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amnesty international

AFGHANISTAN
**Continuing atrocities against
civilians**



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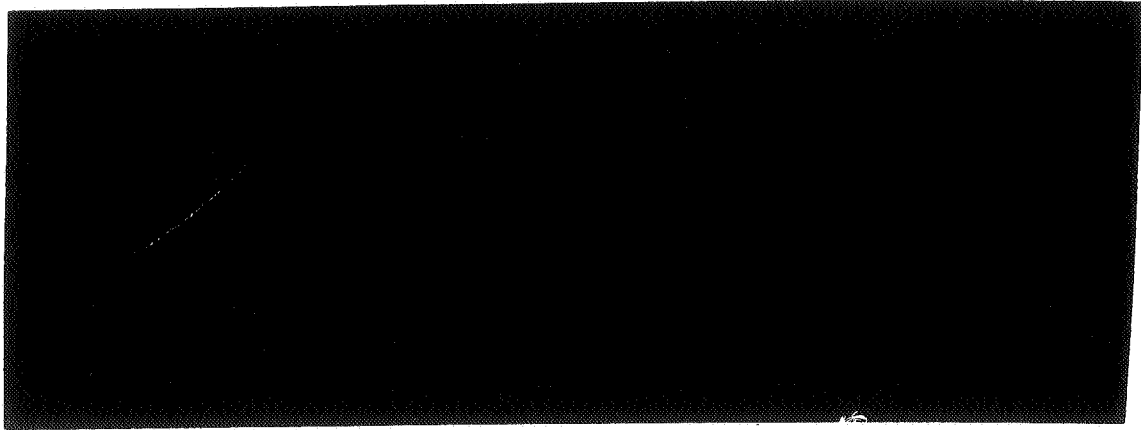
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AFGHANISTAN

Continuing atrocities against civilians



The massacre

Amnesty International has recently received testimonies from the survivors of a massacre in the Afghan village of Qezelabad, near the northern city of Mazar-e Sharif. These testimonies reveal that about 70 civilians, including women and children were deliberately and arbitrarily killed on 14 September by armed Taleban guards as they were retreating from some of the positions they had captured in the area. All of the victims reportedly belonged to the Hazara minority which in recent years has frequently been targeted by the Taleban.

Eyewitnesses report that among the victims was a boy of about 8 who was killed and subsequently decapitated. They say other victims had their eyes gouged out with bayonets. Two boys of about 12 were reportedly held by the guards who picked up stones and broke the children's arms and hands in different places. The two boys were then shot dead.

A Taleban official, Khairullah Khairkha, is quoted in the international media as saying: *"It is a fact that our enemies had entrenched themselves in this village and were shooting at our forces and killing them. We were forced to respond by shelling the village which, as a result, some people may have been killed. But it is not true that the Taleban entered the village and killed innocent people. This did not happen and, God willing, it will not happen in the future"*.

The circumstances of the conflict in Afghanistan make information on human rights abuses difficult to obtain and verify. However, surviving witnesses report that when the Taleban entered the village, opposition fighters as well as young men ran away leaving

women, children and older men behind. Taleban guards asked them to surrender their weapons, but they had none to surrender. Around 70 villagers were then taken prisoner. Most had their hands and arms broken deliberately before being shot. Others were stabbed repeatedly with knives or bayonets. Some had the skin peeled off their head. Thirteen people were killed from just one family. Some of the victims were reportedly killed as they tried to run away.

As the conflict in Afghanistan enters a new phase, with intensive military engagements between Taleban and anti-Taleban forces in the struggle for the control of the north of the country, Amnesty International reiterates its call to the Taleban and other warring factions to abide strictly by minimum standards of humane behaviour which forbid the torture, hostage-taking and deliberate or indiscriminate killing of civilians. It urges Taleban leaders to prevent their fighters from carrying out such atrocities.

Massacres of civilians have occurred in the past but rarely on this scale. Many massacres have remained unreported in the midst of continued fighting but the evidence usually comes to light when mass graves are uncovered. Several such mass graves from the years of occupation of the country by the Soviet forces were discovered in Herat and Kabul after the collapse of former President Najibullah's government in April 1992, but the trend did not stop there. Several other new mass graves of civilians were uncovered in March and April 1995 after fierce battles between the Taleban and their opponents in and around Kabul.¹

Deliberate or indiscriminate killings

In the past five years, more than 25,000 people have been killed in deliberate or indiscriminate attacks against civilians areas, but the number is growing. At times, the killings occur on a daily basis. Usually, they follow severe battles over the control of a piece of territory. As the fighting continues, civilians increasingly become the victims of indiscriminate attacks. Air raids on residential areas have been carried out by all sides to the conflict, but continued fighting makes it difficult to establish the number of civilians - including children - killed or injured.

Heavy rocket attacks on Kabul apparently by the anti-Taleban alliance between 11 and 13 September killed several civilians, including a ten-year-old girl. The rockets, apparently aimed at Taleban military positions, overshot the perimeter and struck a residential area. None of these rockets were reported to have hit military targets. On 12 September, one farmer was killed and another injured when a rocket hit the field in which they were working. After another rocket attack on 13 September, the corpse of a

¹ See *Afghanistan: Executions, amputations and possible deliberate and arbitrary killings, April 1995* (Amnesty International Index ASA 11/05/95)

10-year-old girl was dragged from the scene by screaming residents. Two women were also injured in the attack. Residents reported that houses across Kabul shook with the thunder of the blast reminding them of the past bombings of the city by various factions including the Hezb-e Islami and the Taleban.

Amnesty International urges all factions including the anti-Taleban alliance to refrain from rocket attacks that could lead to deliberate and indiscriminate killings in civilian areas.

Continued abuse of women's human rights

Women continue to be the main victims of abuses. In areas controlled by the anti-Taleban forces, they are at risk of being raped by armed Mujahideen guards. The Taleban are believed to have established a degree of security in the areas they control but they have imposed severe repressive measures against women banning them from going to work or going out without being accompanied by a close male relative. Aid agencies have found it difficult to reach women in need of food and other assistance because the Taleban do not allow contact between them and male aid workers while female workers are already barred from working with aid agencies.

Women, many of whom are widowed with dependent children, as well as children, the elderly, teachers and government employees, form the bulk of the country's destitute. As one Kabul resident quoted in the international media says: "Inflation, unemployment, a crippled economy and the international community's hands-off approach to Afghanistan have only increased the number of beggars in town."

Plea to the international community

Afghanistan has yet again been allowed to become a battlefield between countries of the region protecting their strategic, ideological, and economic interests in Central Asia. Through their political and material support for the warring factions, they in effect have a direct role in the continuation of human rights abuses there. They also have the capacity to influence their client armed groups and moderate their behaviour. But as ever, the civilians of Afghanistan - most in need of protection and support - find little comfort from the international community.

All the countries that support warring factions must accept responsibility for the human rights abuses that Afghan civilians endure. Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United States are believed to be supporting the Taleban; Iran, Russia and Central Asian states are believed to be supporting the anti-Taleban alliance. What about the civilians, who is going to support them?

tortured or killed in custody, to be deprived of their fundamental rights for reasons of gender, and to be massacred and mutilated in celebration of a victory or in retaliation for a defeat.

Afghanistan is a country where the international community has a responsibility to bring to an end the human rights abuses and the international obligations and responsibilities that accompany such a responsibility.

What you can do!

- ◊ You could write to your own government and express concern about the Qezelabad massacre and other human rights abuses in Afghanistan, urging them to raise these concerns with the Taleban officials and other warring factions with whom they may have contact.
- ◊ You could write to the embassies of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates (the three countries that have recognized the Taleban as a government) urging them to raise your concern with the Taleban about the massacre and other human rights abuses.
- ◊ You could also write to the embassies of Iran and Russia as well as to your own government urging them to raise your concerns about the renewed rocket attacks on Kabul with the anti-Taleban alliance.
- ◊ In all cases, you could state that the international community has a responsibility to bring the human rights catastrophe in Afghanistan to an end

KEYWORDS: MASS KILLING / EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS / MINORITIES / WOMEN / CHILDREN / TORTURE / ILL-TREATMENT / NON-GOVERNMENTAL ENTITIES / ARMED CONFLICT / RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE /

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Assistance for Afghanistan WEEKLY UPDATE

Issue No. 237.

21 October 1997

Pledges and contributions

The Government of Denmark has announced its intention to donate US\$599,000 to UNOCHA's Mine Action Programme.

From the frontline

Sporadic fighting is still taking place in Mazar and armed personnel from different factions are to be seen patrolling the city. Heavy artillery has reportedly been moved from residential areas. Most food shops are now open.

Military authorities are reportedly using force to take food from the WFP warehouse in Hairaton to feed troops.

Fighting between Jamiat forces and troops loyal to NIMA has reportedly erupted in the Alburz area of Balkh. The fighting continues north of Kabul.

Herat is reported to be generally stable although the Badghis frontline is still active. UNHCR staff are still forbidden to have any contact with returnees after they have been registered.

Outbreaks of fighting have continued in the eastern region province of Kunar.

Women's healthcare in Kabul

The situation regarding women's access to healthcare in Kabul is a cause of major concern for the international community. The UN Coordinator and the UNICEF Representative travelled to Kabul this week and met with representatives of the local authorities, as well as the international aid

community as part of the ongoing effort to find a joint solution to the problem.

FAO feeds 500,000 Afghans

FAO estimates that it has increased wheat production in Afghanistan by as much as 108,000 tonnes per year. Assuming that the average Afghan eats 200kg of wheat per year, FAO calculates that it is providing staple food for half a million people. The increase is attributed to wider use of improved wheat seeds (which can double, or even treble, production). The seeds are now grown in Afghanistan under FAO supervision. FAO then exchanges the improved seeds for food-quality wheat under a WFP-supported food-for-seed programme, and sells them on to farmers.

P.E.A.C.E. initiative review

UNDP is to hold a three-day workshop, 29-31 October, to review the first six months of the P.E.A.C.E. initiative. Key issues will include the current changes taking place within Afghanistan, new programme and coordination activities, and the Strategic Framework process. Participants will include staff from UNDP, UNOCHA, UNOPS, UNCHS, and FAO.

Humanitarian Update

Herat

FAO ran a training course on improved seed production in P.E.A.C.E. initiative districts of Farah and procured 27.5 tonnes

of improved wheat under the food-for-seed scheme.

Under the UNCHS income-generation programme 9 trainees learnt about silk production. The literacy programme continues to run smoothly.

WFP is opening skills training projects in Tolak, Saghar, and Sharak. Female staff from WFP and a local NGO, ARAA, are involved in this mission.

Kabul

UNHCR is looking into the possibility of launching home-based income-generation activities in Azra. The UNOCHA Mine Action Programme is currently engaged in technical minefield survey in Azra and Tizin – the first step in clearing these areas which agencies are preparing for group repatriation of refugees.

UNICEF has published a book in Dari and Pashtu explaining common symptoms of trauma and grief, and outlining some simple methods to cope with these problems. The book aims to help mothers and children.

UNCHS is to launch a tailoring project through which a group of women will produce clothing for 10,000 children.

WFP distributed 1,334 tonnes of food.

Kandahar

UNICEF handed over 400 blankets and 200 square metres of plastic sheeting to the MoPH, and provided a hand pump for use in a crowded area of Kandahar.

UNICEF and WHO provided drugs and equipment to clinics, hospitals, and laboratories.

The Mine Action Programme cleared 296,000 square metres of land and surveyed another 22,555 square metres. Just under 3,000 people took part in mine awareness training.

UNCHS established a twelfth neighbourhood rehabilitation committee. The solid waste clearance programme has now cleared almost 1,000 cubic metres of waste from Kandahar city.

FAO Crops provided one tonne of onion bulbs to selected farmers in five districts.

DACAAR continues to implement its UNHCR-funded programme to drill wells in different districts of Helmand and Nimroz. Unskilled labour for this programme is provided by the local community, under an agreement signed with the local shura. The aim is to reduce water-borne diseases and to increase awareness of the importance of personal and environmental hygiene.

Mine action statistics

In August, the Mine Action Programme surveyed more than 3 million square metres of "normal" land and just under 4 million square metres of battlefield. Around three and a half million square metres of regular land and battlefield were cleared. Almost 90,000 people were briefed about mine awareness, while more than 29,000 were actually trained.

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Assistance for Afghanistan

-WEEKLY UPDATE

22 October 1997

Issue No. 238

From the frontline

Reports have been received of sporadic fighting in and around Mazar-I-Sharif, also of continued fighting between factional commanders in Balkh. UN buildings are still being looted, with construction materials being stripped from the UNOPS/UNDP and WFP buildings.

