refuge in Iran

"By tradition Afghans are a highly mobile people. The current patterns of displacement accentuate the normal patterns of movement and as a consequence there is now continuous movement in and out of the Panjshir Valley, both northeast towards Pakistan and southwards. Even within the context of the mobile Afghan society, the major population shifts experienced over the past 20 years represent a significant state of disruption. Though the events resulting in mass movements of people may differ from place to place, the root cause of displacement is conflict. During the Soviet occupation the most immediate and obvious cause was the bombing of villages and the destruction of harvests, livestock and, of course, people. Although often people do not flee at first, the momentum of mass movement increases with the fear and terror that follows each event. In some cases it is collective fear which causes people to move, fear of reprisals following a resistance operation, house-to-house searches, checking operations, recruitment of young conscripts, punitive operations conducted by both sides, and the taking of young girls. In the most recent offensives in the Panjshir Valley, a repeat of 15 years ago, village evacuation, sometimes forced, precedes bombardment or attack. The areas most affected are strategically significant: towns, lines of communication and military strongholds where entire valleys (the Panjshir) or mountain areas (the central mountains of the Hazarajat) are affected.

During the 20 years of displacement, four major patterns of internal movement have developed: movement towards the mountains nearest to the area abandoned; refuge to major cities such as Kabul, Jalalabad and Herat to regions in the southeast; refuge in Pakistan; and, for populations in the southwest, refuge in Iran." (WFP, October 1999)

PHYSICAL SECURITY & FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

General

Protection is largely dependent on social networks (March 2003)

- Fundamental protection is dependent on personal and social networks.
- Generally speaking, it is necessary for Afghans to have relatives in the area where they wish to settle.
- Women are unable to move without having male relatives, also they have no protection
- Irrespective of their ethnicity, if a person lacks personal or social networks, he/she is at risk of being assaulted or harassed
- No responsible government to which the IDPs can appeal for protection.
- IDPs to rely on hiding or fleeing or seeking protection with resistance commanders.

"UNHCR, Kabul said that fundamental protection is dependent on personal and social networks.

The source advised that the availability of networks in the form of relatives is vital for a person's ability to live in a given area. The source said that Pashtuns from northern Afghanistan had tried to settle in Pashtun villages in other areas of the country, but that they had not been accepted by the local population. The villages are closed units, and no outsiders can settle in the rural areas, whereas the situation in the town is different. In larger cities the need for relatives in the area where people wish to live is not quite as strong. But the source stressed that generally speaking, it is necessary for Afghans to have relatives in the area where they wish to settle. This is even more so for women. Women are unable to move without having male relatives. Even the UNHCR cannot move locally employed women from other areas to better positions in Kabul, unless they have male relatives in Kabul with whom they can live.

The source believed that it might be possible for large families with a number of males to move to places, where they do not already have relatives or clan members. For families, where the head of the family is female, this option does not exist.

An international source said that the old patterns, enabling families to protect each other, have been upset, because so many people have been displaced and because of the economic situation, which makes it impossible for them to provide protection due to poverty. This means that the families with a female sole provider - widows - or children living alone, now have no protection.

In the towns a network in the neighbourhood is necessary in order to get protection. As regards personal networks in the town, many of the people who have returned - and who do not have a network - are especially at risk of being raped and assaulted. But it is even worse in the rural areas - particularly for women. The source mentioned that there are particularly vulnerable groups who are the subject of injustices irrespective of their ethnicity, but where the actual reason appears to be the person's lack of network. In this connection the source pointed out that it is a misconception that there has been a change in this situation just because the Taliban has been defeated.

Concerning the importance of networks, DACAAR said that persons/families without networks are extremely vulnerable and exposed. There is no judicial or police protection in the country, only personal networks. Even though many people have fled Afghanistan, there are still networks. Even a network spread over several countries - where a person has male relatives in other countries - may be effective and provide

protection against e.g. harassment and arranged marriages, if it is known that there are male family members who, although living abroad, are able to exert influence in such situations." (DIS March 2003, pp. 39-40)

"In the last 25 years of fighting, over two million people have been killed in Afghanistan, most of them civilians. There are few sources of protection for displaced persons. There is no responsible government to which the displaced can appeal and the presence of international agencies is limited. Those agencies that have been able to operate in Kabul have called upon the Taliban government to protect internally displaced persons, but those calls have, in general, been poorly received. The Taliban are not the only threat to security, however. Guerrilla groups have also been involved in killing and harassing Afghan citizens.

Since the displaced are largely unarmed civilians, they must either rely on hiding or fleeing, or seek protection with sympathetic resistance commanders. By agreeing to side with either the Taliban government or one of the various resistance groups, the displaced can win some measure of protection. To some degree, a displaced person's choice of protective political group depends on his ethnic background. The Pushtun have generally sided with the Taliban, and the non-Pushtun groups—the Tajik, Uzbeks, and Hazara—have sided with groups hostile to the Taliban. Many non-Pushtun groups have also joined the Taliban, but it is unclear whether this choice was made freely or not." (Farr, G. 1 September 2001 pp. 131-132)

Government's main protection issues for returnees (March 2003)

"Protection of returnees is the primary responsibility of TISA, with MoRR playing a major role in this area. The development of national protection capacities is a priority concern, so assistance will focus on strengthening local capacity and structures for the development and implementation of national legislation. To do so, the Government will rely on UNHCR's expertise and international protection mandate.

Main protection issues:

- (a) the right to return to places of returnee and IDP choice, without prejudice to their ethnic origin, religion or political affiliation;
- (b) the unity of the family;
- (c) the transfer and or recovery of personal assets;
- (d) special assistance and protection measures for vulnerable returnees;
- (e) mine awareness;
- (f) non forceful military recruitment; and
- (g) the respect of the rule of law (amnesties, recuperation of land ownership, personal documentation, detention cases, etc)." (TISA March 2003, p. 8)

U.S. "warlord strategy" shows protection of human rights is not a priority (December 2002)

- Continuing power of warlords put human rights at risk
- US has implemented a "warlord strategy" to relieve it from its security and human rights responsibilities.
- Local and regional military commanders and their troops regularly abuse the human rights of those Afghans living in areas under their control
- Beyond Kabul poor security, generalized criminality, and limited regard for basic human rights have marked the year since the signing of the Bonn Agreement.

- Vulnerable women and minorities, displaced persons, Afghans who stand up to abusive warlords have virtually no one to turn to.
- US blocked proposals by Afghan leaders, including President Hamid Karzai, and the United Nations, for an expanded ISAF to patrol the countryside

"In the area of human rights (as in many other areas), the primary problem is the continuing power of Afghanistan's warlords. When the U.S. confirmed its commitment to the future of Afghanistan, it spoke about the primacy of democratization and human rights. Yet its actions have shown this commitment to be shallow. After the overthrow of the Taliban, it employed a "warlord strategy" in order to relieve it of its security and human rights responsibilities.

Although the Taliban had effectively unified the military command of most of the country, and thereby undermined the country's endemic military feudalism, the United States and others helped to reestablish this system as part of their strategy for removing the Taliban from power, while Afghanistan's neighbors, particularly Iran, strengthened their local proxies. These regional and local military commanders, many of whom still receive arms, money, and political support from the United States and some of Afghanistan's neighbors, filled the vacuum created by the overthrow of the Taliban. In the past year, most of these warlords have become more, not less, entrenched in power.

Warlords now represent the primary threat to peace and stability in the country. As Human Rights Watch and other groups have documented throughout the year since the signing of the Bonn Agreement, local and regional military commanders and their troops regularly abuse the human rights of those Afghans living in areas under their control. This is no surprise, since many are the same men who helped perpetuate war in Afghanistan for more than twenty years, systematically violating the human rights of millions of Afghans in the process.

In Kabul, the security and human rights situation has improved markedly, largely because of the introduction of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the heavy international presence in the capital. But beyond Kabul poor security, generalized criminality, and limited regard for basic human rights have marked the year since the signing of the Bonn Agreement. Each of these factors has in turn negatively affected reconstruction efforts and the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Travel on many roads remains unsafe from extortion by local soldiers or criminals (often one and the same). Outside Kabul, U.N. officials often have little ability to protect persons at risk of human rights abuses. Vulnerable women and minorities, displaced persons, Afghans who stand up to abusive warlords, and even Afghan government officials have virtually no one to turn to when their lives or safety are threatened.

The power of the warlords has made it impossible for the Afghan Transitional Administration to establish its authority much beyond Kabul. It has also hindered any discernible progress in making the transition from a militarized to a genuinely civilian government. In this environment, even U.N. officials monitoring human rights violations, compliance with the Bonn Agreement, and disarmament of local military forces, have had serious difficulties carrying out their duties.

Nations that promised to assist in strengthening stability and security in Afghanistan—chief among them the United States, but including the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, Turkey, Germany, the Netherlands, and Italy—have not adequately addressed the security and human rights problems caused by the continued dominance of Afghanistan's warlords. The United States blocked proposals by Afghan leaders, including President Hamid Karzai, and the United Nations, for an expanded ISAF to patrol the countryside and act as a deterrent to renewed fighting and human rights abuses by warlords and their subordinates. The solution offered by the U.S., to have warlords provide security outside of Kabul while the international community trains a future Afghan army, has proven to be a failure.

The protection of human rights and the creation of a secure environment for Afghans should be part of a mutually reinforcing effort to rebuild Afghanistan. Yet some have conflated security with political stability, and framed political stability and human rights as competing goals—a zero sum game. This is wrong. While there are occasional short-term tradeoffs, experience and lessons learned elsewhere have made it clear that sustainable improvements in security and human rights are mutually reinforcing.

Confronting the warlords is a major challenge. It requires a strong international commitment and a variety of sophisticated strategies. Efforts need to be made to sever the patron-client relationships that create loyalty to local—instead of national—leaders and institutions. For example, Afghan leaders and donors need to devise training and job programs (which could be part of the national reconstruction effort) that will be more attractive to young men than life as a soldier in the army of a warlord.

Yet there is little apparent commitment within the international community to engage in these efforts. The Afghan Transitional Administration is not powerful enough to confront the warlords on its own. It needs the sustained and genuine commitment of the United States and others to do take on the warlords. This will require a substantial, if necessarily phased, expansion of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), many more U.N. human rights monitors, and the assistance of U.S. and other external armed forces inside Afghanistan.” (HRW 5 December 2002, pp. 1-3)

AI concerned about the protection needs of IDPs stranded at the Chaman border (July 2002)

- AI is concerned about the lack of opportunity for IDPs in Chaman and Spin Boldak camps to seek international protection.
- AI contends that return of refugees and IDPs to places other than their previous homes because their homes remain insecure leads to problems relating to reintegration, sustainability and security.

“In early May 2002, elders representing some of the communities at the Chaman border reportedly agreed to return to Afghanistan, either to their home villages or to an IDP camp near Kandahar, after meeting with a tripartite task force from the Afghan Interim Administration, the Pakistan Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees and UNHCR. Shortly after this, UNHCR began assisting IDPs from Spin Boldak, near Chaman, to return to home villages near Kandahar and helped approximately 150 refugees return to Afghanistan from the Chaman border camp. Although UNHCR is advising returning IDPs and refugees on the conditions for return to home areas in Afghanistan, Amnesty International is concerned about the lack of opportunity for individuals in these makeshift border camps to seek international protection. It is not sufficient to provide them only with the option of return to home areas within Afghanistan or transfer to IDP camps without a proper interview process to establish if protection needs are being met and providing the possibility of refugee status.

Amnesty International considers that return to a place which is not the previous home of the refugee or IDP must be based on a free and informed choice, should not arise from obstacles to return to the place of origin, is sustainable and does not interfere with the rights of others. Return of refugees and IDPs to places other than their previous homes because their homes remain insecure leads to problems relating to reintegration, sustainability and security. Property disputes can ensue, as well as rapid and unsustainable urbanization. Meaningful prospects for earning a livelihood can be limited and political instability can be exacerbated.” (AI July 2002, pp. 9-10)

Reports of increasing problems of insecurity underscore need to raise awareness of the needs of IDPs (March 2002)

- The underlying causes of displacement are still at play with reports of increasing insecurity throughout the country.
- Pashtuns minorities and Uzbek minorities have reportedly been harassed and have fled their villages.
- There is a risk of upsurge of ethnic tensions that might eventually spread to minorities throughout the country.
- Minorities may become apprehensive about returning to areas dominated by other ethnic groups.
- IDP Unit proposes that UNAMA establishes and sustains a capacity to monitor, document and map all local conflicts, tensions and human rights violations as a prerequisite for preventing displacement and ensuring rapid remedial response.
- Focus of the humanitarian intervention in Afghanistan should be on helping the return of IDPs and refugees in safety and dignity.
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"Whereas the current environment in Afghanistan, including the commitment to peace and democracy by the Interim Administration and the international community's support to this process, provides the foundations for an end to displacement and exile, some of the underlying causes of displacement have yet to vanish completely, whilst others remain latent or are even at risk of re-emerging. Hence, there is still a need to promote among national, regional and local authorities a basic understanding of the Guiding Principles on IDPs in order to raise awareness of the special needs and human rights of IDPs.

During the past three months there have been reports of increasing problems of insecurity in several areas which has resulted in looting, diversion of assistance in camps to non-beneficiaries, rapes, and other forms of serious human rights violations. In particular, ethnic Pashtun minorities in the northern and western provinces have been singled out. This has resulted in scores of Pashtun families fleeing their villages and seeking protection in Pashtun majority areas in southern and central Afghanistan or even attempting to cross into Pakistan. There are also recent reports of some Uzbek being harassed in Pashtun areas.

These incidents have produced a significant wave of fresh displacements during the tenure of the Interim Administration, and, as such, are a cause for much concern. What may be interpreted by some as ominous yet isolated acts of revenge for perceived past violations under the Taliban, are now at risk of triggering an upsurge of ethnic tensions that might eventually spread to minorities throughout the country. Consequently, unless immediate and forceful preventive and remedial measures are applied, minorities may become apprehensive about returning to areas dominated by other ethnic groups.

It is encouraging, therefore, that the Interim Administration is addressing the matter through the establishment of a high level commission to investigate and resolve these incidents. Moreover, the Mission supports the call made by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights during her recent visit to Afghanistan, for the deployment of ISAF troops beyond Kabul, and in particular to areas of ethnic tension and/or potential internecine conflict, as a deterrent measure to prevent further displacement.

It is noteworthy that in most peace-building and reconstruction operations, demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration (DDR) is an integral part of recovery and building trust and reconciliation within war-torn communities. It is recommended, therefore, that high priority be given to the formulation and implementation of a DDR programme as this will strengthen the will of people to return to a secure environment.

Furthermore, it is necessary that a capacity be created to monitor, document and map all local conflicts, tensions and human rights violations as a prerequisite for preventing displacement and ensuring rapid remedial response. It is, therefore, proposed that UNAMA, in support of the national human rights commission for and in collaboration with all UN agencies with protection interests and expertise, establishes and sustains such a capacity. In this regard, it is also important that IDPs be also supported in gaining a political voice in local and regional affairs and especially to ensure that they are adequately represented on the Loya Jirga.

Return is also seriously constrained by the levels of destruction of homes; the widespread distribution of mines and other unexploded ordinances, as well as on-going localized military operations. In addition, some provinces from where thousands of refugees and IDPs originate are still labelled by the UN as no-go 'red zones' for security reasons. Therefore, agencies are unable to conduct neither needs assessments nor initiate preparations on the ground for returns in safety and dignity. In order to facilitate the voluntary return of displaced people and refugees, it is critical that main areas of return are prioritized under the security agenda.

Despite these constraints, the Mission supports the vision, generalised amongst the UN and partner agencies that the focus of the humanitarian intervention in Afghanistan should be on helping the return of IDPs and refugees in safety and dignity. This, however, does not pre-empt the need for ongoing continued contingency planning, as well as maintaining adequate protection to those IDPs who decide to remain in their host communities for the time being." (IDP Unit-OCHA 28 March 2002, pp. 5-6)

Physical security

IDPs returning subject to illegal taxation and precarious security conditions (June 2003)

- Instability and deteriorating security situation has made returns of refugees and IDPs unsustainable and forced some into renewed displacement.
- Returnees are subject to illegal taxation by local commanders in their village of origin.
- Forced recruitment in the north and protection concerns is causing new displacement.
- Some IDP families were forced to sell their daughters into marriage or sell their kid to survive.

"Most returnees and IDPs interviewed by Amnesty International had been negatively affected by the deteriorating security situation, which has drastically reduced the sustainability of return, and in some cases has caused renewed displacement. As the fighting continues and escalates, more people are leaving their homes in search of security, either within Afghanistan or to neighbouring countries. In Archi district in Kunduz, 12 returnee families had returned to Pakistan in February 2003, complaining about the policies of exploitation of local commanders.

Returnees are also subject to illegal taxation by local commanders upon their return to their villages of origin. This is now rife in many areas of the north, where such taxation often takes the form of a proportion of the UNHCR reintegration package.

The precarious security situation had a far reaching impact on the protection concerns of returnees, furthering affecting the sustainability of return. In the north of the country, local commanders are forcibly recruiting men and boys to participate in the internecine fighting. The local representative of the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation in Jawzjan province alleged that as many as 2000 families had left Afghanistan in recent months following attempts by the rival *Jamiat-e Islami* and *Jonbesh-e Melli Islami*

factions to forcibly recruit men and boys. Other families had been compelled to send their sons away, most often to Iran and Pakistan, to escape forced recruitment. Still others have been forced to sell their houses in order to pay the local commander not to recruit their sons.

Another protection concern is the prevalence of forced and premature marriages of girls in order to receive dowry. In Badakshaukat IDP camp outside Kunduz city, Amnesty International was told of two families that were forced to sell their daughters, aged 4 and 7 years, into marriage. One returnee in Kabul also told Amnesty International of having to sell one child in the last months of 2002 in order for the rest of the family to survive through the winter." (AI 23 June 2003, p. 23)

IDPs in camps in the north subjected to forcible relocations, compulsory performance of military support functions, and sexual violence (June 2002)

- Competition between Jamiat and Junbish and the establishment of their military posts within or in close proximity to IDP camps has resulted in abuses against IDPs. Among them, forcible relocations, compulsory performance of military support functions, and sexual violence.
- In Camp 65 the establishment of Junbish military camp forced IDPs settled close to it, to relocate in less convenient areas to the outskirts of the camp. Male residents of the camp were ordered to serve as night watchmen and dig trenches—in both cases without payment.
- Sakhi camp was described by local residents and humanitarian aid workers as being dominated by men affiliated with Jamiat. Pashtuns living in the camp faced widespread sexual violence and looting by Jamiat and Junbish militiamen and many of the Pashtun residents subsequently fled the camp.

The competition between Jamiat and Junbish and the establishment of their military posts within or in close proximity to IDP camps has had dire consequences for the security of camp residents. Among the abuses against civilians reported to Human Rights Watch have been forcible relocations, compulsory performance of military support functions, and sexual violence. Two large camps with which these abuses have been associated are Camp 65, in Chintal district, west of Mazar, and Sakhi camp, located east of the city.

Camp 65

Junbish forces partially reoccupied Camp 65, a former military base, amid a heavy buildup of troops and military hardware by the rival parties in and around Mazar in late April and early May. Internally displaced persons whose settlements lay close to the newly established Junbish base were forcibly evicted and their dwellings bulldozed, according to humanitarian aid workers and camp residents; the remains of their demolished homes were clearly visible when Human Rights Watch visited the camp in early June. Most of those who had been evicted—largely ethnic Arabs and Tajiks from Shiram in Sare-Pul province—relocated on their own to the outskirts of the camp, at a site without easy access to water resources.

When confronted with the order to move, the Shiram population first sought help from the local Junbish commanders. 'Some of the elders went to the commanders and asked them not to make us move,' said A, a camp resident. 'They [the commanders] said we should seek assistance from aid organizations, who might point us in the direction we need to go.' No offer was made by the commanders themselves to assist in the relocation, he said. The eviction itself was abrupt. 'The bulldozer came at about noon,' A said. 'In less than one hour they had destroyed the homes.' Another, older man reported, 'They didn't give us time to remove our mattresses or blankets.'

Concurrently with the establishment of the Junbish presence, male residents of the camp were ordered to serve as night watchmen and dig trenches—in both cases without payment. M, who estimated his age as being between 55 and 60, and S, a man of about 30, went to the base to complain on behalf of the camp population. Both were severely beaten by Junbish troops for

their efforts.
[...]

Sakhi camp

Sakhi camp is a planned community of clay and wood homes that was originally built to house refugees from Tajikistan during that country's 1992-97 civil war. Its population is now entirely Afghan, of diverse ethnic origins. Although not militarized to the extent of Camp 65, Sakhi camp was described by local residents and humanitarian aid workers as being dominated by men affiliated with Jamiat, including the de facto leader of the camp, Lal Mohammad.

Many ethnic Pashtuns in Sakhi camp were targeted by the newly victorious Northern Alliance forces, initially including both Jamiat and Junbish troops, who established a presence in the camp following the collapse of Taliban rule in Mazar. According to residents and aid workers interviewed by Human Rights Watch, Pashtuns living in the camp faced widespread sexual violence and looting by Jamiat and Junbish militiamen. An entire section of the camp housing an estimated 400 Pashtun families was destroyed, and lay in ruins at the time of Human Rights Watch's visit to the camp in early June. Many of the Pashtun residents subsequently fled the camp, with some reportedly heading toward the largely Pashtun town of Balkh.

Pashtun women remaining in the camp who were interviewed by Human Rights Watch said that cases of sexual violence had diminished since the immediate post-Taliban period, largely due to the reduced presence of armed men in the camp. But all spoke of a continued fear of sexual assault.

[...]
According to the representative of a group of Pashtun families in the camp, sexual violence by armed men continues to take place. Several residents said that camp 'leaders' associated with the armed forces that had committed abuses against Pashtuns, including cases of sexual violence, remained in the camp and continued to act as representatives of groups of families there." (HRW June 2002, pp. 4-6)

Survey reveals Pashtun households in Western Afghanistan are 2.5 times more exposed to abuses than other ethnic groups (April 2002)

- Findings of the PHR study reveal that abuses were committed on a widespread basis among Pashtun households in Western Afghanistan. Armed militias (primarily Uzbek forces) have used intimidation, extortion and committed abuses against civilians, primarily ethnic Pashtuns, including killings, beatings, shootings, disappearances, and gang rape.
- The abuses among Pashtuns were ~2.5 times the number of reported abuses among other ethnic groups in Shaidayee camp

"The findings of this study indicate that abuses were committed on a widespread basis among Pashtun households in Western Afghanistan. Armed militias (primarily Uzbek forces) have used intimidation, extortion and committed abuses against civilians, primarily ethnic Pashtuns, including killings, beatings, shootings, disappearances, and gang rape. The findings also indicate that despite increased international assistance and humanitarian aid, lack of food distribution and the need for emergency assistance were the main reasons that people in Western Afghanistan left their home villages to go to Shaidayee IDP camp. In a time when reconstruction is the priority in Afghanistan, basic needs such as food, clean water, shelter, and health care services, and security cannot be ignored, without placing many Afghans at further risk for dire health consequences.

The respondents in this study reported that at least one or more abuses had occurred in 8% of all households, 3% of Tajik households and 14% of Pashtun households. Abuses occurred in home villages in 10 districts in Ghor, Baghdis, and Faryab provinces. Sixty-eight percent of the abuses were attributed to

Uzbek forces. The abuses among Pashtuns were ~2-5 times the number of reported abuses among other ethnic groups in Shaideyee camp. It is clear that in several instances the abusers were known to the respondents and that the abusers were primarily of Uzbek ethnicity. In one case, an Uzbek commander was involved in extortion from a Pashtun household, creating a question of whether or not other Uzbek commanders are complicit in these abuses." (PHR April 2002)

Population movements to rural areas increase mine threats (October 2001)

- People fleeing the urban areas towards rural areas are more exposed to mine threats as they attempt to cross mine-infested fields.
- 2,812 mine/UXO casualties were recorded between March 1998 and December 2000.
- Affected land consist of 61% grazing land, 26% agricultural land, 7% roads, 4% residential areas, and 1% irrigation systems

"(...) As thousands of Afghans reportedly flee from urban areas to the countryside or toward the nation's borders, the ICRC is concerned that this could result in soaring numbers of mine casualties.

'Since the current crisis began, we have received no data on casualties', said Laurence Desvignes, head of the ICRC's mine-awareness unit. 'But large numbers of people are now attempting to cross mine-infested borders and the risks are definitely growing.' Past conflicts such as Bosnia and Kosovo had shown that landmines were a huge threat, she went on, when large numbers of people were on the move, especially off the roads.

From March 1998 to December 2000, the ICRC delegation in Afghanistan recorded 2,812 mine/UXO casualties, half of whom were children. Last year, about one quarter of the country's mine victims were people on the move, either because they were fleeing war or drought or because of a nomadic life style." (ICRC 4 October 2001)

"Landmine Problem

A total of about 717 square kilometers of land remains contaminated by mines and UXO. This includes 337 square kilometers of affected land classified as high priority. A major socio-economic impact study conducted by the Mine Clearance Planning Agency (MCPA) under the auspices of the Mine Action Programme in Afghanistan (MAPA), and published in December 1999, revealed that affected land consisted of 61% grazing land, 26% agricultural land, 7% roads, 4% residential areas, and 1% irrigation systems. The survey was conducted in eighteen out of Afghanistan's twenty-nine provinces and covered a total number of 3,656 minefields and 20,645 villages. It indicated about 1,600 villages were affected by mines and UXO.

Refugees and internally displaced persons are still reluctant to return home, in part due to fear of mines. A total of 12,216 families were repatriated in 1999, including 72,098 individuals.

See *Landmine Monitor Report 1999* for a list of fifty antipersonnel mines found in Afghanistan and their countries of origin. Two more antipersonnel mines have since been added to the list: the YM-1 mine from Iran and the RAP-2 mine from Rhodesia/Zimbabwe." (HRW August 2000)

See also : "Landmine use in Afghanistan", HRW Backgrounder, October 2001 and "Study of the Socio-economic Impact of Mine Action in Afghanistan (SIMAA)", Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan (MAPA), 30 June 2001

DOCUMENTATION NEEDS AND CITIZENSHIP

General

Government plans to issue new ID cards as soon as finances are available (March 2003)

- Birth certificate are issued by the hospital where the person is born.
- ID cards are issued when the person turns 7 and replaced when he/she turns 18.
- In Kabul, ID cards are only issued by Ministry of Interior and in the provinces this is done at the governor's office.
- There are reportedly plans to introduce a new system for the issue of national IDcards as soon as finance permits.

"The Minister of the Interior said that a normal birth certificate is issued by the hospital where the person is born. As regards ID-cards (tazkara), such a card with photo attached will be issued when the person turns 7 years. This is because such a card is required in order to be able to start school. The ID-card will be replaced when the holder turns 18.

If a person does not have a birth certificate, an ID-card can be issued if persons certify before the authorities the identity of the person in question. In Kabul ID-cards are only issued by the Ministry of the Interior. In the provinces, this is done at the governor's office. In the districts, they are issued by the "District Commissioner". ID-cards can also be issued by Afghan embassies abroad.

The ID-cards look the same everywhere in the country. The Ministry of the Interior finally said that the issuing authorities have used up all previous ID-forms. This has been the case since the end of the Taliban period. This is why the authorities are now issuing a form instead of the actual ID-card. A copy of all ID-cards issued in places other than Kabul must be sent to the Ministry of the Interior in Kabul.

An ID-card must be presented in the following situations:

- when a person is caught breaking Afghan laws
- when applying for a passport
- when a person has problems with authorities
- when a person is applying for a job.

The Minister also said that there are plans to introduce a new system for the issue of national IDcards. However, this system cannot be implemented until the necessary finances are available." (DIS March 2003, p.p. 54-55)

ISSUES OF FAMILY UNITY, IDENTITY AND CULTURE

General

75% of orphans surveyed in the west express their preference for staying with family instead of being placed in institutions (June 2003)

- Coping mechanisms of the extended family have weakened and an increasing number of children who have lost one or both parents have been placed in institutions.
- 75% of the children claim they would rather be reunited with their families if they were given economic support.

"War Child UK has carried out a survey of institutions for children deprived of parental care in western Afghanistan at the request of UNICEF. After two decades of war, the coping mechanisms of the extended family have weakened and an increasing number of children who have lost one or both parents have been placed in institutions. Primarily, children are placed in these institutions because of economic reasons, better education and food provision. It is, however, crucial for the healthy development of children and adolescents not to be separated from their families and 75% of the children claim they would rather be reunited with their families if they were given economic support. On the basis of the survey, War Child UK has made recommendations to UNICEF that these institutions be transformed into tracing and counselling centres or transition centres where the children remain for a short period of time before being re-integrated with their families or placed with foster families. Additionally, income generation projects should be developed so that the women are able to support their children financially." (War Child 18 June 2003)

PROPERTY ISSUES

General

Property restitution is a key problem facing returning IDPs, refugees and the local population (June 2003)

- Near complete breakdown of the land registration system, together with multiple layers of alleged ownership for many plots of land make the issue of property restitution a key problem for returning IDPs, refugees and the local population.
- Lack of access to land remains a formidable obstacle to refugees returning to the country.
- UN Habitat estimates fifty percent of Kabul's population is living in informal settlements or has no supporting documentation and rights of tenure.

"Authorities in Kabul, as in most other larger towns, object to the large rural to urban migration in search of livelihoods and in some instances have evicted squatters from abandoned and derelict buildings. A key problem facing IDPs returning to urban areas of origin, as well as returning refugees and the local population, is that of property restitution. The near complete breakdown of the land registration system, together with multiple layers of alleged ownership for many plots of land, will require difficult negotiations and substantial resources to redress.

[...]

As in any post-conflict setting, access to land and property restitution are extremely important yet complex areas for the Government to address. A sizable proportion of the Afghan population is landless, not just the displaced. Indeed, lack of access to land remains a formidable obstacle to refugees returning to the country. While access to land and property restitution issues cannot be comprehensively addressed in the short-term, the Government should consider stopgap measures in the interim that would allow IDPs and other landless access to land. UN Habitat estimates fifty percent of Kabul's population is living in informal settlements or has no supporting documentation and rights of tenure. Similarly, many displaced persons are ineligible for basic livelihood-supporting assistance due to their lack of access to land. Thus, resolution to the land and property rights issue is a crucial step towards durable solutions for the displaced." (Inter-Agency Missions 19 June 2003, p. 2)

Disputes over land and property ownership proliferate affecting many returnees (June 2003)

- Disputes over land and property ownership proliferate in Afghanistan today, and returnees tend disproportionately to be affected.
- Process of resolving land and housing disputes is skeletal at best and those without ties to the community are left powerless.
- Unaccompanied women, in particular, often find themselves unable to access their land upon their return.
- Women are often denied access to traditional leaders, or even formal justice mechanisms

"Lack of access to adequate housing is a serious obstacle to sustainable return. Disputes over land and property ownership proliferate in Afghanistan today, and returnees tend disproportionately to be affected. Many returnees Amnesty International spoke to have arrived back at their places of origin to find their land

and/or houses occupied by other families, often with the backing of powerful local commanders. Others have been unable to raise the capital required in order to rebuild houses on their land.

While some returnees Amnesty International spoke with have taken their disputes to the courts, it is also apparent that the process of resolving such disputes is skeletal at best. The rule of law remains elusive, and dispute settlement mechanisms are cumbersome and slow, leaving returnees in a position of heightened vulnerability, as in many cases their ties to the local community have weakened as a result of their absence.

Unaccompanied women, in particular, often find themselves unable to access their land upon their return. UNHCR has documented at least one case of a widow returning to Afghanistan and, despite being in possession of documents of ownership, being denied access to her land by the traditional leadership of her village. Women are often denied access to traditional leaders, or even formal justice mechanisms, and can be severely disadvantaged in the absence of a male family member who is willing to plead the case on behalf of the female relative.

Access to adequate shelter is often a key element in sustainable return. Amnesty International was told by some returnees that the main reason they had returned was to ensure they did not miss out on shelter rebuilding projects. Kokogul and her husband Rahim Khan returned from Karachi to the Shomali Valley in August 2002 when they heard that an international NGO would help them rebuild a house on their land. Similarly, Mohammed Azim came back from Pakistan to Jawzjan province when he heard that UNHCR would help him rebuild his house. However, even these "success stories" demonstrate the interdependence of the rights which are all essential to sustainable return. Kokogul's husband is unemployed and the family is finding it very difficult to survive economically. There is only one hospital in the valley, and most people have only sporadic access to healthcare. In Jawzjan, Mohammed Azim's relatives had had to send their son back to Pakistan to protect him from forced recruitment." (AI 23 June 2003, pp. 25-26)

PATTERNS OF RETURN AND RESETTLEMENT

Return and resettlement movements

25,000 IDPs have returned since January 2003 but many remain displaced after returning (June 2003)

- Returns during first months of 2003 have been considerably lower than last year, 650,00 remain displaced inside Afghanistan.
- Low returns might indicate that many previous returns have not been sustainable due to the actual material and security conditions.
- Many returnees and IDPs have reportedly been displaced after being unable to return home
- UNHCR has assisted some 25,000 IDPs returning between January and May 2003.
- Returns take place mainly from the west and in the north.
- 250,000 IDPs were assisted by UNHCR in returning during 2002

"Due to the situation in contemporary Afghanistan, it has been difficult to obtain accurate numbers of returns to Afghanistan. What is clear, however, is that in stark contrast to the sizeable return from neighbouring states in 2002, the numbers of people returning to Afghanistan during spring '2003 were significantly lower, due in no small part to the conviction of many refugees that they would be unable to return in conditions of safety and dignity. UNHCR announced on 6 June 2003 that around 158,000 Afghan refugees had so far been assisted to return to their country of origin during the first five months of 2003. Of these 115,000 had returned from Pakistan, while 43,000 had come back from Iran. In the same period in 2002, UNHCR had assisted in the return of over 815,000 people. The overwhelming majority of these returns were from Pakistan and Iran, which in total continue to host over 3 million Afghan refugees. An estimated 650,000 IDPs remain displaced inside Afghanistan. Around 25,000 IDPs returned to their places of origin in the first five months of 2003. By the end of June 2002, in comparison, around 400,000 IDPs had returned to their places of origin.

While the fact of lower returns so far this year has placed less strain on Afghanistan's already overburdened infrastructure, it also indicates that the sustainability of the large-scale returns of last year continues to be seriously open to question. Amnesty International collected testimony from many returnees who repeatedly reported that while they had made a "voluntary" decision to return, had they been aware of the actual material and security conditions to which they were returning, their decision would have been different. As a UNHCR spokeswoman noted recently, 'Returning refugees say that more Afghan families will return if security is improved, especially in the southern provinces, and if there are more job prospects and reconstruction inside Afghanistan.' This is further underlined by Amnesty International's research and other reports, both in 2002 as well as this year, of scores of people who have either turned around and left Afghanistan again once confronted with an unsustainable return or, for similar reasons, ended up in situations of internal displacement. Reports of continued displacement of refugee returnees in 2003 emanated from Kabul city as well as rural areas in the rest of the country. IDPs, too, have been forced into a seemingly endless search for refuge, having been unable to return to their places of origin." (AI 23 June 2003, pp. 5-6)

"In addition to returning Afghan refugees, UNHCR this year has assisted over 25,000 internally displaced people to return to their homes. The returns are taking place mainly from the west and in the north, but also

Tajik returns to Bamyan have started this month. UNHCR assisted over 250,000 internally displaced people to return to their villages in 2002, but many more have returned on their own. The estimated number of internally displaced people in Afghanistan is about 600,000 -- more than half of them are in the southern provinces." (UNAMA 22 May 2003)

Close to 100,000 IDPs have returned with assistance in the western provinces between February and October 2002

The following table and map show the number of assisted IDP returns to the western provinces of Badghis, Farah, Ghor and Hirat occurring between February 25 and October 6, 2002.

Province	District	No. of IDPs
Badghis		55324
	Ab Kamari	494
	Dara-I-Boom	2901
	Ghurmach	7321
	Jawand	3249
	Muqur	7227
	Murghab	11535
	Qadis	3782
	Qalay-I-Naw	16189
	Sang Atish	2626
Farah		405
	Anar Dara	
	Bakwa	12
	Bala Buluk	149
	Farah	
	Gulistan	
	Khaki Safed	67
	Lash Wa Juwayn	
	Pur Chaman	177
	Pusht Rod	
	Qalay-I-Kah	
	Shib Koh	
Ghor		23712
	Chaghcharan	16926
	Dolaina	1758
	Lal wa Sarjangal	113
	Pasaband	385
	Saghar	
	Shahrak	4088
	Taywara	208
	Tulak	208
Hirat		11974
	Adraskan	1088
	Chishti Sharif	346

	Farsi	
	Ghoryan	87
	Gulran	982
	Guzara	57
	Hirat	
	Injil	
	Karukh	102
	Kohsan	1
	Kushk	7811
	Kushki Kuhna	1017
	Obe	262
	Pashtun Zarghun	30
	Rabat Sangi	187
	Shindand	4
	Zinda Jan	
Grand Total		91415

Source: AIMS, 8 October 2002

Afghanistan Western Area IDPs Returnee by district Based on IOM-UNHCR Consolidation (25 February - 06 October)
(Click to expand)

Source: AIMS, 8 October 2002

Some 200,000 IDPs expected to return between June and December 2002 (October 2002)

- People are not returning to their home but to urban centers such as Kabul, Herat, Mazar-i-Sharif, Kunduz or Jalalabad, mainly because of insecurity and lack of economic opportunities in their home villages.
- Within the first six months of 2002, almost 200,000 IDPs went home with assistance from the international community, with a further 200,000 going home of their own accord.
- Some 200,000 more IDPs are expected to return between September and December 2002, but may be unable to do so because of persistent insecurity or lack of resources.

"NGO representatives said people were not returning to their original homes but to urban centres such as Kabul, Herat in the west, Mazar-i-Sharif or Kunduz in the north and Jalalabad in the east.

According to White, returning refugees and internally displaced people had increased Kabul's population, normally about two million, by between 450,000 and 600,000.

'People have decided either before returning or once they've arrived at their place of origin that economic opportunities and security might be better in urban areas,' he said. 'They either went directly to Kabul, or tried to make it in their area of origin and it just didn't work out.'

White said international agencies had not been prepared to provide assistance in urban settings. 'Now that winter planning has begun, it's an oversight that needs to be corrected.' " (Alertnet 11 October 2002)

"Some 230,000 displaced Afghans have so far returned home from elsewhere inside the country with assistance from UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration and other partner agencies. More than 200,000 other IDPs have opted to return spontaneously. There are still an estimated over 920,000 IDPs scattered throughout Afghanistan." (UNHCR 10 September 2002)

"Following the signing of the Bonn Agreement and the establishment of the Afghan Interim Administration on 22 December 2001, large numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons began to return to their areas of origin.

While ethnic and factional violence as well as human rights abuses against members of certain groups are still reported in some areas, more than 1.2 million Afghans have returned from the neighbouring countries of Iran, Pakistan, and Tajikistan since March this year, when the Afghan Interim Administration and the United Nations launched their assisted repatriation operation.

Moreover, within the first six months of 2002, almost 200,000 IDPs went home with assistance from the international community, with a further 200,000 going home of their own accord. More are expected to return (see table below), but many may be unable to - at least for the time being. These include groups fearing discrimination, retaliation and persecution, as well as nomadic Kuchis and other drought-affected people who have lost their livelihoods, particularly those who have been displaced in the south of the country. [...]" (UNHCR 1 July 2002)

Overview of IDPs for 2002

Region	Total IDP population, Jan 2002	Total estimated returns, Jan-Dec 2002
Central	432,000	359,000
North	216,000	93,000
South	413,000	30,000
East	80,000	45,000
Southeast	20,000	20,000
West	171,000	151,000
Total	1,332,000	698,000*

* includes the 400,000 who had returned by 30 June

The following map shows IDP returns assisted by UNHCR and IOM as of July 2002:

Source: UNHCR, July 2002, (GIF 80 kb)

The following maps shows IDP returns as of 10 May 2002:

Source: AIMS, 10 May 2002, (GIF 200kb each)

More than 70,000 IDPs have left Herat camps between March and July to return home (July 2002)

- The voluntary repatriation of nearly 7,000 displaced Afghans from the Rawzabagh camp in Herat in the west has been completed.
- Those who remained (some 65 families) did not want to return to their homes and it was still unclear where they would resettle.
- More than 71,000 Afghans have returned to their homes from the IDP camps in Herat in the past four months, leaving an estimated 60,000 IDPs there.

"The voluntary repatriation of nearly 7,000 displaced Afghans from the Rawzabagh camp in Herat in the west has been completed, says the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).

Jeff McMurdo, IOM programme co-ordinator for Afghanistan, told IRIN on Monday that only 65 families from a total of 7,000 people remained at the camp for internally displaced people (IDPs). Those who remained, he said, did not want to return to their homes and it was still unclear where they would resettle. For now, however, they were still being provided with shelter and food at the camp.

Rawzabagh is one of five IOM co-ordinated IDP camps in Herat, western Afghanistan. According to an IOM statement, more than 71,000 Afghans have returned to their homes from the camps in the past four months - 9,000 of them since the middle of June.

Those who have opted to return to their homes in time for the autumn planting season have been given survival kits including blankets, plastic sheets, some tools and seeds, and wheat to survive for up to three months.

The IOM said in a statement that an estimated 60,000 IDPs remained at the camps they run in Herat. Maslakh, the biggest IDP camp, still had 32,000 people living there, while another, Shaidayee, had 21,000, the organisation said.

UNHCR completes the repatriation of the 10,000 IDPs stranded at the Afghan-Tajik border (April 2002)

- UNHCR has completed the repatriation of the close to 10,000 Afghans stuck at the Afghan-Tajik border.
- 10,000 IDPs living on two islands on the Tajik-Afghan border will be offered to return to their area of origin with the help of UNHCR and IOM.
- Distribution of food will be discontinued at the end of March.

"On Thursday, the UN refugee agency completed the repatriation of 8,918 Afghans who have been stuck for a year and a half on islands and promontories of the Pyandj River, which marks the border between Afghanistan and Tajikistan. Protection officers from UNHCR said the last 105 people left the islands for the region of Kunduz in northeastern Afghanistan in trucks supplied by the International Organisation for Migration." (UNHCR 19 April 2002)

"UNOCHA reports that UNHCR and IOM are preparing for the return of Afghan IDPs camped on the "islands" between Afghanistan and Tajikistan. The return, which will be facilitated by UNHCR and IOM, will offer the IDPs the possibility of free return back to their place of origin. Organizations that are currently providing assistance on the islands will discontinue their activities and food distributions there will be phased out." (USAID 22 March 2002)

**Refugees along the Pyandzh river:
Afghanistan-Tajikistan border**
(click on the map for the expanded version)

Source: Gvt. of the United States of America, 8 February 2001, (jpeg 58 kb)

"The 10,000 Afghan refugees camped on the border with Tajikistan are set to return to their homes after the Nouruz holiday (the vernal equinox, 21 March), Asia-Plus news agency reported on 18 February. Denied permission to cross the border by Tajik President Imomali Rakhmonov, whose policy of admitting no Afghan refugees into the country was harshly criticized by international aid agencies after the U.S.-led bombing campaign began last year, Afghans have been living on islands in the Panj River that delineates the Tajik-Afghan border. A UN High Commissioner for Refugees representative said that the refugees are now waiting for warmer weather before returning to homes that may or may not be habitable, and that the relief agency is working with the interim government in Kabul to construct acceptable homes, hospitals, and schools in their villages." (RFE/RL 21 February 2002)

Return and resettlement programmes

Chaman camp set close, IDPs to be relocated (June 2003)

- If the IDPs at the Chaman border are relocated to Zhare Dasht camp they will lose their access to employment.
- Chaman camp, known as the "waiting area" is set to close at the end of July, mainly because of the security risks posed by the proximity of the border.
- The close to 20,000 residents will be offered repatriation to Afghanistan, likely to be Zhare Dasht camp near Kandahar or Spin Boldak camp, or relocation to an existing refugee camp inside Pakistan.
- WFP's food distribution and UNHCR's provision of water will cease after July
- Due to the presence of landmines, scarce water supplies and the lack of employment opportunities on the new proposed site of Zhare Dasht west of Kandahar, many IDPs in Chaman and Spin Boldak are reluctant to move there. Therefore, UNHCR had to re-schedule, from the beginning to the third week in August, the process of relocating up to 89,693 people from the temporary settlements at Chaman and Spin Boldak to the new site.
- The Zhare Dasht camp was established by the UN refugee agency with the help of the Afghan authorities as an interim solution for the tens of thousands of displaced people stranded in squalid sites around the Pakistan border. Zhare Dasht is ready to receive 30,000 people and can be expanded to accommodate 60,000.
- The voluntary relocation to Zhare Dasht was requested by the governments of both Pakistan and Afghanistan. Those who opt to relocate will receive food assistance and healthcare.
- The Afghans at Chaman have been stranded at the arid site since February, when the Pakistan government closed its borders.
- Spin Boldak's displaced persons live in similarly desolate camps lacking proper sanitary facilities, shelter, food aid and other assistance. Most of the Afghans arrived there in late 2001, fleeing lawlessness as the Taliban regime collapsed.

"In the case of the Spin Boldak camp, and the displaced 'stuck' at the Chaman border, the security situation has seriously deteriorated in recent months restricting access to these displaced by international actors. The authorities are considering forcibly relocating these IDPs, possibly to Zhare Dasht camp, for the alleged

security risks that they are creating at the border. Should this happen, the IDPs will also lose their access to employment associated with the flourishing border trade. Moreover, access to Zhare Dasht has also become more restricted by growing insecurity in the province. Indeed, the deteriorating security situation in the south in general has serious implications for the overall assistance and protection of all IDPs in the region." (Inter-Agency Missions 19 June 2003, p. 8)

"A makeshift encampment perched on the Afghan-Pakistani border criticised for its harsh living conditions in the months following the 2001 Afghan war is slated to close by the end of July, following an agreement by the two governments and the UN refugee agency.

Although life in Chaman's camp, known as the "waiting area", had improved through the provision of medical care, water and food, the continued concentration of thousands of Afghan asylum seekers in a desolate spot right on the border had long presented what was considered an unacceptable security problem.

Under the agreement reached by the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan and UNHCR at their Tripartite Commission meeting on May 14, the remaining 19,626 residents of the area will be offered repatriation to Afghanistan or relocation to the existing Mohammad Kheil refugee camp inside Pakistan's Balochistan province.

All support for the "waiting area", which now includes a stream of daily water tankers financed by UNHCR and food supplies by the UN World Food Programme, will cease after distributions in July. The unofficial camp will then be closed.

"This was a situation that could not be allowed to continue," said Hasim Utken, UNHCR's Representative in Pakistan. "We have found a solution that provides the asylum seekers with reasonable choices – we hope most accept a package of assistance to return to Afghanistan while those with continuing security concerns can move to an existing refugee camp inside Pakistan."

Some details remain to be decided, but residents will first be offered a chance to move back to Afghanistan. The two most likely destinations are a camp for internally displaced Afghans located just across the border in the Afghan town of Spin Boldak, which is becoming a permanent settlement. Others may go to the new site at Zhare Dasht, near the city of Kandahar, that UNHCR helped develop for displaced Afghans waiting to return home.

A package of assistance items for repatriation will be offered to the residents, who have dwindled from more than 26,000 a year ago because of previous relocations to Zhare Dasht.

Alternatively, those Afghans who still do not want to return to their country can move to the refugee camp of Mohammad Kheil, one of a string of camps that were opened near the border to house Afghans fleeing the US-led war that toppled the Taliban rulers of Afghanistan in late 2001.

At the end of July, anyone remaining in the "waiting area" would no longer receive UNHCR assistance or be considered refugees and would be treated according to normal Pakistani law." (UNHCR 20 May 2003)

"UNHCR had to re-schedule, from the beginning to the third week in August, the process of relocating up to 89,693 people from the temporary settlements at Chaman and Spin Boldak, astride the Pakistan border to the south of Kandahar, to the Zhare Dasht site to the west of Kandahar. Access to the new camps is through a corridor between two mined areas and this may represent a particular risk to any Kuchis who make the move because of their historical practice of roaming freely over a large area. It would appear, in any event, that many of those at Chaman and Spin Boldak are reluctant to relocate because of the absence of employment opportunities at the new site. Feedback that water supplies at the new camps are scarce is also having an effect. These two populations are, for the most part, made up of Kuchis from southern

Afghanistan or Pushtuns who have fled from northern Afghanistan in response to pressures from local power holders and inter-ethnic tensions. A UN report of 19th August indicated that further displacement of ethnic Pushtun families was continuing from various districts of Faryab controlled by Junbesh.

Refugees and IDPs returning to Faryab are reported by the UN to have been subject to looting, extortion, harassment and aggressive behaviour by local commanders." (BAAG 31 August 2002)

"The UN refugee agency today started moving Afghans stranded at the Pakistan border to an interim haven in southern Afghanistan.

[...]

On Thursday, 466 Afghans who had volunteered to leave a desolate, windswept encampment at Chaman, on Pakistan's frontier with southern Afghanistan, boarded 20 UNHCR-hired trucks and were relocated to a recently-prepared site at Zhare Dasht, 30 km west of Kandahar.

The Zhare Dasht camp was established by the UN refugee agency with the help of the Afghan authorities as an interim solution for the tens of thousands of displaced people stranded in squalid sites around the Pakistan border.

'This is a temporary solution to get these people through winter with better assistance,' said UNHCR spokeswoman Maki Shinohara at a Thursday press briefing in Kabul. 'We hope to continue with regular movements to Zhare Dasht, and at the same time continue to assist families who wish to go home.'

There are more than 25,000 Afghans camped at Chaman's so-called "waiting area" site and at least 30,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in four primitive camps located around Spin Boldak, just across the border in Afghanistan.

Khan Zada, the UNHCR field officer at Chaman, said others stranded at the waterless "waiting area" camp showed strong interest in the move. Although most have not decided whether to join the relocation, 250 families have already asked to go to Zhare Dasht. The next group is expected to leave for the new site in the next week.

Zhare Dasht is ready to receive 30,000 people and can be expanded to accommodate 60,000. The UN refugee agency believes Zhare Dasht will serve as a temporary haven where the Afghans can receive assistance away from the precarious border camps until the time comes when they can return to their home areas.

[...]

The Afghans at Chaman have been stranded at the arid site since February, when the Pakistan government closed its borders to Afghans fleeing the effects of drought and ethnic persecution in the north.

Spin Boldak's displaced persons live in similarly desolate camps lacking proper sanitary facilities, shelter, food aid and other assistance. Most of the Afghans arrived there in late 2001, fleeing lawlessness as the Taliban regime collapsed and seeking aid then being distributed by various Islamic relief agencies.

Tension and occasional security problems have hampered the work of UNHCR and other relief agencies operating in the dusty border zone around the Afghan/Pakistan border. Several relief agencies have left Spin Boldak in recent months, which has further worsened conditions in the sprawling IDP camps.

The voluntary relocation to Zhare Dhasht was requested by the governments of both Pakistan and Afghanistan. Those who opt to relocate will receive food assistance and healthcare. They will live in tents while they build their own homes on 500-square-metre plots located around already drilled wells. The new site also includes space for a community services centre where mosques, schools and markets can be built." (UNHCR 15 August 2002)

See also "30,000 IDP stranded at Chaman border in dire condition await assistance (July 2002)" and "MSF concerned over relocation of Chaman asylum seekers", IRIN 7 August 2002

MSF concerned about the relocation of 12,000 IDPs from Shaidayee to Maslakh camp (June 2003)

- There is concern that the phasing out of food distribution is happening without a comprehensive understanding of the IDPs' coping mechanisms.
- 16,000 IDPs in Shaidayee camp and 29,000 IDPs in Maslakh camp.
- Govt plans to close Shaidayee camp in the coming months.
- MSF is worried that the relocation of 12,000 IDPs from Shaidayee to Maslakh camp will disrupt their lives and employment.
- MSF thinks closure of the camp will result in mental and physical damage for the Shaidayee camp IDPs.

"In Hirat, IDP protection in the camps has improved over the situation a year ago. Currently, however, IDPs are facing possible forced relocation from Shaidayee camp to Maslakh camp because the governor is 'restituting' most of the camp lands to the military. Because Maslakh is much further from Hirat town, such relocation runs contrary to the expressed goal of achieving durable solutions as relocated IDPs risk losing their already limited livelihood options and access to urban employment. At the same time food distribution is being phased out and the mission noted that there is much concern among many of the international community that this is occurring without a comprehensive vulnerability analysis being completed and a fuller understanding of the existing coping mechanisms of IDPs being reached. Thus, WFP is encouraged to revisit its plans for targeting assistance to the residual IDPs pending the completion of a planned vulnerability assessment later this summer." (Inter-Agency Missions 19 June 2003, p. 8)

"We estimate there are 16,000 internally displaced persons in Shaidayee. Maslakh is much bigger, with around 29,000 people living there. This is likely to change dramatically in the coming weeks when the U.N. agencies and Afghan government relocate the population of Shaidayee to Maslakh. The government's plan is to completely close Shaidayee in the coming months. Around 12,000 internally displaced persons are being relocated. We are worried about this because of Maslakh's capacity to receive such a large number. The move could potentially disrupt the lives and employment developed by people living near Shaidayee. Once the camp closes their income will disappear.

[...]

There is an atmosphere of uncertainty and anxiety among the population. Most of them have already been through two decades of wars and three or four years of the worst drought Central Asia has seen for 30 years. Now they are being told they cannot go home because of warfare, lack of employment and an absence of shelter. They hear that the international community will not provide for them anymore and on top of that they will soon lose whatever kind of life they have built in Shaidayee camp. The closure will only worsen the precarious level of mental and physical health found in many of our patients." (AlertNet 28 May 2003)

300,000 IDPs expected to return during 2003 (January 2003)

- Afghan government and international agencies will facilitate the return of 300,000 IDPs during 2003, with transport assistance, food packages and non-food items.
- Reintegration efforts will be spearheaded by the government with assistance from WFP, UNHCR, UNICEF, FAO and UNOPS.

- Shelter assistance will be provided to some 75,000 returnee families and 4,000 wells will be dug in areas of return.
- Government, with assistance from UNHCR, will conduct comprehensive monitoring of the return of displaced people and their initial reintegration.
- UNHCR will attempt to reinforce the rule of law by developing mechanisms to enhance government's capacity.

"Return: The Afghan Administration and international agencies intend to facilitate the return of an estimated 1.2 million refugees and 300,000 IDPs. International legal frameworks governing refugee returns will be finalized with the Government of Pakistan, and renewed with the Governments of Iran and other countries of asylum. As in 2002, returnees will be provided with transport assistance, an initial food package and non-food items by UNHCR, IOM and WFP.

Reintegration: The Afghan Government with the assistance of various UN agencies will also spearhead intensive reintegration efforts; UNHCR will continue to support the Returnee Reintegration Unit at the Ministry Rural Rehabilitation Development (MRRD); WFP will develop food-for-work initiatives; UNICEF will work on safe water supply and education; FAO on crop production, and UNOPS (UN Office for Project Services) on road repairs. Shelter, water, education, health, community services and cash-for-work initiatives, although nationwide priorities, will feature prominently in reintegration assistance in regions with significant refugee/IDP returns. It is expected that shelter assistance will be provided for approximately 75,000 returnee families while 4,000 wells will be dug in communities with returnee populations. Specific attention also will be paid to vulnerable groups, including female heads-of-households, the elderly and the disabled.

Protection of Returnee Rights: Comprehensive monitoring of the return of displaced people and their initial reintegration will be conducted by the Government, with key support from UNHCR's network of field offices. UNHCR will also work to develop mechanisms to enhance the capacity of government and other national institutions to reinforce the rule of law. The work of the Return Commission will continue to be supported." (UNAMA 30 January 2003)

Mahkaki and Mile-46 IDP camp to be closed in April to allow for the repatriation of the 10,000 IDPs (March 2002)

- Iran plans an incremental closing of Mahkaki and Mile-46 camps during April in coordination with NGOs.
- MSF approves the plan and advocates that UNHCR play a more active role in assisting the return.
- According to a recent MSF survey of Mahkaki residents, 15 to 20 percent were found to be vulnerable and therefore in need of protection and special assistance.

"Iranian officials confirmed to IRIN on Monday plans to close two camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) inside Afghanistan. Established after 11 September, and home to more than 10,000 Afghan IDPs, the Mahkaki and Mile-46 camps in southwestern Nimruz Province, are administered by the Iranian Red Crescent Society.

"As per our plans for repatriation in April, we will begin the process of closing these two camps during the repatriation process," the international affairs officer for the Iranian Bureau for Foreigners and Illegal Aliens (BAFIA), Rostam-Ali Rostami, said from the Iranian capital, Tehran. In coordination with the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), BAFIA hopes to repatriate some 400,000 Afghan refugees this year alone.

Asked how the operation would proceed, Rostami said the closure would not be done immediately, but under an incremental process, in coordination with nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) working in the area. With reconstruction already beginning inside the country, and most of the people at the camps being farmers, they should return to their homes and fields, he said.

The move was pragmatic, Bruno Jochum, the head of mission of the international NGO Medecins Sans Frontiers (MSF), told IRIN from Tehran. 'Given the harsh climatic conditions - particularly sandstorms - closing these two camps is a wise decision.' He added that the question now was the methodology to be applied. 'We are advocating that UNHCR play a more active role in assisting the return of these people to their places of origin,' he said.

Jochum went on to call on UNHCR to offer the same assistance package to the IDPs at Mahkaki and Mile-46 as it would be offering the refugees to be repatriated from Iran. In this respect, according to a recent MSF survey of Mahkaki residents, 15 to 20 percent were found to be vulnerable and therefore in need of protection and special assistance - something UNHCR could greatly assist with, he added.

(...)

The United Nations maintains there are over two million Afghan refugees in Iran today. Fearing a major new influx after 11 September, Tehran sealed its border with Afghanistan, and proposed establishing a series of IDP camps inside Afghan territory where assistance would be provided instead. Mahkaki and Mile-46, just inside the border, were the only such camps to open." (IRIN 4 March 2002)

5 main geographic areas expected to be high-return areas during 2002 (January 2002)

- The AIA has identified five geographic areas expected to be high-return areas for refugees and internally displaced people. These are: Shomali Plain, Hazarajat, Ghor region, Khoja Ghar, and Kandahar.

*79. Based on the experience of repatriations worldwide, the return of refugees is likely to exacerbate increases in population in urban areas. This is due to the perception of employment opportunities (whether accurate or not), as well as to the reality that long periods of displacement in urban areas or in urban-like camp settings may make adaptation to rural conditions and livelihoods difficult for some refugees even if they originated from rural areas. As an example, it is estimated that 30% of Afghan refugees in Iran are living in greater Tehran.

80. The AIA has identified five geographic areas expected to be high-return areas for refugees and internally displaced people. These are: Shomali Plain, Hazarajat, Ghor region, Khoja Ghar, and Kandahar. It has also stated its concern to see that the inhabitants of Jalozai Camp can return to their places of origin.

IDP reintegration programmes

Government foresees a gradual increase of operational focus from repatriation to reintegration during 2003 (March 2003)

- Gradual increase of operational focus from repatriation to reintegration during 2003 with linkages to MRRD development programmes.
- During 2003, greater integration and coordination of present and future efforts targeting returnees and IDPs will be sought so as to ensure a smooth transition from relief to reconstruction.

- Initial reintegration assistance will include: construction/repair of 100,000 rural houses and 60,000 houses in 6 main cities, provision of drinking water and related sanitation, provision of employment activities for returnees in both rural and urban areas, provision of technical advice and agricultural inputs to food production, ensure that returnees enjoy equal access to health and educational services as their host communities.

"42. The 1382/2003 programme foresees a gradual increase of operational focus from repatriation to reintegration. As per the National Development Framework (NDF), one of the main components for national recovery and reconstruction is the sustainable reintegration of returnees.

43. As indicated under the Institutional Framework, further efforts will be required for the establishment of regular consultations with key constituencies (donors, international agencies, NGOs) to identify and agree upon key elements of strategy, programme design, and resourcing. Appropriate linkages with relevant MRRD programmes, such as the National Area-based Development Programme (NABDP) supported by UNDP, and the National Solidarity Programme (NSP) supported by the World Bank and the National Emergency Employment Programme (NEEP) supported by ILO and several donors.

44. The prime focus for the concerned Ministries of the TISA during 1382/2003 should be to encourage greater integration and coordination of present and future efforts targeting returnees and IDPs among implementing agencies, so as to make sure that the transition from relief to reconstruction is carried out smoothly.

45. Among the 2 million returnees who have come back to Afghanistan during 1381/2002 are a number of returnees classified as persons with special needs. After so many years of destruction, there are no public, social welfare support systems. A referral system established in the previous year will be further strengthened during 1382/2003.

46. During 1381/2002, the existing network for returnee monitoring will continue to be reinforced and expanded to provide accurate information on the conditions of return and the progress of reintegration including security and assistance needs. Close collaboration with mandated agencies (e.g. ICRC and OHCHR) and UNAMA will be essential in particular in the field of detention of returnees, family tracing, minority issues and the monitoring of the conditions of human rights, including women's rights, in areas of return. Links with the newly established Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission will be sought and consolidated.

Initial reintegration assistance

Shelter: House construction and repair for vulnerable returnees and IDPs. Nationwide a total of 100,000 rural houses are expected to be constructed or repair. MoRR is in charge of this component. In 6 main cities, 60,000 houses will be self-built under the Urban Reconstruction Plan. MUDH and Municipalities will coordinate.

Linkages: ECHO, UN-Habitat.

Water: To ensure that returnee areas have adequate sources of drinking water and alternative sources for domestic purposes. Related sanitation interventions (targeting both men and women) would be carried out under the MRRD National Water Supply Programme. In urban areas water supply will be incorporated into the Urban Reconstruction Plan. Linkages: GTZ, UNICEF, USAID, WB

Employment Creation and Income Generation: Providing off-farm labour-intensive, fast employment activities in returnee dense rural areas under the NEEP. Also, support for small business, micro-finance initiatives, and employment skills training. It is expected that at least 60% of the returnees will have access to employment opportunities both in urban and rural areas.

Linkages: ADB, ILO, UNDP, UNOPS, WB, NEEP.

Food security: Through technical advice, agricultural inputs (crops and livestock), market support and cash related inputs to food production would be encouraged in areas of high refugee and IDP return.

Linkages: FAO, UNDP, WB, WFP, USAID

Social support: In conjunction with line Ministries, to ensure that returnees enjoy at least equal access to health and educational services as their host communities, Support will be provided through major national programmes with focus on both urban and rural areas.

Linkages: JICA, UNICEF, UNODC, WB, WHO." (TISA March 2003, p. 9)

Rural integration (March 2003)

- Establishment of MRRD Reintegration Unit to facilitate the potential reintegration dimension of the 5 main programme areas designed to address rural poverty and promote recovery.
- For the year 2003, it is expected that the first phase of reintegration programme in 3 sectors (education, health and water) may result in unmet costs amounting to US\$12 million.
- The Inter-Ministerial Commission for Rural Development will need to address the problem of land allocation and right property issues.
- Government will seek to encourage private investment and the development and re-establishment of an export farming industry.

"47. To address rural poverty and promote recovery, MRRD has set five main areas for programming, namely (i) institutional strengthening to support sustainable rural livelihoods, (ii) macro economic regeneration, (iii) community-based development, (iv) protection of lives and livelihoods, and (v) income diversification. Within each programme area, emphasis is to be placed, *inter alia*, on reintegration (returnees, IDPs, ex-combatants), sustainable resource management, and gender equality. Each of the five programme areas has an important potential reintegration dimension to them, which will need to be further detailed. The establishment of the MRRD Reintegration Unit (see paragraph 24) will facilitate this process.

48. The first phase of reintegration may result in additional costs to larger programmes. These can broadly be accounted for in the social sectors; yet more accurate calculations need to be made by taking into account the availability and resources of existing facilities. A rough figure of unmet costs for the 1381/2002 returnees for three sectors (education, health and water) amounts to approximately US\$ 4.5 million. For 1382/2003, this figure could reach up to US\$12 million.

49. To plan appropriate food security interventions, it will be necessary to determine the number of returnee families who own or have access to sufficient land to grow their own food. Also, it is necessary to quantify the number of families who will be able to meet some of their food needs through share cropping and casual labour, and to seek off-farm employment to purchase their food requirements. Investment choices will have to be made between encouraging on-farm livelihood systems (crops and livestock) and other non-farm economic opportunities (labour intensive works programmes); between expanding the cultivable areas (through expanded irrigation infrastructure) or raising agricultural productivity and efficiency on existing land (through extension work, input supplies, improved market access).

50. Land allocation and right property issues will also need to be addressed by the Government as soon as possible. The Inter-Ministerial Commission for Rural Development will need to pursue this matter with all relevant Government entities.

51. In addition, the Government will seek to encourage private investment and the development and re-establishment of an export farming industry. This will be achieved through the development and promotion

of markets, the establishment of agricultural credit schemes and incentives to small and medium scale farmers for expansion of activities. Special attention will be paid to the expansion of the export market for fruits and vegetables." (TISA March 2003, pp. 10-11)

Urban reintegration (April 2003)

- MUDH envisages to relocate urban IDPs, in particular those in Kabul, to a location near Pul-e-Charkhi as a short-term solution.
- There is concern that urban areas cannot absorb the large number of people who have returned during 2002. These concerns have been incorporated by MUDH into the Urban Reconstruction plan.
- In the last years, the focus of humanitarian programmes in urban areas has been on providing relief to the vulnerable. The large number of returnees has now made their reintegration a key issue for urban rehabilitation.
- The degraded and inadequate state and availability of housing in the main cities of Kabul, Kandahar, Herat, Jalalabad, Mazar-I-Sharif and Kunduz is an immediate reintegration challenge for the MUDH. 60,000 owner built units are planned.
- It is expected to increase the capacity of the existing public networks to cover the needs of at least 50% of the urban population.
- MUDH expects to generate at least 50,000 jobs and provide rapid income opportunities to more than 20,000 households.
- A household surveys of returnee dense areas will be commissioned during 2003 to gather more data about urban returnee families, their place of former residence, and their assets.

"The Ministry of Urban Development and Housing (MUDH) has undertaken efforts to address the immediate problems of urban IDPs, in particular those who live in public premises in Kabul. It is envisaged to relocate these IDPs to a location near Pul-e Charkhi as a shorter-term strategy. Suggestions on longer-term solutions focus on the possibilities of land allocation by the Government or the use of land. Issues such as the urban returns/IDPs should be streamlined in the discussions of the two concerned CG's." (HAAG 22 April 2003)

"52. The large number of returns to Kabul, Jalalabad, and other Afghan cities during 1381/2002 has raised understandable concerns over unmanageable levels of migration to urban areas ill prepared to absorb rapid population growth. As with rural programmes, a key concern for the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (MUDH), associated ministries, and municipalities during 1382/2003 will be building reintegration concerns into its main programme and planning areas – housing, urban infrastructure, community development, utilities, employment and services. To do this, MUDH has already incorporated into the draft Urban Reconstruction Plan, key elements that address the main priorities of urban returnees and IDPs.

53. Due to security, political, and resource constraints, there has been little rehabilitation assistance or investment in the development of Afghanistan's cities for many years. Even more than in rural areas, the focus of humanitarian assistance programmes in urban areas has been on providing relief to the vulnerable and urban poor. The rapid and large return of returnees to Kabul has made their reintegration a key short and medium term issue for urban rehabilitation in 1381/2002 and 1382/2003.

54. In the urban sector, an immediate reintegration challenge for the MUDH is the degraded and inadequate state and availability of housing in the main cities of Kabul, Kandahar, Herat, Jalalabad, Mazar-I-Sharif and Kunduz. The launching of a housing programme for the cities is an urgent priority. As a part of the Reconstruction Plan 60,000 owner built units are planned plus the upgrading of social services in new and old residential areas.

55. As per in rural areas a second priority in the cities is the access to safe drinking water and sanitation. Through the urban reconstruction plan it is expected to increase the capacity of the existing public networks to cover the needs of at least 50% of the urban population. Reliability on private deep tube wells will be necessary for families with financial capacity. Coordination, water management, site protection, and distribution mechanisms will be also enhanced.

56. Although the urban economies have revived in the last few months, their ability to absorb so many new entrants onto the labour market (youth, the unemployed, returnees, ex-combatants) remains constrained. This will be a key concern for reintegration programmes since the numbers and demography (70% of working age) of returning refugees indicate that they will account for a large proportion of job seekers. The MUDH through reconstruction projects including housing, public works, and city level infrastructure expects to generate at least 50,000 jobs and provide rapid income opportunities to more than 20,000 households.

57. Another important aspect of urban reintegration is the support to establish social and cultural reintegration networks with support from national NGOs and community groups. Particular attention will be provided to mental health, gender equity and reintegration of children into education.

58. As with repatriation to rural areas, the generation of more data about urban returnee families, their place of former residence, and their assets will be important. To that end, household surveys of returnee dense areas will be commissioned during 1382/2003. The information will be collected and analysed systematically and used to guide programme decisions. Agencies such as UNHCR will transfer by the end of 1382/2003 their returnee monitoring capacity and district profiling exercises to the Government." (TISA March 2003, pp. 11-12)

Obstacles to return and resettlement

Major returns to northeast but few returns to northwest due to persistent tension, lack of long-term assistance (June 2003)

- 20% of IDPs remaining in camps and settlements cite insecurity as the main reason for not returning, most of them Pashtuns
- 600,000 refugees & IDPs (200,000) have returned to the northern provinces since beginning of 2003.
- 60,000 Pashtuns have fled the persecution and ethnic tensions in the north since 2001.
- Security still a major concern in the northwest.
- Situation has stabilised in the northeastern provinces of Takhar, Baghlan and Konduz, where most of the Pashtuns have returned, but few have returned to the northwestern provinces of Faryab, Jowzjan, Sar-e Pol and Badghis.
- Return commission still needs to persuade Pashtuns IDPs in the south that conditions are conducive to return in the north.
- Aid workers report gap between the emergency humanitarian assistance delivered and the time of return or immediately after return.
- Land disputes is one of the main problems facing returnees fueling local conflicts.

"An estimated twenty percent of the IDPs remaining in camps and other concentrations cite safety as their primary reason for not returning to their areas of origin. Most prominent among them are the ethnic Pashtuns originating from the north and northwest who have been displaced to the south, the west and within the north. Many more, including some very recently displaced, are found throughout the country, with those displaced within the northern provinces are of particular concern. Some IDPs feel threatened

simply because of their ethnicity while others were caught in the crossfire of competing local armed factions. The common denominator among all of these displaced is that their areas of origin are too insecure for them to return.

Clearly, a lasting change in the security and rule of law situation in much of Afghanistan would be necessary to address the valid protection concerns prevailing among IDPs and the humanitarian and development community as a whole. A certain level of instability, insecurity and human rights abuses connected to weak governance and rule of law will remain a fact of life for many Afghans for years to come. Therefore, activities in support of IDPs must be based on the reality of relative levels of risk and vulnerability, as well as on informed and voluntary choices being made by the IDPs.

The principal cause of protection problems in the north is the ongoing struggle for power and land among competing paramilitary factions and warlords. Local commanders operating in the name of larger factions retain near-absolute control over civilian life and continue to actively engage in power struggles and armed conflict. Ethnic and tribal cleavages fuel this competition. Such conflicts affect both the locally displaced IDPs within the north as well as the non-displaced population and seriously threatens the process of normalization and recovery of local communities. For those displaced to the south and west, these ongoing conflicts remain the main impediment for return. Creative and aggressive measures by the Government are required to address these security problems immediately while a longer-term reform process and institution building gets underway.

In the interim, most of these displaced remain in the camps/settlements in Kandahar and Helmand provinces (Zahre Dasht, Spin Boldak, Panjwai and Mukhtar) and to a lesser extent in Hirat province (primarily Maslakh and Shaydayee). There are also some 20,000 displaced at the border between Spin Boldak and Chaman who are not allowed to enter the refugee camps in Pakistan and, as such, remain in limbo." (Inter-Agency Missions 19 June 2003, pp. 7-8)

"According to UNHCR, by the end of March, about 600,000 Afghan refugees and IDPs, had returned to their homes in the nine northern provinces of Faryab, Jowzjan, Sar-e Pol, Badakhshan, Takhar, Baghlan, Konduz, Samangan and Balkh. Of these, some 400,000 refugees came from Iran, Pakistan and the Central Asian republics with UNHCR assistance. While 140,000 IDPs also returned to their villages with the assistance of the refugee agency and other aid organisations, another 60,000 returned spontaneously or without assistance.

[...] fighting between the Taliban and their opponents of the Northern Alliance forced hundreds of thousands to flee northern Afghanistan. Moreover, the worst drought in living memory during the 1990s ruined nomadic pastoralist and agrarian livelihoods and people left their villages.

Following the fall of the Taliban, ethnic Pashtuns in the north were persecuted by ethnic militias and independent commanders and forced to flee. As many members of the Taliban came from among the Pashtun clerics in the south, they were associated with the reclusive movement and subsequently victimised. UNHCR estimates that 60,000 Pashtuns fled the area after the demise of the Taliban in December 2001.

Weak civilian authority in north

Vicky Tennant, a protection officer with UNHCR in Mazar-e Sharif, told IRIN that security remained one of their major concerns. 'In some areas, local commanders still effectively exercise the authority and power,' she told IRIN, noting that civilian authority was weak across northern Afghanistan. The jostling for power between the ethnic Uzbek general, Abdul Rashid Dostum, and the Tajik commander, Mohammad Atta, had resulted in armed clashes and instability across the region.

She maintained that in addition to insecurity, many returnees had problems with shelter, with access to water, they wanted more schools and demanded a clinic closer to their village. 'A majority thinks that they will feel safe after a comprehensive disarmament campaign,' she said.

The refugee agency estimates that 24 percent, or 100,000 returnees over the past year, were Pashtuns. Tennant explained that the process of building up trust and relationships between the Pashtun and other communities who had remained would be a complex and long-term process.

Aid workers believe that the situation has largely stabilised in the northeastern provinces of Takhar, Baghlan and Konduz, where most of the Pashtuns have returned. However, few have returned to the northwestern provinces of Faryab, Jowzjan, Sar-e Pol and Badghis.

Return commission to persuade Pashtuns in south to return

In March, Rudd Lubbers, head of the UNHCR, inaugurated a return commission comprising representatives from the UN, the central government in Kabul and northern faction leaders. With thousands of Pashtuns living in crowded and squalid displacement camps in southern and western Afghanistan, the return commission has yet to send a working group there to persuade them to return to their ancestral homes. Local observers felt that political rivalries in the north were hindering such initiatives.

However, Tennant maintained that the commission's working group had now completed its initial assessments of the areas in the five northern provinces of Faryab, Samangan, Sar-e Pol, Jowzjan, and Balkh. 'Their reports are extremely comprehensive and forthright in identifying abuses by local commanders as a key issue which must be addressed in order to create the confidence necessary for large-scale returns to the north and northwest,' she said.

Need for more assistance to make returns sustainable

In addition, they emphasised the need for ongoing assistance from the international aid community towards securing access to shelter, water, livelihoods, health facilities and education.

Making the returns sustainable would need paced, integrated development and reconstruction. But aid workers maintained that there was a gap between the emergency humanitarian assistance delivered and the time of return or immediately after return. Substantial development work such as rebuilding sustainable livelihoods through income generation, infrastructure development and institution building therefore needed to be undertaken. 'The long-term development programmes have yet to kick off,' Tennant said.

Although donors and aid agencies have recognised the problems, and had initiated some projects, the people have far greater needs. Over the past year, UNHCR has built shelters for some 8,000 families; 470 water wells in the communities were dug and 12 schools were established. The agency also established six clinics to improve health conditions. Last winter 100,000 returnees received blankets, stoves, fuel and tents to survive through the harsh weather.

The government had realised such shortcomings, and President Hamid Karzai has repeatedly called for more funding. According to Qaderi of the ministry of refugees and repatriation, the country needed to rebuild basic infrastructure such as roads, electricity and a telephone system. But the country has a long way to go before it rehabilitates and moves towards self-reliance.

'If there is no improvement in the situation it would certainly have a negative impact on the overall sustainability of the return and the future stability of this country,' he warned.

Land disputes

Some provinces have attracted more returnees than others. Paola Emerson, the area coordinator for relief and reconstruction for the northeast with the UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA), told IRIN that the perception of Konduz being a rich province was attracting a large number of returnees. UNHCR assisted some 110,000 refugees to return to the fertile agricultural region last year. 'We are concerned over the land-ownership disputes, as land is scarce and there are competing claims,' she said.

In the ethnically heterogeneous north, returning refugees and IDPs find themselves entangled in land disputes as they try to rebuild their shattered lives. 'For a significant number of returning refugees, it is one of the most problematic issues,' Tennant explained.

A recent report by the independent Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) has found that land-ownership disputes are fuelling local conflicts at a time when stability is needed for reconstruction. 'The number-one source of conflict here today is land disputes,' the AREU's director, Andrew Wilder, told IRIN in Kabul.

Tennant added that although UNHCR was working with the traditional dispute-settlement mechanisms such as shuras, or village councils, the rule of law remained the only long-term solution to the issue. 'This is the primary prerequisite, and we encourage that even now by supporting the courts,' she said.

Emerson maintained that reconstruction also required decentralisation, thereby creating opportunities for returnees. 'The provincial authorities also need capacity building,' she said, noting that besides salaries, they did not receive any funds from Kabul. 'How can you be governor and serve the people without a budget?' she asked.

According to Gabriel Frailich, the head of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in Faryab, there were still some 50,000 IDPs in the region now after the agency resettled about 150,000 in their villages over the past year. Although the returning refugees and IDPs have similar problems, IDPs in general are poorer. 'Survival is their main problem,' he told IRIN.

Frailich maintained that understanding the situation in depth and addressing it by removing the primary causes of displacement remained the key to success. Recently, in Astana valley in Faryab Province, IOM built one of the first rural water supply schemes, a school was opened with UNHCR support and repairs were made to the access road. 'Life is reverberating in the village that was completely abandoned during the Taliban rule two years earlier,' he said. (IRIN 18 June 2003)

See also:

"AFGHANISTAN: UN reports serious rights violations in northwest", IRIN, 28 April 2003

The Political, Security and Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan, Report on fact-finding mission to Kabul and Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan and Islamabad, Pakistan, 22 September - 5 October 2002, Danish Immigration Services (DIS), March 2003

"UN suspends IDPs repatriation to Afghanistan's volatile north", AFP, 2 July 2002

"Afghanistan: UN Refugee Chief Hopes Displaced Northern Afghans May Return Home Soon", RFE/RL, 10 July 2002

"Afghanistan: IDP Returns Outpace Reintegration Assistance", Refugees International, 21 May 2002

Urban areas' absorption capacity reaching its limit (June 2003)

- UNHCR is not monitoring and assisting returnees in urban areas where the majority of refugees have gone during 2002.
- Lack of access to employment, to adequate shelter, and to security for many vulnerable groups has meant that urban centres can be as treacherous for returnees as rural areas.
- Returnees are often forced to occupy deserted buildings and land, often living in very poor and sometimes dangerous conditions.
- The absorption capacity of urban centres is also reaching its limit in many areas, and particularly in Kabul.
- Many donors have stipulated that international agencies, including UNHCR, restrict their assistance activities to the rural areas, at least partially to avoid a "pull factor" to the cities.

"Amnesty International is concerned about the decision taken by UNHCR, among other agencies, not to actively monitor and, in most cases, assist returnees in urban areas. During the return movements in 2002, UNHCR reported that the majority of returnees went back to urban areas. It is almost certain that this trend is being repeated in the returns taking place in 2003. Despite this fact, however, UNHCR only started a very limited post-return monitoring programme in some urban centres in spring 2003, and provides no reintegration assistance at all. As this report has noted previously, it is not possible to substantiate the assumption held by many that all returnees to urban centres find themselves secure and able to sustain this return. Lack of access to employment, to adequate shelter given the depleted housing stock of many cities including Kabul, and to security for many vulnerable groups including female headed households and unaccompanied women, has meant that urban centres can be as treacherous for returnees as rural areas. Returnees are often forced to occupy deserted buildings and land, often living in very poor and sometimes dangerous conditions. Amnesty International was told of more than one case of children suffering fatal falls from unprotected ledges in dilapidated buildings housing returnee families.

The absorption capacity of urban centres is also reaching its limit in many areas, and particularly in Kabul. Refugees, IDPs and rejected asylum seekers are "returning" to Kabul (even though this might not have been the place they left when forced into flight) in search of material, physical and sometimes legal protection. Mirza, who came to Kabul from Quetta, Pakistan with his family in July 2002, originates from Logar province in central Afghanistan.

"There is no work in the countryside", he told Amnesty International, "I had to come to Kabul to provide food for my family." Agencies estimate that more than half a million returnees settled in Kabul in 2002. In many respects this is making a 'ticking bomb' out of the capital, which is already seeing a rise in incidents of crime, overcrowding and violence against women.

[...]

Many donors have stipulated that international agencies, including UNHCR, restrict their assistance activities to the rural areas, at least partially to avoid a "pull factor" to the cities. There are, however, obvious concerns about policies that avoid the unavoidable reality of urbanization in a country as insecure and devastated as Afghanistan. Returnees, including the landless, that have made a rational decision to return to urban centres in the hope of sustaining their return through access to security, employment and shelter should not be penalized by being denied access to basic reintegration assistance and services, including adequate monitoring by the competent agencies." (AI 23 June 2003, pp. 29-30)

Landlessness leads to renewed displacement upon return (June 2003)

- In 2002, UNHCR stated that 74.3 percent of returnees do not have farmland to which they can return.
- Many landless returnees being forced into situations of either destitution or internal displacement.
- Many families unable to afford rent of houses or rooms live in dilapidated buildings or unoccupied land, under the constant, and increasingly threatening, shadow of eviction by the landowners.

- Landless returnees cannot, in addition, benefit from shelter projects run by various international agencies, including UNHCR, which stipulate that the returnee must either own a title to the land, or be able to get his community to vouch for his ownership of the land.

"Another problem related to return to Afghanistan is that of landlessness. In 2002, UNHCR stated that 74.3 percent of returnees do not have farmland to which they can return. A recent report noted in addition, "it may be assumed that a 'significant' number of returnees did not own land, surviving as workers, tenants, or sharecroppers in varying degrees of dependency to landowners. They left the country landless and may return landless." In interviews with returnees and IDPs, Amnesty International was repeatedly confronted with evidence of landless returnees being forced into situations of either destitution or internal displacement. One local NGO told Amnesty International that several returnees in the Bamiyan region had been forced to move into caves in the area as they had no where else to live.

Amnesty International also spoke to returnees in Kabul city who had returned to the city as they owned no land elsewhere in Afghanistan, and hoped to be able to earn a living in the capital. Being unable to afford to rent a room or a house due to spiraling rent prices, however, many have been forced to move into dilapidated buildings or unoccupied land. This was what had happened to Kamaluddin and ten members of his family, who live in one room in the ruined Russian Cultural Centre in Kabul city. "I have no other place to live", he said, "we sold our land five years ago when we left Panjshir to seek refuge in Badakhshan." The majority of these families in Kabul live under the constant, and increasingly threatening, shadow of eviction by the landowners. Of the returnees Amnesty International interviewed in Kabul, many were squatting on government owned land and had recently been issued with eviction orders. Around 60 returnee families who had moved into the premises of a ruined shoe factory in western Kabul have been evicted by the authorities, forcing them to set up tents on the surrounding hillside.

Landless returnees cannot, in addition, benefit from shelter projects run by various international agencies, including UNHCR, which stipulate that the returnee must either own a title to the land, or be able to get his community to vouch for his ownership of the land before the agency will assist with rebuilding shelter on this land. Obviously, such projects are of no help to the landless. This is the reason one woman, Fariba, is unable to return to her place of origin in the Shomali valley from Kabul city, where she is living in an informal tented settlement on government land. While many international agencies are involved in helping returnees to rebuild their houses in Shomali, Fariba and her family, despite originating from the Shomali valley, are unable to benefit from this assistance and thus to return "home", as they do not own any land in the valley on which to build a house. A group of 15 Uzbek families returned from Pakistan to Kunduz city in August 2002. Being landless and unable to afford rents in the city, they had set up tents on government land just outside Kunduz, but were forced to move away by villagers who claimed to own the land. They now reside in tents 50 metres away from their original location. Amnesty International has learned that the provincial government plans to redistribute this land to government employees, which will almost inevitably lead to another displacement for these families." (AI 23 June 2003, p. 26)

No immediate return solution for Kuchi IDPs (June 2003)

- Small minority of Kuchis that have retained a few animals might return to their traditional livelihoods if the wells can be identified and repaired.
- For those displaced from the north and northwest and whose pasturage has been confiscated by local commanders, return will be more problematic.
- Many Kuchis likely to opt for integration in the area of displacement.
- Inter-Agency mission believes that more expertise is needed among both the authorities and the international actors in order to plan any longer-term solutions for the Kuchi
- The Kuchis is the largest vulnerable population in Afghanistan, displaced mostly by drought but also conflict.

- Presently there is no return solution for them as the drought in the south continues and their livestock is decimated.
- Report produced by Cordaid consultant proposes a time-phased approach (1-3 years) to rehabilitate their herds to resume their nomadic lifestyle or to engage them in skill-training activities in view of integration into their area of displacement.
- A limited number of Kuchis will be able to migrate to the Reg desert again once the wells are repaired.

"The small minority of Kuchi that retain a few animals, and is able to acquire some income with which to rebuild their herds, will likely return to traditional livelihoods, but only if wells and pastures are rehabilitated. Moreover, the task of identifying wells to be rehabilitated is complicated by ownership issues that risk causing conflict between different Kuchi clans. With respect to the Kuchi displaced from the north and northwest much of their pastureland has been confiscated by local commanders that would clearly hinder their return even if they had animals to return with.

In the mission's numerous discussions with Kuchi, it was widely suggested that significant numbers of Kuchi, especially women, would opt for durable solutions in settled areas where access to education, healthcare, permanent shelter and income generating opportunities, particularly in agriculture, are perceived to exist. Having lived at their present locations for a number of years, many have been able to access at least minimal levels of employment and would now prefer to integrate among local communities. Others survive from remittances received from family members working in the larger Afghan towns, who are refugees, or who work as illegal migrants in Iran and Pakistan.

The challenge now facing the local authorities and the international community is one of how best to assist the Kuchi in finding appropriate durable solutions. The mission believes that more expertise is needed among both the authorities and the international actors in order to plan any longer-term solutions for the Kuchi. Moreover, there is still a widely held conviction among many in the local authorities that the only durable solution for the Kuchi is to return to pastoralism and that in the interim they not be provided with anything more than basic humanitarian assistance so as not to alter their 'nomadic-pastoralist way of life'. It is encouraging, therefore, that a special commission has been established within MRRD Kabul to address the Kuchi problem, albeit the commission should play a much more proactive role than hitherto. WFP's renewed deployment of a specialist on pastoralism to MRRD Kabul to assist it with developing a policy for the Kuchi is therefore welcome.

If the Kuchi remain in their present settlements in the south and the west, some will likely continue to be dependent upon at least some level of humanitarian assistance. However, were the authorities to provide them with longer-term guaranteed access to land, even if just for housing, either in the existing camps or in surrounding areas, local integration would become a feasible option. Once given the opportunity to settle, the Kuchi can pursue skills training, seek local employment opportunities or develop their own income generating activities. Investments in basic infrastructure can also be made for communities with settled Kuchi population.

A recent study of Kuchi IDPs by CordAid/VARA proposed several creative projects for skills development and income generation, as well as reintegration options and activities for those Kuchi who either wish to return to the Reg or be locally integrated. Constraints to the implementation of some of these proposals are the large number of potential beneficiaries that need to be addressed and the provision of the necessary access to land by the local authorities. Unfortunately, the extremely fragile security situation in the south continues to discourage much needed 'development' NGOs from establishing themselves in the region to help address this problem." (Inter-Agency Missions 19 June 2003, pp. 11-12)

"This is the largest vulnerable population in Afghanistan. There are presently no "return" solutions for Kuchi and there will not be any return until the drought is over in the south, pasture returns, the wells in the Reg are repaired, and their limited livestock increase to a number that they can sustain themselves. All

these elements must exist simultaneously or Kuchi return to the Reg will not be successful. The documents by the VARA/CordAid consultant (VC) should be used as the guide to develop projects for this vulnerable group. They describe a time-phased approach (1-3 years) to assist a limited number of Kuchi to rehabilitate their remaining small herds and to engage them in various skill-training activities, if they so choose, to provide opportunities for local integration and potentially the means to obtain additional income. The Kuchi could remain in their present camp-like situation where they are currently displaced or the authorities could allocate land where some infrastructure can be developed and where the IDPs can pursue these skill-training activities and limited re-stocking and animal husbandry activities as described by the VC (some of these skill training activities have already begun in the present settlement locations, however projects for animal husbandry and agricultural training would require land more suitable for these projects to begin). Also described by the VC, there will be a limited number of Kuchi that have enough animals to begin migrating to the Reg area once their wells are repaired. Every effort to develop projects to repair wells with the close cooperation of these Kuchi families with animals needs to be taken. However, this will be a very limited number with the difficult task of assisting them in the Reg (now summer approaching) and identifying the limited number of wells to be rehabilitated without causing conflict between the different and desperate Kuchi clans, and between the Pashtun and Baluch." (UNAMA 7 April 2003, p. 2)

See also:

Return of Kuchis to Registan: A Phased Approach, RDP International, April 2003

Lack of funding and insecurity in the north constrain IOM's repatriation activities (April 2003)

- In April 2003, IOM delayed IDP returns to Faryab province due to security concerns.
- Additional financial contribution from the Netherlands and Finland will allow for the continuation of the transport programme for IDPs stranded in the north, west and centre of the country.
- Between July and September IOM was planning to help with the return of 75,000 IDPs. IOM has already helped over 270,000 displaced people and refugees return home to towns and villagers throughout Afghanistan since the beginning of the year.
- In May the return operations were temporarily suspended due to funding shortfalls. In mid-June, IDP movements were re-started in the west and the north of the country, but security concerns in the north following factional fighting led to a second suspension of IDP movements from Mazar-e-Sharif June 27th.
- New donor support would allow IOM to lift the suspension of its care and maintenance activities in the IDP camps in the north and west of the country, to allow a gradual handover of the function to other agencies in the coming months.
- IOM has coordinated relief efforts in Maslakh and other IDP camps since the early summer of 2001.

"The International Organisation for Migration [IOM] has delayed the return of internally displaced persons [IDPs] to the northern Afghan province of Faryab due to security concerns.

"We are holding back for the time being as all missions to the area have been suspended," the head of the office for IOM operations in the north, Ghotai Ghazialam, told IRIN from the city of Mazar-e Sharif.

Some 774 IDPs registered with IOM in the northern Jowzjan Province to return to Faryab, but will remain there, because fighting between rival factions of the Jonbesh-e Melli-ye Eslami (National Islamic Movement) and Jamiat-e Islami (Islamic Society) erupted in Meymaneh, the provincial capital of Faryab. Movement was restricted for aid workers as of 10 April, due to the fighting, reported to have started on 8 March, according to IOM.

"Although the UNAMA [United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan] has intervened to resolve the problem, our fear is that when they [UNAMA] leave, the factions will go back to fighting," Ghazialam said." (IRIN 15 April 2003)

"IOM's efforts to help hundreds of thousands of internally displaced Afghans to return to their homes received a boost this week with new financial contributions from the Netherlands and Finland totalling E1.5 million.

The additional funding, E1.2 million from the Netherlands and E300,000 from Finland, will go towards providing transport for IDPs stranded in the west, north and centre of the country." (IOM 23 August 2002)

"IOM will help 75,000 more displaced Afghans to return home to their places of origin between now and the end of September. The policy decision follows new funding pledges of over US\$ 4 million from donors including the US, Australia and New Zealand.

There are currently still an estimated 440,000 people displaced by conflict and natural disasters in camps and cities across Afghanistan. Although some are unable to return home for security and other reasons, others depend on help from IOM and other agencies.

IOM estimates that the total cost of helping all these people to return home by year end would be in the region of US\$ 14 million - in other words, a shortfall of some US\$ 10 million still exists.

IOM has already helped over 270,000 displaced people and refugees return home to towns and villagers throughout Afghanistan over the past six months, but in May was temporarily forced to suspend return operations due to funding shortfalls.

In mid-June, IDP movements were re-started in the west and the north of the country, but security concerns in the north following factional fighting led to a second suspension of IDP movements from Mazar-e-Sharif June 27th." (IOM 9 July 2002)

"IOM has been forced to suspend indefinitely its Afghan internal transport network due to lack of funding. A major component of IOM's Afghan programme, the network provided transport for refugees from Iran and internally displaced people returning to their homes from IDP camps.

Consultations with partners are ongoing to minimize the impact of the suspension of the network, which has provided return transport for over 250,000 IDPs and refugees throughout the country over the past four months.

In particular, solutions need to be found for refugees returning home from Iran via the Islamqala border crossing point near Herat. These are crossing into Afghanistan at a rate of 2,500 a day and an estimated 480,000 are expected to return this year.

Earlier this month ITN movements of IDPs from the Herat and Mazar-e-Sharif IDP camps and camp management activities were temporarily suspended, while IOM appealed for additional funding to cover a shortfall created by greater than expected numbers of returning refugees and IDPs and spiralling transport costs.

Refugee returns from the Iranian border continued, together with other IOM programmes including the US\$8 million USAID-funded Afghan Transition Initiative (ATI) community development programme, the Return of Qualified Afghans (RQA) programme and the Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) programme for stranded Afghan migrants abroad.

Several donors have responded sympathetically to IOM's appeal. But the total response has not been sufficient to ensure the survival of the ITN programme, which would have required an immediate injection of US\$10 million and a total of US\$18.7 million to continue through year end.

But new donor support will allow IOM to lift the suspension of its care and maintenance activities in the IDP camps in the north and west of the country, to allow a gradual handover of the function to other agencies in the coming months. IOM has coordinated relief efforts in Maslakh and other IDP camps since the early summer of 2001.

The reason behind IOM's dramatic scaling back of its Afghan programme is that unlike many inter-governmental agencies, its operational funding is entirely project-based. Under its existing constitution, it cannot draw on reserves or run into deficit." (IOM 31 May 2002)

IDPs resettling in Mazar-i-Sharif cannot do so unless they originate from the area (March 2003)

- IDPs wishing to settle in Mazar-i-Sharif cannot obtain permission to establish a home unless they can prove ownership of the land or if they originate from the area.
- As a consequence, there are no returnees from other regions choosing to settle in Mazar-i-Sharif.
- Most people returning continue to live on their return package from UNHCR.

"In terms of access to land, the source [Head of UNHCR in Mazar-i-Sharif] mentioned that in order to obtain permission to establish a home, a person needs a guarantee from the village council to prove ownership of or permission to use the land. Only repatriated persons whose place of origin is Mazar-i-Sharif, will be able to obtain such permission; new arrivals who do not originally come from the area cannot get permission. Many repatriated people never get beyond Kabul. There are no repatriated people from other regions choosing to settle in Mazar-i-Sharif rather than in their area of origin.

According to the source, there are signs of destabilisation due to the high number of repatriated people. However, the majority of the people, who have returned, continue to live on their "return package" from UNHCR, and at the same time there are many internally displaced people, who are unable to return to their homes, because they have been occupied by others. The situation may therefore change with the onset of winter, and when the assistance packages have been used up." (DIS March 2003, p. 42)

Absence of social network makes it difficult for returnees to settle in areas other than their area of origin (March 2003)

- Main problems faced by returnees in urban centers is the lack of employment and education opportunities.
- Social networks are less important when resettling in cities than in rural areas when it is not that of origin.
- It is very difficult for returned refugees or internally displaced people to settle in areas, other than their areas of origin, and where they do not have a network.
- Crucial issue in connection with resettlement is the access to resources. Widespread shortage of land and water in the rural areas in Afghanistan often leads to fighting about the scarce resources.
- Pashtuns IDPs trying to resettle in Pashtun areas other than that of origin have not been accepted by the local residents.

"CCA said that for people, who are returning to the towns, the social network is less important in terms of being able to settle in towns other than the place of origin. The general problem, that everybody has to face, is the lack of employment, the economic situation in general and the lack of educational facilities for children. In the rural areas, people are closer. They live in extended families, and if a person does not have a family, that person is in danger of not being able to receive any help or assistance. There may be difficulties, however, the person is not in any real danger.

ICG mentioned that it is very difficult for returned refugees or internally displaced people to settle in areas, other than their areas of origin, and where they do not have a network. Accordingly, it is extremely difficult to settle in other regions, even when (e.g. as a Pashtun) people are settling in an area populated by a dominating ethnic group to which the person belongs. It will be impossible for Hazaras to settle in an area dominated by Pashtuns.
[...]

The coordinator of UNAMA's Civil Affairs Branch advised that the support of the government would be required for any resettlement of ethnic groups in areas other than their areas of origin. In this connection the source was referring to the large group of Pashtun refugees who are currently living in the area around Kandahar and who do not wish to return to the northern areas. The crucial issue in connection with resettlement is the access to resources. There is widespread shortage of land and water in the rural areas in Afghanistan, which often leads to fighting about the scarce resources.

UNHCR, Kabul, said that Pashtuns from northern Afghanistan had attempted settlement in the Pashtun villages in other areas of the country, but that they had not been accepted by the local communities.

ICG also said, that it would be difficult to settle in an area other than a person's area of origin. This was the same for all ethnic groups - both when settling in areas, where they were in minority and when settling in other areas, where they belonged to the major ethnic group in that area. According to the source, the real problem is one of access to resources, especially water. If the resources were not scarce, there would be no fighting. The source compared the situation to that in the former Yugoslavia, emphasizing that contrary to the situation in Yugoslavia, ethnic groups in Afghanistan are generally more pragmatic, and they would not fight if there were sufficient resources." (DIS March 2003, p. 40; 45)

Landmines in Afghanistan (August 2002)

- Afghanistan signed the mine Ban Treaty in July 2002.
- Afghanistan is still believed to be one of the most severely mine- and UXO-affected countries in the world.
- The known mine/UXO contaminated area is estimated to total approximately 737 million square meters of land in 206 districts of 28 provinces

"Afghanistan has experienced dramatic political, military, and humanitarian changes. The cabinet approved Afghanistan's accession to the Mine Ban Treaty on 29 July 2002 and the following day the Minister of Foreign Affairs signed the instrument of accession on behalf of the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan.

Mine action operations were virtually brought to a halt following 11 September 2001. The mine action infrastructure suffered greatly during the subsequent military conflict, as some warring factions looted offices, seized vehicles and equipment, and assaulted local staff. Four deminers and two mine detection dogs were killed in errant U.S. air strikes. Military operations created additional threats to the population, especially unexploded U.S. cluster bomblets and ammunition scattered from storage depots hit by air strikes, as well as newly laid mines and booby-traps by Northern Alliance, Taliban, and Al-Qaeda fighters.

A funding shortfall for the mine action program in Afghanistan prior to 11 September 2001 had threatened to again curtail mine action operations. But since October 2001, about \$64 million has been pledged to mine action in Afghanistan. By March 2002, mine clearance, mine survey, and mine risk education operations had returned to earlier levels, and have since expanded beyond 2001 levels.

In 2001, mine action NGOs surveyed approximately 14.7 million square meters of mined areas and 80.8 million square meters of former battlefield area, and cleared nearly 15.6 million square meters of mined area and 81.2 million square meters of former battlefields. Nearly 730,000 civilians received mine risk education. A total of 16,147 antipersonnel mines, 1,154 antivehicle mines, and 328,398 UXO were destroyed. In all of these activities, 95 to 99 percent of the actions were completed prior to 11 September 2001.

The ICRC recorded 1,368 new landmine and UXO casualties in Afghanistan in 2001, but that number is not comprehensive.

[...]

The interim administration has identified mine action as a priority area for the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Even before the latest conflict, the full extent of the landmine and unexploded ordnance problem in Afghanistan was not determined. In addition, there is limited information available thus far about the UXO contamination caused by the ground battles and aerial bombing (especially of ammunition storage facilities) during the recent military activities.

Despite continued progress made by MAPA and its implementing partners over the past decade, Afghanistan is still believed to be one of the most severely mine- and UXO-affected countries in the world. MAPA continues to discover, at a rate of 12 to 14 million square meters per year, areas that were mined years ago, but remained inaccessible due to armed conflict. Notably, until recently, there was no access to 100 million square meters of former Northern Alliance front lines.

The known mine/UXO contaminated area is estimated to total approximately 737 million square meters of land in 206 districts of 28 provinces. Of this, some 360 million square meters are classified as high priority land for clearance. The areas affected include vitally important agricultural land, irrigations systems, residential areas, grazing land, and roads. Priority areas include those where there is a high risk of accident, high repatriation, and the area is vital to meet the basic needs of villagers." (ICBL August 2002)

The following map shows Landmines & UXO in Afghanistan as of 1 May 2002:

Source: AIMS, 1 May 2002. (GIF 50 kb)

See also: "Returning Afghans fear mine menace", IWPR, 31 January 2003

"Afghanistan Mine Action Update", Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan, 22 April 2002

Drought-induced IDPs' needs differ from those of conflict-induced IDPs in the return phase (March 2002)

- Majority of IDPs in west and north are drought-induced and the preconditions for their return differ significantly from those of the conflict-induced IDPs.
- ICRC estimates that only 10 percent of the dryland farming areas of Badghis and Faryab provinces, two of the three principal source areas of IDPs in Herat have been cultivated.

- Until May 2003, the next opportunity to cultivate is the winter season, the drought-induced IDPs will require food assistance, as there are virtually no alternate sources of income.
- No agency appears to be addressing the critical need for animal power, which was sold before people left as IDPs.
- Potable water is still extremely scarce in many areas as it will take several years to recharge the drained aquifers.
- Potential villages of return are surveyed and cleared before return takes place. However, agricultural areas cannot be cleared rapidly and thus many potentially productive areas, such as large parts of the fertile Shamali Plains, will remain uncultivable for some time.
- It is essential that IDPs be provided with the same level of reintegration assistance as is being provided to returning refugees.

"The majority of IDPs in the north and west have been displaced by four years of severe drought. Their needs and the precondition for their return differ in many respects from those of conflict-induced IDPs. Their levels of destitution is acute and without significant reintegration assistance, the chances of successfully re-establishing themselves and becoming self-reliant is minimal. Moreover, they remain at the mercy of climatic vagaries and, without traditional coping mechanisms – their livestock – can readily become IDPs again if there are inadequate rains next season.

Moreover, it is questionable whether the points of origin are able to absorb any large influx of returning population. ICRC estimates that only 10 percent of the dryland farming areas of Badghis and Faryab provinces, two of the three principal source areas of IDPs in Herat have been cultivated. IDPs are currently returning at a time when the spring sowing period is ending and are thus unlikely to get much, if any, crop into the ground for an August harvest. Hence, their next opportunity to cultivate is the winter sowing season that will only produce a crop in May 2003. Until then, they will require food assistance, as there are virtually no alternate sources of income.

Seed shortages remain acute. There is considerable concern among the humanitarian community about FAO's capacity to deliver sufficient seed to underpin a recovery of the drought-affected regions during the next winter and spring planting seasons. An equally serious deficiency is that of animal power as most of the animal power was sold before people left as IDPs. Drought animals are essential for cultivating rainfed lands. However, no agency appears to be addressing this critical need. In addition, potable water is still extremely scarce in many areas as it will take several years to recharge the drained aquifers. Detailed community assessments are only now being undertaken in areas of return to fully ascertain such needs as availability of potable water, community assets, seed availability, winter crops in the ground, etc.

Returnees to former conflict areas face the additional constraint of mines and unexploded ordinances. Fortunately, there is close coordination between the mine-action groups and agencies and NGOs assisting returnees. Potential villages of return are surveyed and cleared before return takes place. However, agricultural areas cannot be cleared rapidly and thus many potentially productive areas, such as large parts of the fertile Shamali Plains, will remain uncultivable for some time. Shelter is a major problem facing returnees to former conflict areas (which is less of a problem for drought returnees) where most villages have been completely destroyed.

Given the serious levels of impoverishment of IDPs, it is essential that they be provided with the same level of reintegration assistance as is being provided to returning refugees. Indeed, most returning refugees are much more likely to bring considerable assets with them and hence the risk of increasing the disparity among the two groups of returnees unless they are treated equitably.

UNDP has yet to establish an operational field presence to facilitate and resource community programming and livelihood promotion in the principal areas of return. The Mission was informed that in the absence of UN development bodies, the NGO's efforts in promoting community development have been critical.

Notwithstanding concerns about the pace of return expressed earlier in this report, it is highly desirable that such 'pulls' to the rural areas be rapidly redressed by the development actors if the return movements are to be sustainable." (IDP Unit-OCHA 28 March 2002, p. 7)

Many returnees likely to settle in urban centers instead of returning to their village of origin (March 2002)

- There are concerns that the potential areas of return have not the capacity to absorb the large number of IDPs expected to return.
- Some argue that no return should be assisted until a comprehensive assessment by district of the conditions for return has taken place.
- It should be anticipated that large numbers of returnees will target urban centers or will gravitate around IDP camps.

"The Mission encountered considerable concern among some interlocutors about the expected rate of return of IDPs, projected by a number of operational organisations (such as returning most of the 120,000 IDPs from Maslakh camp near Herat). These actors question the present capacity of potential areas of return to absorb the numbers that are being proposed. The lack of basic community infrastructure, inherent levels of food insecurity, serious shortages of agricultural inputs and/or other means of livelihood support, all augur a precarious future for potential returnees. It is even argued by some that no return should be assisted until such time as district profiles are completed and a full understanding of conditions in the return areas is acquired. These concerns are especially strong with respect to organized returns to drought areas where there remains much doubt as to whether the drought is indeed over or whether it will be possible to sustain returnees in points of origin until they become self-supporting.

Though it is premature to forecast patterns, the prospects of IDPs/returnees settling in urban centers should be anticipated, at least during the early phases of the return process, since cities offer a more or less secure environment and expectations of employment opportunities. In this connection, many humanitarian agencies are expressing serious concern about the specter of major new concentrations of returnees, both former IDPs and refugees, establishing themselves in the major urban centers or gravitating to existing IDP camps. Contingency planning for such a scenario is, therefore, essential as the urban areas are ill-prepared to absorb large influxes of population and, indeed, such influxes risk creating new sources of tension." (IDP Unit-OCHA 28 March 2002, p. 6)

HUMANITARIAN ACCESS

General

Volatile security situation hampers access to IDPs and constrains relief and development activities (June 2003)

- Insecurity and lack of rule of law are major constraints to comprehensively addressing the needs of most of the residual IDP population.
- All UN activities have been suspended in Uruzgan, Zabul and northern Helmand provinces and restrictions on movements have recently been imposed on southern Helmand and parts of Kandahar province.
- Insecurity impacts on most dimensions of the international community's support to IDPs.
- Limited access by the international community and inadequate Government mechanisms for challenging impunity by violators means that adequate protection cannot be provided and many violations remain unreported.
- Deteriorating security in parts of Afghanistan is hampering return programmes for refugees IDPs and jeopardising the sustainability of past and future returns.
- Following the murder of an ICRC staff, more than 10 international NGOs withdrew staff from the southern province of Kandahar.
- Large areas of southeastern Afghanistan - including the whole of Uruzgan and Zabul provinces - remain off-limits.
- There are also security problems in eastern Afghanistan and Nangahar province as well as in the northwest due to factional fighting.

"Insecurity and lack of rule of law are major constraints to general long-term development in Afghanistan and by extension to comprehensively addressing the needs of most of the residual IDP population. Throughout much of the country the rule of law is at best weak and at worst non-existent. Presently, all UN activities have been suspended in Uruzgan, Zabul and northern Helmand provinces and restrictions on movements have recently been imposed on southern Helmand and parts of Kandahar province which have seriously reduced access to IDP camps and other informal settlements. In parts of the south and southeast, even NGOs have significantly scaled-back their operations in recent months due to increased insecurity. There is growing concern that international staff is being targeted by radical opposition factions in the south and southeast. Thus, national staff is increasingly being utilized for implementing programmes. However, even they are increasingly at risk of being targeted and their deployment to high-risk areas must therefore be closely monitored. The dramatic growth of poppy cultivation throughout the country has added a further dimension to insecurity and risk.

Insecurity impacts on most dimensions of the international community's support to IDPs. Comprehensive assessments cannot be undertaken in many areas, in turn, constraining planning and project development. Lack of security limits the extent and effectiveness of monitoring IDP needs and providing them with protection. Operations are frequently subject to interruptions or suspension due to security incidents or risks thereof. The limited presence of 'development' actors in many regions is also attributable, at least in part, to insecurity. Hence, both the quality and geographic coverage of support to the authorities for IDP protection and provision of services is seriously compromised in areas of insecurity.

Human rights violations remain widespread and often occur with impunity. Limited access by the international community and inadequate Government mechanisms for challenging impunity by violators means that adequate protection cannot be provided and many violations remain unreported. While traditional conflict and dispute resolution mechanisms are still generally in place, and do indeed often succeed in upholding a degree of rule of law, particularly with respect to competing claims for access to land, these mechanisms are often sidelined with impunity by local commanders.

Until such time when a better trained and unified police force is in place, the judicial reform process runs its course, the Afghan National Army is strengthened and deployed countrywide, and the disarmament and demobilization programme becomes fully operational, it is unlikely that many of the current security constraints will abate. To date, ISAF has not been deployed to areas of high insecurity beyond Kabul. It is also unclear whether the deployment of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) by the coalition forces will have any significant effect on reducing insecurity." (Inter-Agency Missions 19 June 2003, pp. 3-4)

"The HAAG shares the deep concerns of the assistance community about the current security situation. The situation is particularly bad in the South where a considerable number of NGOs had to withdraw international staff. The UN is still reflecting about the future set up of operations. The ICRC partly suspended activities. The NGO community fears that no remedy of the situation is in sight unless there is sufficient public dialogue. The High Commissioner for Refugees issued a press release on 17 April expressing serious concern over the deteriorating security situation in parts of Afghanistan, saying it was hampering efforts to support returning refugees and internally displaced people.

The perception is that threats are mainly aimed at the international aid workers. What remains a concern is the lack of enough background information on the level of risks, threats and the overall security situation. Little is known about the true reasons of the ongoing conflict in the South and the measures so far taken by Government and other security actors.

The AACA is requested by the HAAG to verify the possibility and organize a meeting of a HAAG working group with relevant authorities (chair of the CGSC or members of the National Security Council, and/or Coalition) in order to obtain clarity of taken measures, strategies and future action (CGSC meeting takes place on the 24.4.03...)

To note: Without a marked improvement in the security situation by June 2003, major operational adjustments by the assistance community are expected to be implemented." (HAAG 22 April 2003)

"In looking at the security situation in the various parts of Afghanistan, the south remains the most unstable because of the increasingly manifest threat from radical elements. Spin Boldak has experienced, perhaps, the greatest number of incidents arising from the determined efforts of the Taliban to gain ground and actively challenge the coalition forces and their Afghan allies. Its proximity to the border, and the interest of powerful trading interests in reducing the substantial US presence to the south of Kandahar are additional factors. The Pakistani city of Quetta, to the south of this border crossing, is proving to be an increasingly important centre of Islamic radicalism and of opposition to the US military presence in Afghanistan.

Elsewhere in the country, Maimana, in the north, has again been an area of serious tension because of clashes between the forces of Dostam and those of Atta Mohammed. An outbreak of conflict, from 8th April, resulted in the deaths of 17 people. A peace agreement was brokered by UNAMA on 11th April, following negotiations between senior commanders of the two groups, which required the departure of armed men from the city, the removal of military posts and the collection of weapons. The UN reported on 27th April that, since the signing of the peace agreement, the political situation had continued to improve and that the city had returned to normal. International humanitarian staff members had all returned to the

city. However, some reports suggest that, in spite of the efforts of UNAMA to create a neutral power holding arrangement, Dostam's forces now have control of Maimana.

The Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission and UNAMA reported, on 27th April, on an investigation they had carried out on a serious outbreak of violence in a village in the Bala Morghab area of Badghis. There have been conflicting reports as to the cause of this violence which resulted in the deaths of 38 non-combatants and the execution of 26 fighters attached to a local Pushtun commander. Bala Morghab was, prior to the Taliban takeover, the scene of intense ongoing conflict between the forces of Ismail Khan and Rashid Dostam over many years and it is possible that this episode reflects a continuing struggle for power between the Governor of Herat, Ismail Khan, and those who oppose his authority.

The UN has also reported on fighting in the Khulm district of Balkh, towards the end of April, and on tensions in Gosfandi district of Sar-i-Pul province, both of which resulted in a suspension of UN missions. UNAMA has been engaged in discussions between high level representatives of Hisb-e-Wahdat (Mohaqqiq) and Harakat-i-Islami to encourage disarmament in the Dar-i-Suf area of Samangan Province, following recent fighting there. This area has seen periodic outbreaks of conflict for some years.

Aid workers remain vulnerable, both Afghan and international, in the light of the threats by the Taliban to target Afghans who are closely linked with the US forces and the Afghan government. In one incident, a car carrying three Afghan staff of the Mine Clearance Planning Agency was riddled with bullets on 22nd April near the town of Sarobi on the Kabul-Jalalabad road. Two of the team suffered minor injuries. US security officials were reported to have linked the attacks to the recent arrest of five men from the area in connection with the killing of four international journalists in November 2001 and speculated that the attackers could have been seeking to target foreigners. However, it is equally possible that the attackers saw the vehicle as associated with the West and did not differentiate between foreigners and Afghans working for international organisations. In a further incident, a grenade exploded in the office of UN Office of Drug Control in Jalalabad on 24th April. There were no casualties.

More than ten international NGOs have withdrawn their staff from Kandahar since the murder of the ICRC staff member, Ricardo Munguia, at the end of March and several other areas of Afghanistan are closed to international aid workers because of insecurity. These include the provinces of Uruzgan and Zabul to the north of Kandahar and the road between Kandahar and the Pakistan border." (BAAG April 2003, pp. 4-5)

See also:

- "Insecurity darkens humanitarian outlook in Afghanistan", AFP, 11 June 2003*
- "Rocket attack against Afghan deminers", AFP, 5 June 2003*
- "Deminers suspend operations in southern Afghanistan", AFP, 22 May 2003*
- "Afghanistan: NGO say security still critical in the wake of Rumsfeld visit", IRIN, 2 May 2003*
- "Afghanistan: Insecurity threatening return programs, says UNHCR", 18 April 2003*
- "Poor security in the southeast hampers humanitarian aid", IRIN, 7 February 2003*
- "Afghanistan: Security concerns remain for NGOs", IRIN, 3 February 2003*
- "UN refugee agency warns of need for better security in Afghanistan", AFP, 13 April 2003*
- "Afghanistan's crisis far from over", Oxfam briefing notes, 23 January 2003*

Distribution of aid by the military makes it impossible to assert that humanitarian aid is non-political and impartial (January 2003)

- NGO express concern that Coalition forces' engagement in reconstruction project will have a negative impact on security level and compromises NGO's ability to work

- Coalition forces are establishing Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), consisting of a modest number of combat troops, civil affairs soldiers and civilian US government officials.
- There is a feeling among humanitarian agencies is that humanitarian aid has been used as a cover for military activities and as a public relations tool.
- If forces engaged in combat also provide aid to civilians, it will be close to impossible to assert that humanitarian aid is non-political and impartial.
- Pentagon has no plans to stop allowing armed US soldiers in civilian clothes distributing humanitarian assistance.
- US-based international aid agencies urged G. Bush to change the policy, saying the practice blurred the distinction between combatants and aid workers on the ground in Afghanistan, putting them at risk.
- Humanitarian leaders added that it also contradicts a consensus reached after years of discussions between American NGOs and senior American military officers on delivering humanitarian aid in conflict or post-conflict areas where U.S. military forces are present.

"A US-based NGO working in Afghanistan raised concern on Tuesday over the Coalition forces' engagement in reconstruction projects, saying it could have a negative impact on security levels, and that it was 'not a substitute for security'.

"Our main concern is that there is a security vacuum in Afghanistan, and despite promises made, the international community is not likely to address it in the near future," the advocacy coordinator for CARE International in Afghanistan, Paul O'Brien, told IRIN from the capital, Kabul.

He referred to the US-dominated Coalition's shift in strategy, from purely hunting Taliban and Al-Qaeda members towards aid work. The Coalition is establishing Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), consisting of a modest number of combat troops, civil affairs soldiers and civilian US government officials. "We have a number of concerns over this. Our major one is that this prematurely distracts attention from the security situation," he added.

This view was supported and echoed by several large NGOs working in Afghanistan, including Mercy Corps International.

"We are working in areas which have had continuing security problems, and found that there is still definitely a security vacuum, which is getting worse. This not only compromises our ability to do our job but also the safety of staff," Cassandra Nelson, the senior spokeswoman for Mercy Corps-Afghanistan, told IRIN, in the Pakistani capital, Islamabad.

Nelson added that the knowledge and expertise held by aid workers was crucial in long-term sustainable development. "When we tackle reconstruction, we don't have the stigma of having carried guns," she noted.

She went on to point out, however, that there were areas where the military was suited to provide assistance, primarily in large-scale projects such as bridge reconstruction. "There is a bridge in the south of the country between Spin Buldak and Kandahar, which was bombed during the US-led strikes and is in need of repair, but nothing has been done about this," she observed.

In a report published on Tuesday, CARE International suggested that "the Coalition should leave the coordination of reconstruction to the Afghan government, UN and other civilian aid agencies, and it should take all the necessary steps to ensure that communities, policy makers and the general public do not confuse military and civilian-implemented assistance".

O'Brien stressed that there were security lapses throughout most of the country, which could only be addressed by international military forces. "If they move into the field of reconstruction then it [security] won't get the attention it needs," he argued.

Asked whether the PRTs would be a good way of breaking down barriers between Coalition soldiers and local Afghans, he replied: 'We have different reports on what the ultimate aim is of this strategy. They see this as an indirect way to promote security by an on-the-ground presence. But if you look at the kind of numbers they are talking about, if you evaluate it as a security strategy it doesn't add up.'

Between seven and 12 PRT teams are expected to be operational soon in up to 10 Afghan cities." (OCHA 14 January 2003)

"Never before has the role of the military in delivering humanitarian been so controversial as is the case in Afghanistan. Since the 'foodbombs' in October, the feeling among humanitarian agencies is that humanitarian aid has been used as a cover for military activities and as a public relations tool. The two international forces that remain in the country, i.e. the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) peacekeeping forces and the US-led coalition forces, both have become involved in humanitarian assistance. In fact, donor governments have made funds available in order to allow the military to carry out so-called quick impact projects, which include activities such as the rehabilitation of schools or medical clinics.

The coalition forces have created the coalition joint civil-military operations task force (CJCMOTK) to deal with civil-humanitarian operations. However, no central mechanism has been set up, either by the UN or other body, to coordinate any humanitarian activities with the military. One reason for this omission may be that, as noted above, the role of the military in providing aid is not undisputed. Many humanitarian agencies have pointed to the blurring of roles. Particularly if forces engaged in combat also provide aid to civilians, it will be close to impossible to assert that humanitarian aid is non-political and impartial. In addition, there is little reason to assume that the local population will distinguish between the international forces, part of the ISAF forces and those that belong to the coalition. The feeling that humanitarian aid has been used as a cover for military activities has been reinforced by the fact that humanitarian agencies have witnessed coalition forces in civilian clothes but carrying arms going around in rural areas and villages in order to provide aid. It is clear that these forces are more interested in gathering intelligence than delivering humanitarian assistance.

Many NGOs have raised strong objections to this so-called 'humanitarian role' and a joint statement under the umbrella of the NGO Forum was issued in the third week of March. However, in view of the political forces behind this military involvement and the interests at stake, it is unlikely that NGOs will be able to have a real impact. But, as was pointed out by one NGO staff, if we do not speak out against these practices, nobody will. 'We must put these issues in the public domain in order to show where we stand regarding our principles.' " (Ed Schenkenberg van Mierop 9 April 2002, pp. 15-16)

"The US military has no plans to stop allowing armed US soldiers in civilian clothes to distribute humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan, but the policy is under review, the Pentagon said Wednesday. 'I think there are some legitimate things that our people do where they don't have to be in uniform,' said General Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He said, however, that US military commanders are always reviewing the aid distribution effort and would make recommendations to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld as appropriate.

US-based international aid agencies Tuesday urged President George W. Bush to change the policy, saying the practice blurred the distinction between combatants and aid workers on the ground in Afghanistan, putting them at risk. Rumsfeld defended the military's humanitarian aid efforts, saying they began at a time when the Afghan people were starving and desperate after years of Taliban and al-Qaeda control. 'The only reason that today humanitarian workers are back in Afghanistan is because of the US military,' he said." (AFP 3 April 2002)

"In a letter to National Security Advisor Dr. Condoleezza Rice, heads of 16 leading US-based international relief organizations engaged in Afghanistan expressed concern over U.S. military personnel conducting humanitarian activity wearing civilian clothes, saying it increasingly puts aid workers at risk. The humanitarian groups, all members of InterAction, sent their letter on April 2 to Dr. Rice indicating that the policy blurs the distinction between military and humanitarian personnel in the eyes of local Afghan populations.

Humanitarian leaders added that it also contradicts a consensus reached after years of discussions between American NGOs and senior American military officers on delivering humanitarian aid in conflict or post-conflict areas where U.S. military forces are present.

"During this period our organizations have engaged in various degrees of cooperation with the American military without being exposed to the risks now created by this blurring of the lines between NGO and military personnel engaged in humanitarian assistance," the letter stated.

Leaders urgently requested that Rice review the policy of armed or unarmed military dressed in mufti conducting humanitarian operations and the risk the practice poses for humanitarian workers." (InterAction 2 April 2002)

International humanitarian NGOs in the north face violent attacks (August 2002)

- Since January, the UN had documented over 70 serious incidents involving aid agencies or vulnerable groups in the north.
- A real security void existed which leaves many Afghans feeling vulnerable and uncertain about their own and their country's future.
- The UN had to suspend missions to Laghman following a violent incident between local commanders.
- International humanitarian NGOs operating in the north have faced a dramatic upsurge in violent attacks, including cases of rape, looting, and firing on their vehicles.

"Addressing the UN Security Council on 19th July, Lakhdar Brahimi, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Afghanistan, noted that the security situation in the north of Afghanistan had seriously deteriorated in recent weeks. He added that, since January, the United Nations had documented over 70 serious incidents involving aid agencies or vulnerable groups. He commented that this list did not begin to capture the insecurity with which Afghans in certain regions of the country, who felt that they were permanently at the mercy of armed groups, had to live under on a daily basis. He concluded that a real security void existed which left many Afghans feeling vulnerable and uncertain about their own and their country's future.

The assassination of Haji Qadir has created tensions between local commanders in the Jalalabad area, resulting in violent incidents and restricting UN and aid agency movement. The UN has suspended missions to Laghman following a violent incident between local commanders.

Tensions in the northern region have reduced somewhat over the past month, following the recent establishment of a Security Commission representing the different factions, local government and the United Nations.

It is, nonetheless, interesting to note the security constraints that WFP faced over the month to give an indication of the fluidity of the situation:

On 5th July, WFP reported that insecurity continued to impact on WFP operations, particularly in the northern region, hampering the movement of WFP staff. It added that international staff had been

evacuated from the Maimana office, which continued to be maintained by national staff. It also reported that WFP offices, warehouse facilities and vehicles had been slightly damaged when an ammunition depot blew up at Spin Boldak in Kandahar province.

On 12th July, WFP reported that, due to bombings, all UN missions in Uruzgan province and certain districts of Zabul province had been suspended at the beginning of the week. It added that, with the security situation being relatively stable over the previous week in the northern region, road mission restrictions for UN staff had been removed, permitting WFP international staff to return to Maimana.

On 19th July, WFP reported that the security situation remained tense in Bamyan province, as well as in Hairaton and Maimana in the northern region. It added that parts of the southern region were still considered as high risk areas.

On 26th July, WFP reported that the security situation had been relatively calm during the week, while noting that a number of incidents had affected WFP operations in parts of the western, eastern and southern areas.

On 2nd August, WFP noted that the security situation in the eastern area had deteriorated, particularly in Laghman province where fighting had been reported." (BAAG, 12 August 2002)

"In recent weeks, international humanitarian NGOs operating in the north have faced a dramatic upsurge in violent attacks, including cases of rape, looting, and firing on their vehicles. NGOs in the region believe that the rapid rise in the number of isolated attacks is an indication of their growing vulnerability amid the existing security vacuum. The attacks have had a chilling effect on the ability of women NGO staff, in particular, to participate in relief and recovery operations. During a press briefing on June 25, Manoel de Almeida e Silva, the spokesperson for the special representative of the secretary-general, reported that many NGOs in northern Afghanistan had "removed female staff from undertaking field missions as a temporary measure." The withdrawal of women aid workers from field missions in turn prevents those aid agencies from communicating effectively with Afghan women about their assistance needs.

What follows is a summary of the major reported incidents, based on information gathered by Human Rights Watch from officials of humanitarian aid agencies in the north.

May 29: Five gunmen broke into the Mazar office of Goal, an Irish humanitarian aid organization, around 9:30 p.m. They quickly overpowered the two guards at the entrance to the compound, hitting one on the head with a pistol and then chaining one in a basement and the other in the bathroom. The intruders appear to have proceeded directly to the organization's safe and carried it away. According to witnesses interviewed after the robbery, the gunmen wore uniforms and spoke in Uzbek.

June 6: At about 2:30 a.m., armed men broke into and robbed the Mazar office of an international humanitarian NGO. Employees of the NGO who were present in the compound during the raid were reportedly bound and beaten. According to witness accounts, a pickup truck arrived at 4:00 a.m. to receive the intruders and took them to an unknown destination.

June 8: An international NGO vehicle was ambushed by seven armed men ten kilometers west of Khulm, in Balkh province. Upon stopping the vehicle, the gunmen confirmed by radio in Dari that they had seized the

passengers. One woman international staff member was taken from the vehicle and gang-raped, while an Afghan employee of the NGO was badly beaten. The gunmen looted the vehicle, taking the passports of the two international staff and a large sum of money that they were carrying, before allowing it to proceed. Khulm is in a Jamiat-controlled area, but the political affiliation of the assailants, if any, is not known. Six of the gunmen were believed to be ethnic Tajiks, and one Hazara.

June 14: A vehicle convoy belonging to an American NGO and carrying seven international staff was fired on at a checkpoint in Dehdadi district, southwest of Mazar-i Sharif, while delivering bread to an IDP camp. At least ten shots were fired at the convoy, wounding one Afghan staff member in the leg. Although the convoy had reportedly driven past the checkpoint without stopping, some of the vehicles were clearly marked as NGO property and all were fired upon. The NGO subsequently evacuated its international staff and shut down its operations in northern Afghanistan.

June 16: A truck carrying a Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA) team was shot at in northeastern Takhar province, on the road from Pule Begon to Rustaq, at 10:45 a.m. The vehicle was stopped about seven to eight kilometers from Rustaq by a group of people demanding a ride, at least one of whom was an armed soldier. After the team rejected the request and began to drive away, shots were fired at the vehicle. Two of the nine passengers sustained bullet injuries, one in his hand and the other on his shoulder. According to SCA, the truck was rented but clearly marked as one of its vehicles.
[...]

The recent violence against international NGOs followed a series of attacks on directors of Afghan NGOs and local employees of the United Nations earlier in the year. During February alone, more than half a dozen such cases were recorded by international officials in Mazar-i Sharif, including attempted killings, kidnapping, and hijacking of vehicles." (HRW June 2002, pp. 1-4)

UN and international agencies able to access 80-85 percent of the country (May 2002)

- The UN is now able to travel in 80-85 percent of the country.
- Banditry is affecting access on some roads, particularly in the southwest.
- Criminality is increasing in the North, Kandahar and Jalalabad and the outskirts of Kabul.
- The eastern provinces of Paktia, Paktika and Khost have been no-go zones for the UN since the coalition operation commenced and in the west, Farah Province is reported insecure. This has affected interventions such as, for example, the return of IDPs from Hesar Shahi camp, near Jalalabad, to Laghman Province.
- Mine incidents, while not frequent, happen regularly and this affects logistical capability and access.

See also:

"AFGHANISTAN: Key humanitarian route expected to reopen", IRIN, 17 February 2003

"The ability of the humanitarian community to access the vulnerable has increased substantially since October, and the UN is now able to travel in 80-85 percent of the country. However, in some areas, instability and volatility have occasionally held up assistance due to either lack of access resulting from military operations, inter-factional fighting, mines or general banditry. Some areas have been inaccessible for extended periods, others on a periodic basis.

While all roads are now open for UN travel, banditry is affecting access on some roads, particularly in the southwest. There are now additional security restrictions when travelling on the Kabul - Kandahar road and

the Kabul - Jalalabad road, due to terrorist threats against UN and westerners. This can be a serious constraint to operations for agencies with a limited number of vehicles.

Criminality is increasing in the North, Kandahar and Jalalabad and the outskirts of Kabul, although the centre of Kabul is stable due to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) presence. Additionally, the government Poppy Eradication Programme has provoked a huge response in the south and east. The Torkham-Jalalabad road was closed when protestors demonstrated, halting temporarily the return of refugees from Pakistan. The road is now open but the threats of armed resistance has effectively stopped the Poppy Eradication campaign and resulted in a stalemate.

Inter-factional fighting around Nimroz recently resulted in the suspension of aid operations in the south. The situation has since been resolved but the Sarobi area on the Kabul - Jalalabad road and Ghazni on the Kabul-Kandahar road are still affected by conflict. Parts of Uruzgan province have also been inaccessible through fighting. The eastern provinces of Paktia, Paktika and Khost have been no-go zones for the UN since the coalition operation commenced and in the west, Farah Province is reported insecure. This has affected interventions such as, for example, the return of IDPs from Hesar Shahi camp, near Jalalabad, to Laghman Province.

Ongoing ethnic tensions, in some parts of the country have also affected national staff. Several Afghan humanitarian staff and their families have been relocated by NGOs or UN Agencies given their exposure to harassment. The severity of the insecurity affecting national staff was illustrated by the murder on 12 April of a national UN staff member in Mazar-i-Sharif. In addition, there have been instances of harassment but the situation appears to have stabilised following the mission of SRSB Brahimi last week to Mazar, where he spoke with senior authorities.

Mine incidents, while not frequent, happen regularly and this affects logistical capability and access. A lorry contracted by a UN Agency hit a landmine 24 April resulting in the death of the driver and the destruction of the vehicle and its consignment." (OCHA 2 May 2002)

Afghanistan UN security update (click to expand)

Source: AIMS. 10 June 2002

Factional fighting and heavy snowfalls limit humanitarian access (March 2002)

- Insecurity, involving predominantly banditry and battles between rival warlords, makes it difficult to deliver food and other items to the needy population.
- Routes from Mazar to other locations, such as Hairaton, Jalalabad, south of Qandahar, and south of Herat remain at high risk.
- Security in the southern parts of the central region as well as in Kandahar has improved recently.
- UNOCHA reported that three provinces of the eastern region—Paktia, Khost and Paktika—remained off-limits for humanitarian workers due to insecurity.
- Heavy snows have put remote villages in the mountainous areas out of reach or only accessible by helicopter or donkey.

"In some areas, increasing insecurity and fear of lawlessness are making it difficult to deliver food and other essential assistance to people. According to reports, this insecurity predominantly involves banditry and battles between rival warlords. International staff travel is still restricted, and local staff are moving with increased caution in many areas. While roads in Mazar and its immediate environs continue to be

relatively safe to travel, routes from Mazar to other locations, such as Hairaton, Jalalabad, south of Qandahar, and south of Herat remain at high risk." (SCF 20 March 2002)

"Security in the southern parts of the central region has improved recently and fighting has subsided in the Gardez area. The situation in Gardez however is still not conducive for the return of UN staff. Access to Logar province has been opened to international staff and national staff can now travel from Kabul to other parts of the central region. An improved security in the Kandahar region is also bolstering relief efforts there." (UNICEF 4 March 2002)

"Humanitarian access has been limited by factional fighting in parts of the country. UNOCHA reported that three provinces of the eastern region—Paktia, Khost and Paktika—remained off-limits for humanitarian workers due to insecurity. The Kabul-Jalalabad road is open and no security incidents have been reported. Elsewhere, the road from Kandahar to Herat and the road from Herat to Bamiyan remain off limits due to security concerns.

Heavy snows over much of Afghanistan have put humanitarian agencies to the test. Remote villages in the mountainous areas are out of reach or only accessible by helicopter or donkey. An avalanche hit the Sailing Pass, a vital humanitarian route in the central highlands linking Kabul with the northern region of the country. Hundreds of people were trapped inside the tunnel, which opened a month earlier." (UNICEF 21 February 2002)

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

4Rs	Repatriation, Reintegration, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction
AACA	Afghan Assistance Coordination Authority
ACBAR	Agency Coordination Body for Afghanistan
ACF	Action Contre la Faim
ACT	Action by Churches Together
ACTED	Agence d'aide à la coopération technique et au développement
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AHSAO	Afghans' Health and Social Assistance Organisation
AIA	Afghan Interim Administration
AIMS	Afghanistan Information Management Service
ANCB	Afghan NGOs Coordination Bureau
APB	Afghanistan Programming Body
ARC	Afghan Relief Committee
ARCS	Afghanistan Red Crescent Society
AREA	Agency for rehabilitation and energy-conservation in Afghanistan
ASG	Afghanistan Support Group
ATA	Afghanistan Transitional Administration
CARE	Cooperative for American Relief Everywhere
CAWS	Central Authority for Water and Sanitation
CCA	Cooperation Centre for Afghanistan
CIMIC	Civil Military Cooperation
CIC	Children in Crisis
CJCMOTF	Coalition Joint Civil-Military Operations Task Force
CWS	Church World Service
DACAAR	Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees
DAD	Donor Assistance Database
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DDR	Disarmement, Demobilisation, Reintegration
DPVPV	Department for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice
DFID	Department for International Development
ECHO	European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office
EO/CA	Ecumenical office/Christian aid
EPI	Expanded Immunisation Programme
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FFW	Food for Work
FOODAC	Food for Asset Creation
GAA	German Agro Action
GAF	German Afghanistan Foundation
GAVI	Global Alliance for Vaccine Initiative
GIS	Geographic Information System
GTZ	German Technical Cooperation
HICFA	Humanitarian Information Center for Afghanistan
IA	Interim Authority
IAM	International Assistance Mission
IASF	International Security Assistance Force
ICC	Islamic Coordination Council
ICC	Inter-Agency Coordination Committee

ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	Internally Displaced People
IMCI	Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses
IMSMA	Information Management System for Mine Action
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRC	International Rescue Committee
IRIN	Integrated Regional Information Network
ISRA	Islamic Relief Agency
ITAP	Immediate and Transitional Assistance Programme 2002
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
LEP	Landmine Education Programme
LVAU	Livelihoods and Vulnerability Analysis Unit
MACA	Mine Action Center for Afghanistan
MAAH	Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry
MAPA	UN Mine Action Programme
MCH	Mother and Child Health
MDM	Medecins Du Monde
MEDAIR	Christian Relief and Aid Organisation
MIWRE	Ministry of Irrigation, Water Resources and Environment
MMR	Maternal Mortality Rate
MoC	Ministry of Construction
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoHE	Ministry of Higher Education
MoIC	Ministry of Information and Culture
MoPH	Ministry of Public Health
MoRR	Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation
MoUDH	Ministry of Urban Development and Housing
MoWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
MUDH	Ministry of Urban Development and Housing
NABDP	National Area-Based Development Plan
NDB	National Development Budget
NDF	National Development Framework
NCA	Norwegian Church Aid
NIDs	National Immunization Days
NPF	New Police Force
NSC	National Security Council
NSF	National Security Force
NSP	National Solidarity Programme
NWFP	Northwest Frontier Province
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ODP	Office of Disaster Preparedness
OI	Ockenden International
OIC	Organization of the Islamic Conference
Oxfam	Oxford Committee on Famine Relief
PCP	Principled Common Programming
PDPA	People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan
PHC	Primary Health Care
PHR	Physicians for Human Rights

PRB	Pamir Reconstruction Bureau
ProMIS	Project Management Information System
RCB	Regional Coordination Bodies
RCOs	Regional Coordination Officers
RDD	Rehabilitation and Development Department
REACH	Radio Education for Afghan Children
RMAC	Regional Mine Action Center
RTMP	Road and Transport Master Plan
SCA	Swedish Committee for Afghanistan
SC/US	Save the Children (US)
SFA	Strategic Framework for Afghanistan
SMEs	Small and Micro Enterprises
SNI	Shelter Now International
SRSG	Special Representative of the Secretary-General
TAPA	Transitional Assistance Programme for Afghanistan
TB	Tuberculosis
TBA	Traditional Birth Attendants
TISA	Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan
TPUs	Training Production Units
UF	United Front (The Northern Alliance)
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNCHS	United Nations Center for Human Settlements
UNCO	United Nations Coordinator's Office
UNDG	United Nations Development Group
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNHAS	United Nations Humanitarian Air Service
UNIC	United Nations Information Service
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNJLC	United Nations Joint Logistics Center
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Populations Fund
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance to Afghanistan
UNSG	United Nations Secretary General
UNSMIA	United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USCR	United States Committee for Refugees
UXO	Unexploded Ordnance
VAM	Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping
VRF	Voluntary Repatriation Form
WES	Water and Environmental Sanitation
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WSS	Water and Sanitation Services

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