
UN REPORT: CIVILIAN CASUALTIES IN AFGHANISTAN SHOW SLIGHT DECLINE

-

28.04.2017

Reuters (27 April 2017)

An Afghan family leaves the site of an attack where the house of an Afghan member of parliament was attacked by Taliban in Kabul, Afghanistan December 22, 2016. Credit: Reuters/Omar Sobhani/Files

Kabul: Civilian casualties caused by the war in Afghanistan declined slightly in the first three months of 2017, the UN said on Thursday, a rare drop that officials attributed mostly to residents fleeing areas of fighting.

From January to March there were 715 civilians killed and 1,466 wounded, an overall 4% decrease compared to the same period last year, according to a quarterly report released by UN human rights investigators in Kabul.

A major factor in that decrease was a 19% drop in casualties from ground engagements between Western-backed government security forces and insurgent groups like the Taliban and ISIS, but investigators said the decrease was likely because more than half a million Afghans fled areas of fighting in 2016, the highest number on record.

While UNAMA welcomes such a decrease and all efforts to protect civilians, it notes the record levels of internal displacement within Afghanistan during 2016 and that the reduction in numbers may be related to the movement of civilians from several areas severely affected by conflict, the UN Mission in Afghanistan said in a statement.

Overall in 2016, 3,498 civilians were killed and 7,920 wounded, making it the deadliest year on record for Afghan civilians.

The report highlighted a 24% spike in casualties among women, and a 3% increase for children.

At least 62% of casualties were attributed to anti-government groups like the Taliban, as well as ISIS, which launched several of the deadliest attacks ever in Kabul this year.

During an armed conflict, the intentional killing and injuring of civilians is a war crime, Tadamichi Yamamoto, the UN secretary-generals special representative for Afghanistan, said in a statement.

Anti-government elements must stop this deplorable practice and everybody must apply □ and respect – the definition of civilian provided by international humanitarian law.

There was a slight, 2% decrease in casualties attributed to Afghan security forces and their Western allies, but the report documented a substantial and disturbing increase in casualties from air strikes.

In the first quarter of 2017, 72 civilians were killed and 76 wounded in aerial operations by Afghan and US forces, compared to eight dead and 21 injured in the same period last year.

Kaynak/Source: