# Terrorism as a Challenge to Good Governance in Afghanistan: An Evaluation

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## Abstract

Good governance denotes ensuring justice, empowerment of masses, employment opportunities and efficient delivery of services. Terrorism however is a hurdle in achieving the above and thus is a spoiler. It is a major challenge in assuring rule of law in a country, security, prosperity, development, and human rights and fundamental freedoms of a nation. More particularly, it is a threat to economic, political and social wellbeing; all of which are required for safeguarding good governance. In absence of good governance, development schemes cannot bring improvement in the quality of life of the citizens and can lead to distrust between the government and masses thus paving the ground for radicalization and forcing more people into terrorism. How is terrorism affecting good governance in Afghanistan and to what extent? To respond to this question, this paper has adopted qualitative methodology in nature and has used and examined secondary sources, which include books, magazines, journals and newspapers. This paper provides a framework for good governance in Afghanistan with the help of worldwide governance indicators and further identifies its essential features and the major challenges before it. Particularly this paper identifies terrorism as a challenge to democracy and good governance in Afghanistan. The paper concludes that terrorist attacks in Afghanistan have affected the social and economic development of the country and has undermined the democratic fabric and governance capabilities of the Afghan society. The paper will further shed light on the policy recommendations and suggestions.

**Keywords:** Challenges, Good Governance, Afghanistan, Terrorism, Prospects, Sustainable development.

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*"If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, no controls on government would be necessary. In framing a government of men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: You must first enable the government to control the governed, and in the next place oblige it to control itself."*

*James Madison (1788)*

## Introduction

Since independence, Afghanistan's democratic experience has established that to achieve good governance it must aim at expansion of social opportunities and removal of poverty. More particularly it means securing justice, empowerment, employment and efficient delivery of services[1]. In the Afghan context, the central challenge before good governance relates to multi-faceted development issues involving social, economic and political dimensions.

Every nation is guided by certain values; democracy, nationalism, , non-alignment, and market economy are some values in Afghanistan context. Aside from these values the primary responsibility of the government is to maintain public order and security, and it cannot be neglected at any cost. The most important public good is the supply of security, especially the security of life and property. Also, there are several inter-related aspects of attaining justice including security of life and property, access to justice, and rule of law.

The term Governance has been conceptualized in various ways. There is a difference of opinion between the conservatives and the liberals, and also between socialists and the communists, about the meaning of governance [2]. The government is viewed as an agency or machinery through which the will of the State is formulated, expressed, and realized. While this traditional distinction between the state and the government holds, the role of the government and nature of governance have been changing from time to time; and even at a given point of time there is a considerable variation when the form of government is a democracy or otherwise[3]. Actually the term governance covers a very wide range of meaning; it is defined in several ways by different authors and thinkers. Governance is about how authority is exercised and public affairs are conducted and controlled in a country. It is the exercise of economic, political, and administrative authority to manage the country's affairs at all levels and aspects. According to Vineeta Rai, the term Governance is derived from the Greek word

Kubernao, which means to 'steer' and it is also the term first used by Greek Philosopher Plato in a metaphorical sense[4]. Thus, good governance means securing justice, empowerment, employment and efficient delivery of services[5].

So, governments ought to continue to work towards eradicating poverty, reducing disparities of income and wealth, eliminating corruption and formulating good governance policies. As Afghanistan is a complex society to govern where terrorism[6] is a major challenge to nation's economic, political, and social set up. Terrorism makes the public functioning and normal life paralyzed, and also it causes huge economic losses for the state as well as for the whole country. Thus development is seriously hampered and the success of governance of a country remains a challenge because of terrorism[7]. In this regard, the current study makes an endeavor to provide a framework for good governance in Afghanistan with the help of worldwide governance indicators and identifies its essential features and the major challenges before it. Particularly this study identifies terrorism as a challenge to good governance in Afghanistan. The rest of the study is organized as, section 2 highlighting the current status of Governance in Afghanistan by discussing challenges. Section 3 discusses Terrorism in Afghanistan, Section 4 portrays Worldwide Governance Indicators in Afghanistan Context and measures already take by government and finally section 5 concludes the study with policy recommendations.