There is reportedly a strong military presence in Hairaton, where WFP food stocks have been reduced by 50 tonnes per day to feed troops. The Hairaton commander has, however, provided assurances that no further demands will be made on WFP food stocks.

UNSMA chief resigns

On 23 October it was announced that Dr Norbert Holl, who has led the UN Special Mission to Afghanistan for the past year, had resigned.

Kabul healthcare commission

Following last week's meetings between the UN Coordinator and the MoPH, it has been proposed that a health commission be formed. This will be made up of representatives from MoPH, MoFA, the Department for the Preservation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, WHO, UNICEF, ICRC, and the NGO community. The aim is to promote dialogue and facilitate future healthcare planning, with a view to ensuring that men and women have equal access to equal levels of healthcare.

Meanwhile, a mission from WHO headquarters is to investigate the women's healthcare situation in early November.

Refugees return to Tajikistan

Around 280 Tajik refugees arrived home on 25 October, after a complex return journey from Sakhi Camp near Mazar-I-Sharif. The return was organized by UNHCR in close association with officials from Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and northern Afghanistan. The refugees went by truck to Hairaton (accompanied by a MSF local medical staff member), then to Termez by barge, and on to Shaartuz in Tajikistan by train. They were given medical checkups and provided with food, plastic sheeting, and blankets along with a repatriation grant of US\$30 per person.

Local staff from the UNHCR Mazar office are taking the lead on the Afghan end of the repatriation programme. The programme plans to repatriate three groups of up to 500 refugees each per week from now until Sakhi Camp is empty. There are still more than 5,000 refugees living in the camp.

Conserving plant resources

A two-week training course on the collection and conservation of plant genetic resources in Afghanistan will end on 31 October. The course has been paid for and run by the International Plant Genetic Resources Institute (for which FAO Rome is the secretariat) in collaboration with the

International Centre for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas, based in Aleppo, Syria. The long-term aim: to ensure the conservation of plants that can contribute to the evolution of crops in Afghanistan.

CDAP small grants

One of CDAP's key objectives is to provide seed money to encourage local initiatives to integrate disabled people in the ongoing programme. NGOs funded by CDAP's small grants programme include:

Motivation: redesigns standard wheel-chairs to make them available to as many people as possible. Motivation helps people with spinal cord injuries and other wheel-chair users through sports such as volleyball and by providing information – the organization has published five manuals for those with spinal cord injuries.

Afghan Association of the Blind: establishes associations for blind people in different parts of Afghanistan.

The Afghan Amputee Bicyclists for Rehabilitation and Recreation: implements a rehabilitation programme for lower-limb amputees. This includes first aid, basic health instruction, Pashtu literacy, and cycling. It also provides physiotherapy services in Jalalabad.

The Hearing Impaired Foundation of Afghanistan: is to run a shoemaking, arts and crafts, and sign language training in Kabul city.

New mine awareness approach

The Mine Action Programme is now involving deminers and surveyors in mine awareness activities in high priority areas, instead of depending entirely on mine awareness experts. Deminers report that villagers and nomads are responding well to this approach, and will continue to provide mine awareness in coordination with

other mine awareness and demining agencies.

MACA corporate strategy

The Mine Action Centre for Afghanistan has published its corporate strategy. Copies are available from MACA in Islamabad.

Humanitarian Update

Gardez

UNHCR is working on a programme to provide returnees with shelter materials and safe drinking water. The programme aims to benefit more than 700 families.

MARUF continues to implement a WFP-supported food-for-work sanitation and drainage programme.

The Swedish Committee vaccinated 527 women and children this week.

IRC has trained 80 farmers from the Said Karam district in seed multiplication and fruit tree pruning. Other IRC programmes cleaned 64 tonnes of wheat seed in Khost and distributed 32 tonnes of DAP fertilizer to 640 farmers.

FAO carried out an agricultural survey in Paktia to assess the performance of different varieties of improved wheat seed.

Jalalabad

The pilot phase of a UNOCHA-sponsored CIET evaluation of mine awareness throughout Afghanistan was carried out in the Jalalabad region. Preliminary results will be available in early November.

Kabul

WFP provided 608 tonnes of mixed food to different projects over the past week. Stocks currently stand at 6,600 tonnes.

UNHCR is to distribute 100 "peace packs" and 100 blankets to orphans in Wardak. The organization has purchased 820 quilts made by 30 widows under its

revolving fund programme. These will be distributed through the Kabul winter relief programme.

The infectious diseases hospital annex that has been rehabilitated by WHO was inaugurated in the presence of Dr Rabbani, acting Deputy Health Minister, hospital staff, and members of the international healthcare community. The total cost of construction was around US\$62,000.

Boys from the UNICEF-supported Tahea Mashan Orphanage played competitive soccer matches against outside teams. A three-week refresher course for 21 vaccinators from Logar, Wardak, and Kabul provinces began on 22 October.

UNCHS reports that 190 families have been given doors and windows under its shelter programme.

The people of Chinry village in Bagrami district handed over 15 antipersonnel mines to an MCPA survey team working in the area.

Kandahar

WFP gave food to 32,269 people, a number

them returnees from Pakistan, over the past week.

WHO distributed drugs and medical and surgical equipment to Helmand and Zabul Provincial Hospitals. The organization also supplied a blood refrigerator to the Kandahar blood bank.

UNHCR completed 166 shelter units in Kandahar and Zabul. UNHCR and DACAAR are cooperating to install shallow wells in the Garamser district of Helmand, an area to which large numbers of refugees are returning. A newly completed irrigation QIP in Uruzgan will benefit 150 families.

UNICEF provided DACAAR with 60 handpumps.

FAO studied training needs in ten districts targetted by the UNDP P.E.A.C.E. initiative. Five of these are in Farah and five in Kandahar. Seed, fertilizer, and equipment (including a rubb hall) have been moved from Gerisk to Farah Rud. Farm machinery and agricultural equipment has also been moved from Kandahar to the Farah sub-office.

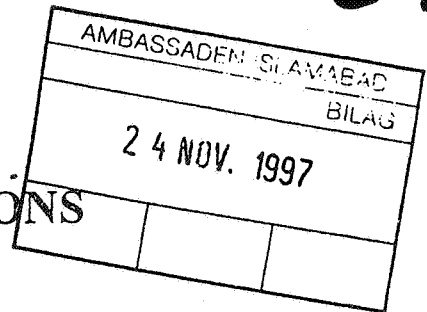
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Assistance for Afghanistan WEEKLY UPDATE

Issue No. 241

18 November 1997

From the frontline

The general security situation in Kabul has been relatively quiet. To the North of Kabul, reports of sporadic exchanges of artillery and rocket fire were received last week. In the northern region a number of heavy factional clashes between troops loyal to Dostum and Malik took place in Jozjan and Faryab Provinces during the past week. Fighting on the eastern and western fronts in Kunduz Province between Northern Alliance forces and the Taliban continued throughout the reporting period. The Badghis front in the western region remains active along the Morghab River. Jalalabad city was reported to be quiet although reports of increased harassment of UN staff. The general security situation in the East of the country remains calm, but tense. Particularly in Kunar and Laghman Provinces where anti-Taliban guerilla attacks continue.

Mine Action

During November mine action teams are changing from their summer to winter locations. The mine activities will be shifted to the southern and western regions of Afghanistan. The Organisation for Mine Clearance and Afghan Rehabilitation (OMAR) has received direct funding from the German Government to implement a women's mine awareness project in Kabul city.

For the mine action, the Danish Government has announced funding of

US\$380,000 and commitment to the programme.

The Canadian Government through CIDA will also provide US\$52,000 for funding two MCPA teams to carry out a three months survey in Kandahar.

Afghan Cultural Heritage

UNESCO has proposed an Action Plan to protect the cultural heritage of Afghanistan. The objective is to protect the remaining movable and immovable property of the country and to promote awareness among the Afghan people of the cultural value of heritage. This Plan is proposed to be carried out in collaboration with a number of offices in Islamabad and competent museums and institutions. An *ad hoc* task force will be set up to coordinate the relevant activities and exchange information.

Publication on War

BBC, UNED and UNESCO have recently launched the publication "When There Is Peace" in both Dari and Pashto languages. In simple terms the book explains the logic and reasons behind war and its devastating effects. The logic of differences among people is explained and it gives a clear comparison between advantages of peace and disadvantages of war. It is based on practical reasoning and it clarifies why peace weakens the rebuilding of the country.

WHO Mission

A joint donor/WHO fact-finding mission visited Faizabad, Kabul and Islamabad between 10 and 14 November. Member states included Denmark, Finland, France, Italy, Netherlands and the UK. Its purpose was to establish the facts of a situation that had aroused concern with regard to women's access to health services. Its findings will be available shortly.

Strategic Framework Process

Comments on the draft Strategic Framework for Afghanistan continue to be received and are being shared with the HQ international mission that visited the region September/October. A strategy review meeting will be held in Islamabad on Friday 21st November attended by donors, UN agencies and NGOs with a view to presenting an assistance strategy to participants of the Afghan Support Group meeting. This will take place under Norwegian chairmanship in New York on 3 December.

Humanitarian update

Central Region

UNHCR has provided 1,000 plastic sheets for emergency distribution to 100 families.

MoPH in Kabul City has completed the chlorination of 7,500 houses dug wells with assistance from UNICEF.

UNCHS is carrying out shelter project activities by repairing and installing doors and windows. 230 houses have been covered.

WFP has approved a three months project of distributing 98 MT of food for training of 260 TBAs in Kabul.

Save the Children (US) has constructed its 18th playground in Kabul. The project is part of the Landmines Education Project, which aims at reducing the number of injuries and deaths among children.

Eastern Region

UNHCR/WFP/WHO are carrying out a joint project of environmental Health Services in Metherlam in Laghman. The objective is to improve the standard of life for urban dwellers. Today, about 90% of the population is exposed to water borne diseases.

MADERA has inaugurated an animal vaccine production project and a diagnostic laboratory in Jalalabad City. The aim is to improve the quality of livestock and to have 40 000 families benefiting from the project.

WHO has implemented a "Health City" project in Jalalabad, which will be coordinated between WHO, UNHCR and WFP. The community is also taking part in providing a clean environment in the city.

CARE International has completed the construction of four major diversion canals and one dam in Zawu District in Paktika. The stream will cover 200 ha and benefit over 700 families.

Northern Region

DACAAR and UNHCR will assist 203 families from Daid Karam District in the construction of shelter for identified returnees.

UNOCHA visited Kalolgu village in Zornat to investigate a reported seizure of UN vehicles from an NGO by the local authority. The vehicles were located but the local authority was not available to explain the incident.

Western Region

WHO has completed the renovation of Gulan Basic Health Centre in Herat and provided medical supplies and equipment to the regional hospital.

PAO provided the Dutch Committee for Afghanistan with 10,000 doses of Rabies vaccine in Ghor Province.

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Assistance for Afghanistan

WEEKLY UPDATE

AMBASSADEN ISLAMABAD

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25 November 1997

From the frontline

In Kabul, the general security situation has been relatively quiet. Reports of exchanges of rocket fire have continued north of Kabul during the last week and the front line is still 20-30 km north of the city.

Sporadic fighting is still occurring in Mazar and the surrounded area. A UN mission consisting of an UNSMA team and the UN Field Security Officer were in Mazar between 18-20 Nov to assess the security situation and meet with the authorities. The road from Hairaton to Mazar is still open, but the border bridge to Uzbekistan remains closed.

Bamiyan food situation

Efforts to lift the Hazarajat food blockade continue. A letter from the Governor of Kandahar suggests that the Taliban might be prepared to lift the block, if the UN can guarantee that food aid goes to the poor and needy -- and not to troops fighting for the Northern Alliance. UN officials and representatives of the donor community have today travelled to Kandahar to discuss a package of strategies. If negotiations are successful, food will be trucked in from Peshawar via Kabul to the most affected parts of Hazarajat immediately. Meanwhile, WFP is engaged in buying and distributing some 2,000 tonnes of locally produced potatoes.

Sakhi camp empty

The last group of 222 Tajik refugees living in Afghanistan returned to Tajikistan on 15 November. Ten groups were repatriated after fighting between Taliban and the Northern Alliance engulfed the camp in late

October. The refugees were among 55,000 Tajiks who fled to Afghanistan in 1992 during Tajikistan's civil war.

Mine Action

Mine Action teams are continuing to receive the support of local communities for their work. In eastern Afghanistan, a resident handed over eight anti-personnel mines; two rocket propelled grenades, a mortar and some explosives to the Afghan Technical Consultants.

Three completed road clearance tasks in Paktia and Paktika have made a big difference to the lives of local residents. One of the roads connects the four villages of Rohani Baba, Khwazd, Kadous, Mangle Khil with Gardez thus enabling the free and safe movements of people and their goods between the towns.

Clearance of a nine-kilometre stretch of road between the two districts of Yah Khil and Yousafkhil and the centre of Paktika Province has halved people's travelling time. In Survaza a newly opened five-kilometre long stretch allows the safe movements of at least 55 vehicles per day.

Assistance to schools in Kabul

Agricultural and Construction Development (ACD), will provide emergency assistance to boys' and girls' schools in Kabul city. The project aims at benefiting 580 boys and 400 girls and it will be carried out between 15 Nov 1997- 1 March 1998. ACD has obtained a non-objection certificate from the authorities to run these schools. UNICEF and SCF (US) will provide essential education supplies and ICRC will give food aid.

UNOCHA has agreed to provide US\$ 1,886 from its small-scale emergency funds for heating 19 classrooms during the winter. The activities will be monitored by UNOCHA, Kabul.

Disabled Persons' Day

December 3 is the International Day of Disabled Persons. CDAP will mark the day in different parts of Afghanistan through its project offices. The Peshawar office will hold an event in the afternoon and stage an exhibition.

Shelter and Rehabilitation

DACCAR will implement three new projects funded by UNHCR and UNICEF. One rehabilitation project has been completed in Lashkargah City in Helmand Province. The objective was to provide safe and secure drinking water to improve the health situation. It is estimated that 12,500 families have benefited from the project. A new and similar project will be carried out in Urozgan Province.

In Sayed Karam District in Paktia Province, DACCAR will monitor two UNHCR's shelter pilot projects. This will enable returnees to rebuild their houses, and a "rehabilitation shura" will also be established to supervise the work.

Strategic Framework Process

The Strategy Review meeting was held on Friday 21st in Islamabad. Participants included donors, UN agencies, NGOs, the OIC and the ICRC. Norwegian State Secretary Leiv Lunde, who will chair the Afghanistan Support Group meeting in New York on 3 December was also present. The meeting reviewed the draft strategy and

concluded with broad agreement on a number of points: the common objectives of the strategy; the principles which should underpin it; the need for an independent monitoring and evaluation mechanism; the approach to be adapted in preparing the 1998 Consolidated Appeal and the need for a phased and collaborative approach to achieving a common programme. The next draft of the strategy will shortly be available and will be sent in advance to participants of the New York meeting.

Humanitarian update

Central Region

UNHCR recorded 466 families leaving Kabul and 140 families entering the city. Out of these, 86 families arrived from Mazar, Kunduz, Baghlan and Takhar Provinces.

UNHCR plans to complete the construction work under the Repatriation Program in Azro before the onset of winter. 1,350 quilts will be distributed during the winter relief program.

UNCHS is to provide support for roofing of damaged houses in Kabul. Reinforced concrete beams will be produced through the Kabul Housing Factory.

WFP has released 748 tonnes of wheat flour to bakery projects in Kabul City. The subsidised bread will benefit 211,564 people. An additional 350 tonnes of wheat were distributed to food-for-work projects on water and sanitation in the city.

Mine Action: all operations in the central region were in progress during the past week. The site of the Russian Embassy, where IDPS have taken shelter is cleared.

Eastern Region

UNHCR has launched a health facilities project in Tizin village in Sorobi District. The project aims to benefit 196 repatriated families.

A joint malaria epidemic survey mission comprising WHO and HNI-MCP visited Watapur District in Kunar. Findings indicate a high rate of malaria cases in the district and anti-malaria drugs were immediately provided by WHO

Western Region

WFP has distributed 50 tonnes of food to Herat and Badghis Provinces.

FAO Crops transferred and stored 64 tonnes of improved seed and 9 tonnes of DAP fertilisers from Herat and Delaram to Shindand and Farah.

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Assistance for Afghanistan

WEEKLY UPDATE

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2 December 1997

Pledges and contributions

The Netherlands Government is to donate an additional amount of US\$ 1,025,600 to the 1997 ICRC Appeal for Afghanistan.

The People's Republic of China has provided UNHCR with relief items, worth some US\$ 362,000, for the 1997 UN Consolidated Appeal.

From the frontline

In Kabul, the general security situation has been relatively quiet. Reports of harassment and summary punishment of locals by the Taliban continue.

To the north of Kabul, reports of exchanges of rocket fire continued to be received during the past week and the front line is 20-30 km to the north of the city.

The Ghorband Valley and Jalrez fronts have been quiet. No activity in the Tagab Valley has been reported.

Factional tension prevails in Mazar and the surrounding region. Security and law enforcement in the city is uncoordinated and civil administration has not yet been established.

Kunduz remains occupied by Taliban forces. Clashes against this force from neighbouring Takhar Province were reported during the past week. The western province of Faryab was reported to have been captured by Dostum's forces on 23 November.

The general security situation in Herat city is reported to be stable. The Badghis front in the northwest remains active along the Morghab River.

The southern region and Jalalabad were reported to be quiet. Tensions remain in Kunar due to guerrilla activity.

Bamiyan food situation

Having received permission from the Pakistan Government, WFP is preparing for an airlift of food supplies from Peshawar to the central Bamiyan region. If the Taliban will lift the road block this week, then food aid will be trucked from Kabul via Ghazni to the most affected parts. WFP has enough wheat in Peshawar to supply the region with the 7,000 tonnes it needs. The three NGO coordination bodies, ACBAR, ANCB and ICC have announced that they will assist WFP in its effort to bring in supply goods to Bamiyan.

Human rights mission

Professor Paik Choong-Hyun, the Human Rights Commission's rapporteur for Afghanistan, is visiting Pakistan and Afghanistan between 30 November and 11 December. He intends to investigate the mass graves recently found in northern Afghanistan. Reportedly, a large number of bodies had been buried in circumstances suggesting violations of human rights. Mr. Choong-Hyun will issue a final report to the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva in March next year.

Strategic framework process

The Afghan Support Group of donors will be meeting in New York on 3rd December. The agenda will include an update of the political and security situation, the Strategic Framework, Drug Control and Human Rights. Participants will in particular be focusing on the proposed Assistance Strategy paper. The draft strategy document is now available from UNOCHA/UNDP.

The NGO coordination bodies in Peshawar, ACBAR, ANCB and ICC, held a

meeting on 27 November to discuss their internal coordination and participation in the Afghanistan Task Force. The discussion focused on the role of the Task Force and the NGOs' representation in the Strategic Framework process. They expressed a willingness to actively participate in the Task Force and representatives have already been selected. Regarding their internal coordination, a process has been initiated to define its structure. The agenda included the dissemination of information in a timely manner and a more detailed reflection of the NGO discussions in the Strategy documents.

Humanitarian update

Central Region

A joint mission of WHO, UNICEF and MOPH visited Ghazni Province to evaluate the extent of EPI in the region. Medical items and AIDS information books were distributed to hospitals.

WFP approved the release of 346 tonnes of food items for a nutrition and health education program. Included in the program is training of TBAs.

Mine Action: A delegation from the Swedish Foreign Ministry visited the sites of mine activities in the region last week. There were two UXO incidents involving two victims.

UNOPS is carrying out two Health Care Training projects in Yakawlang district in Bamyan Province. The aim is to train 360 female TBAs and 360 male community health workers in basic health care and literacy.

UNOPS has signed a contract with ACBAR to conduct a baseline survey in Azro and Sarobi districts. The districts are identified by UNHCR as expected refugee

return areas. The survey will look at demographic and economic baseline information in all sectors.

Eastern Region

In a joint mission to Asabad, WFP, FAO and ACLU, are carrying out a needs assessment of the people of Kunar. It is said that drinking water seems to be the most urgent need.

The EPI campaign, covering 7 districts in Nangarhar, 3 in Laghman and 7 in Kunar has started. Children and women in Nangarhar and Laghman have been vaccinated.

Western Region

Habitat continued the solid waste removal with WFP and the Municipality. They completed the construction of all culverts in district 7 and 8, and the community hall in district 8.

FAO Crops distributed 9 tonnes of improved wheat seed in Bakwa and Farah Provinces under the PEACE initiative.

UNICEF provided food stuff and fuel to health facilities in all provinces in the region. This was done in collaboration with MOPH, CHA, MDM and Merlin.

Southern Region

UNOPS has started the implementation of two new irrigation projects and one road project in Shiga and Arghandab districts in Kandahar.

FAO Crops transported 230 tonnes of Urea and 45 tonnes of DAP from Quetta to Kandahar.