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Summary Report

The first six months of 1398, 21 March-21 September, were deadly for civilians in Afghanistan. During this period, civilian casualties increased unprecedentedly. As peace talks between the Taliban and the US continued, the level of violence escalated as conflicting parties sought to gain military advantage by launching increasingly violent attacks.

Civilians are paying the price for this armed violence. Over the past six months, complex suicide attacks, roadside mines, ground engagement, assassinations, rocket attacks, airstrikes and night-time military operations were used as warfare tactics resulting in extensive civilian casualties.

Civilian Casualties

According to AIHRC figures, the first six months in 1398, have been deadly months for Afghan civilians. Changes in war tactics and operations led to an increase in civilian casualties. AIHRC figures show that during the first six months in 1398, a total of 6,487 civilians were killed and injured in Afghanistan, of which 1,611 were killed and 4,876 civilians were injured. These figures show an increase of 8.36% compared to the first six months in 1397. AIHRC figures show that 5,986 civilians were killed and injured; 1,496 killed and 2,992 others wounded during the first six months in 1397.

The total number of civilian casualties recorded is 6,487 including 4,176 men, 578 women and 1,634 children. The gender of 99 killed civilians remains unidentified.

The number of child casualties during the first six months in 1398, compared to the same period in 1397, increased by 26.47%. During the first six months of 1398 the number of child casualties recorded was 1634 children killed and injured; 1292 children killed and injured during the first six months in 1397.

Perpetrators of Civilian Casualties

Findings by the AIHRC in the first six months of 1398 indicate that parties to the conflict in Afghanistan did not abide by IHL. All parties to the conflict have caused civilian casualties. Although AIHRC has repeatedly called on parties to the conflict to abide by IHL standards, the results of monitoring by AIHRC show that little attention was paid to IHL.

According to findings by AIHRC during the first six months in 1398, almost 75% of civilian casualties were committed by the Taliban, 3% by Daesh and 11% by the government forces. The perpetrators were not identified for 10% of civilian casualties. Remaining casualties were caused by Pakistani rockets fired on Kunar province.

During the first six months in 1398, a total of 4,878 civilians were victimized by Taliban attacks, of which 1,051 were killed and 3,827 were injured. As a result of Daesh attacks, 181 civilians were killed and wounded; 114

killed and 67 injured. Government forces and allies are responsible for victimization of 711 civilians; 310 killed and 401 injured.

The perpetrators of 685 civilian casualties; 126 killed and 559 wounded were unknown and the AIHRC could not identify the perpetrators. No conflicting party claimed responsibility. On the other hand, 32 civilians; 10 killed and 22 wounded were victimized by rockets fired from Pakistani soil into Afghanistan in Kunar province. In total, 6,487 civilians were killed and wounded by the parties involved in the armed conflict during the first six months in 1398; 1,611 killed and 4,876 injured.

Distinction of Civilian Casualties Based on Types of Incidents

Continuation of old war tactics, disproportionate use of military equipment, waging war in residential areas, especially in cities, and changes in warfare, with no attention to the vulnerability of civilians, are the main causes of increased civilian casualties committed by the conflicting parties in Afghanistan.

The methods and military tactics used by the conflicting parties, including the use of mines and explosives, sophisticated suicide attacks, ground battles, rocket attacks, terrorist attacks, air strikes and night-time military operations, have caused the highest civilian casualties.

Conclusion

The first six months in 1398, were the deadliest months for civilians in Afghanistan, with 6,487 civilians, including women and children, victims of the armed conflict. According to findings by the AIHRC, the conflicting sides, especially armed opposition groups ignored all provisions of IHL and human rights principles instead using war methods and tactics that caused severe human casualties.

Combatants lack of commitment to IHL has caused an increase in civilian casualties. AIHRC findings show that during the first six months in 1398, the number of civilian casualties increased by 8.36%, comparing to the same period in the last year. During the first six months in 1397, a total of 5,986 civilians were killed and wounded, while in the first half of 1398, a total of 6,487 civilians were killed and wounded.

Out of the total civilian casualties during this period, 75% were committed by the Taliban, 11% by government forces and international military forces, 3% by Daesh group. The perpetrators of 10% of civilian casualties were unknown. While the remaining casualties attributed to the rockets fired by Pakistan on Kunar province. Civilian casualties, killed and injured, during the first six months in 1398 totaled 6,487 people, including 4,176 men, 578 women and 1,634 children. The gender of 99 victims remains unknown.

Similarly, the number of civilian casualties committed by the Taliban has risen by 53%. Civilian casualties by the government forces and their allies have increased by 54%. There is an 85% decrease in civilian casualties caused by Daesh attacks. The reason for this outstanding decrease may be capturing of the areas and military bases of this group by the state forces in the eastern parts of Afghanistan. State forces have been able to capture most of the areas previously controlled by Daesh in the eastern parts of the country and to destroy their active networks in Kabul city.

During this period, most civilian casualties were caused by roadside mines explosions and handmade explosive devices or mines, ground battles, suicide attacks, rocket attacks, air strikes, systematic and targeted killings and night military operations.

The past six months have been deadly for media representatives and reporters. In Kabul, Helmand, Ningarhar and Baghlan provinces, 3 reporters were killed and 16 others were injured.

Recommendations

The AIHRC calls on all involved parties – Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GoIRA), international forces, the Taliban and other armed opposition groups – to pay keen attention to the Commission's recommendations and to commit to their implementation.

1. All parties involved in the war in Afghanistan are urged to abide by IHL – the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and its Additional Protocols – and to observe these norms at all times. Any violation of these rules puts responsibility on those who violate the rules and will be legally prosecuted and put on trial;
2. Peace is the urgent need of the Afghan people. The conflicting parties are called to begin intra-Afghan dialogue as soon as possible and to establish a cease-fire, taking into consideration the maintenance of justice and human rights protection of the citizens;
3. All parties to the war are urged to use methods that will not harm civilians. Killing and harming civilians deliberately and systematically is prohibited in accordance with humanitarian law and is an example of war crimes;
4. All parties to the conflict are urged to refrain from fighting in residential areas or anywhere that may harm civilians and never use human beings as human shields. Similarly, hostage-taking, assassinations and targeted killings and summary trials of civilians are never justifiable and no military faction can do so;
5. Armed opposition groups are strongly urged not to attack public establishments and to refrain from destruction of electricity pylons and disruption of telecommunication networks;
6. GoIRA is called upon to identify and prosecute all violators of IHL;
7. GoIRA should enforce the policy document National Policy on Prevention of Civilian Casualties;
8. GoIRA should review and modify its war policies and procedures in a way that reduces civilian casualties and ensures accountability of the perpetrators of civilian casualties;
9. GoIRA is urged to take serious steps to ensure better security for its citizens as soon as possible. The government should identify and disarm all irresponsible gunmen;
10. GoIRA is called upon to provide an opportunity for the active presence of the International Criminal Court in Afghanistan and to co-operate with the Tribunal in addressing the cases of IHL violation;
11. It is necessary that GoIRA provides training on principles of IHL to all members of the defense and security forces of Afghanistan.
12. The government and assistance agencies should provide more assistance to the victims and their families. Serious attention should also be paid to the individuals and families displaced by the war and more protection should be provided for them;
13. GoIRA should speed up the process of ratification of the Law on Compensation for the War Victims, drafted by the AIHRC and forwarded to the Ministry of Justice, and to submit it to the National Council for approval;
14. Parliament's National Council should establish a Civilian Protection Group within the National Assembly, with participation by the AIHRC, international organizations and civil society institutions, to effectively prevent civilian casualties during armed conflicts.