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Information on Islamic State/Daesh/ISKP/ISIL/ISIS activity

In June 2019 the *Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australia* states in a report that:

“ISKP formally launched its Afghanistan operations in January 2015, pledging its allegiance to the ‘caliphate’ in Syria and Iraq. Initially based in Nangarhar province on the porous Pakistan border, ISKP has subsequently expanded its presence to approximately 30 districts across the country, primarily in the north and east. The UN has estimated the overall size of the group in Afghanistan at between 1,500 and 6,000” (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australia (27 June 2019) *DFAT Country Information Report: Afghanistan*, p.19).

In June 2019 the *European Asylum Support Office* comments on:

“...ISKP’s transformation into a sectarian, terrorist outfit bent on carrying out large-scale, deliberate attacks on civilians...” (European Asylum Support Office (June 2019) *Afghanistan Security Situation*, p.40).

A publication in September 2019 by the *Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights* states that:

“Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province (ISIL-KP) remained resilient. Afghan and international military forces maintained a high pace of operations against the group’s strongholds in Nangarhar and Kunar Provinces, resulting in some degradation of ISIL-KP leadership structures, but the movement continues to compete with the Taliban in the eastern region and has retained an operational capability in the city of Kabul” (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (3 September 2019) *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security: Report of the Secretary-General (September 2019)*, p.7).

In October 2019 the *United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan* states that:

“From 1 January to 30 September 2019, Anti-Government Elements caused 5,117 civilian casualties (1,207 deaths and 3,910 injured)...accounting for 62 per cent of all civilian casualties. While this represents a three per cent overall decrease in civilian casualties attributed to Anti-Government Elements compared to the same period in 2018, the recent increase of civilian casualties attributed to Taliban is noteworthy. UNAMA attributed 3,823 civilian casualties (922 deaths and 2,901 injured) representing 46 per cent of all civilian casualties to the Taliban. Civilian casualties attributed to the Taliban increased by 31 per cent in the first nine months of 2019 as compared to the same time period in 2018...However, comparing the months of July, August and September of 2019 to the third quarter of 2018, it shows more than a tripling of civilian casualties caused by the Taliban...UNAMA attributed 1,013 civilian casualties (229 deaths and 784 injured) representing 12 per cent of all civilian casualties, to Daesh/Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP). This is a 49 per cent

decrease as compared to the first nine months of 2018..." (United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (17 October 2019) *Quarterly Report On The Protection Of Civilians In Armed Conflict:1 January To 30 September 2019*, p.3).

Reuters in November 2019 notes that:

"Security forces have "obliterated" Islamic State (IS) militants in Afghanistan, President Ashraf Ghani said on Tuesday, hours after a prisoner swap with Taliban insurgents raised hopes of a lull in violence in the country" (Reuters (19 November 2019) *Afghanistan's president claims victory over Islamic State*).

This document also states that:

"Nangarhar, which shares a long and porous border with neighboring Pakistan, has long served as the main stronghold of IS, from where militants planned and staged bombings around the country, especially the capital Kabul. Their attacks, targeting foreign nationals and the minority Shi'ite community, have killed hundreds. Corroborating the government's claims on defeating IS is difficult given the province's remote and mountainous terrain, with diverse bands of fighters that often switch sides between militant groups and sometimes pro-government forces" (ibid).

In December 2019 the *New York Times* states that:

"The Islamic State's main stronghold in eastern Afghanistan collapsed in recent weeks, according to American and Afghan officials, following years of concerted military offensives from American and Afghan forces and, more recently, the Taliban" (New York Times (3 December 2019) *Afghans Find Little Solace in Collapse of an Islamic State Stronghold*, p.1).

This document also states that:

"Western and Afghan officials see a combination of factors that led to the Islamic State's losses in the east, forcing many of the fighters to either move or surrender. One Western official estimated that the group's strength was now reduced to around 300 fighters in Afghanistan, from an estimated 3,000 earlier this year" (ibid, p.1).

Agence France Presse in December 2019 points out that:

"IS-K remains in Afghanistan, notably in Kunar province, which neighbours Nangarhar, as well as in the capital Kabul" (*Agence France Presse* (3 December 2019) *Stunned residents return after IS losses in east Afghanistan*).

Agence France Presse in December 2019 points out that:

"Nangarhar was once a hotbed of activity for the Islamic State group's Afghanistan affiliate. Authorities recently claimed the jihadists have been territorially defeated in the province -- but small cells are thought to remain" (*Agence France Presse* (4 December 2019) *Japanese doctor who helped Afghans for decades among six killed in attack*, p.2).

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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