## 2. Current Status of Governance in Afghanistan

As Afghanistan represents a cultural and geographical diversity and socio-religious traditions. It comprises multiracial, multi-religious, multilingual, and multicultural society. Translating the concept of good governance into reality, in this type of society, is not any easy task.[8] One of the important components of good governance is the transparency in the working of the government. Thus, in case of Afghanistan also, the pre-requisite for good governance is the successful establishment of its democratic institutions meant for development like, institutions of Afghanistan's governance include, governors, election commissioners at central level, police and regulatory bodies.[9]

The concept of good governance in Afghanistan is new and the country lacks a practical background of performing good governance in its contemporary history. The concept of good governance for the first time entered into Afghan political literature after the fall of the Taliban. The Bonn Conference's declaration bolds the essential components of good

governance such as the concepts of democracy, human rights and the rule of law; but the declaration doesn`t introduce or describe any kind of structures, mechanisms or ways that would show how it is practically possible to perform good governance in a war-torn country. The Bonn Conference (22 December 2001) was held in Bonn, Germany immediately after the fall of the Taliban. Its main goal was to form the foundations of an inclusive political regime in Afghanistan in which all sides of the 30 years civil war are included. But despite its goal, the conference turned into a scene in which the warlords, forming the majority of the conference, mostly compromised to divide the political power. That's why the conference was rather focussing on political power than on how to build a transparent regime and how to tackle potential challenges for a democratic political system. In this phase the international community played the key role in funding the post-Taliban government in Afghanistan who later made two major mistakes. First mistake was selection of the wrong partners. The International community, particularly the United States, selected its partners from uneducated warlords, mostly involved in war crimes and human rights violation in Afghanistan. Such decisions disappointed the people who had wished a new era, new faces and new political structures, and had accordingly welcomed the international community. Second, the international community ignored the fact that it is not possible to democratize a society and implement democratic values such as human rights, civil rights and rule of law by leaders who don`t believe in them and even see them as a threat to their undemocratic factional and sectarian political influence in the Afghan society. Consequently, such an approach by the international community can be considered as an unfavourable beginning for performing good governance in Afghanistan[10].

## 2.1  Challenges to Good Governance in Afghanistan

Criminalization of politics, corruption, and terrorism are some of the major challenges to good governance. Criminalization of the political process has an influence on public policy formulation and governance. For this reason, the political class is losing gradually value. In the era of coalition politics, the government has to cope with uncertainty and pressure on national and international front. Apart from that the unholy relationships or tie-ups between politicians, civil servants, and business personalities make the situation even more complex. Though the public and media have their own voice, new methods are devised to fiddle away with the process of law.

### 3. Terrorism in Afghanistan

Nowadays, terrorism or violence is a challenge with respect to good governance of this country. The most profound contributing factor of a structural kind to ongoing conflict in Afghanistan was the substantial collapse of the institutions that followed the Soviet invasion in December 1979. The Afghan resistance in 1992, and for that matter the Taliban in 1996, found themselves controlling the symbols of state rather than ensure smooth and efficient functioning of the bureaucratic instrumentalities that could penetrate society, mobilize resources, regulate behavior, or sustain social order more broadly. In this context two related problems became apparent.

First, there was no longer an actor called 'state' which could have been capable of exercising monopoly over legitimate means of violence, in the process offering security protection to the people as they went about their everyday lives. Second was that the loyalties of many ordinary Afghans shifted away from the state to a range of non-state actors that could better provide them with protection or assistance.

Terrorism indeed overshadows every aspects of economic, social, cultural and political life. While it brings instability and disrupts peace and environment of coexistence, it directly endangers the lives of people and brings violence in the society. The negative effect of terrorism in the countries at armed violence is the reduction of government presence and poor rule of law. The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) documented 5,939 civilian casual- ties (2,117 killed and 3,822 injured) from 1 January to 30 September 2020[11]. The figures 1 and 2 capture the civilian causalities and civilian causalities by incident type.

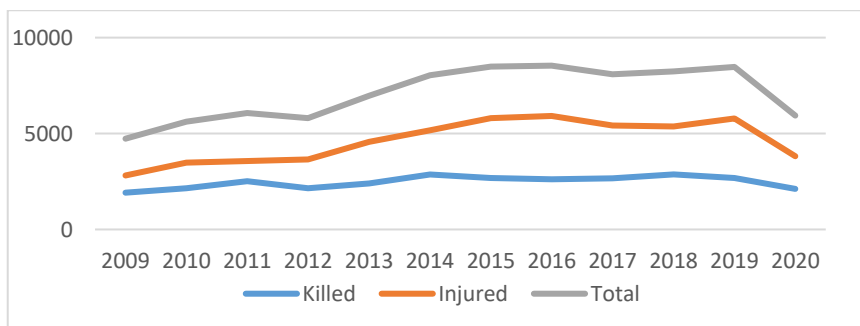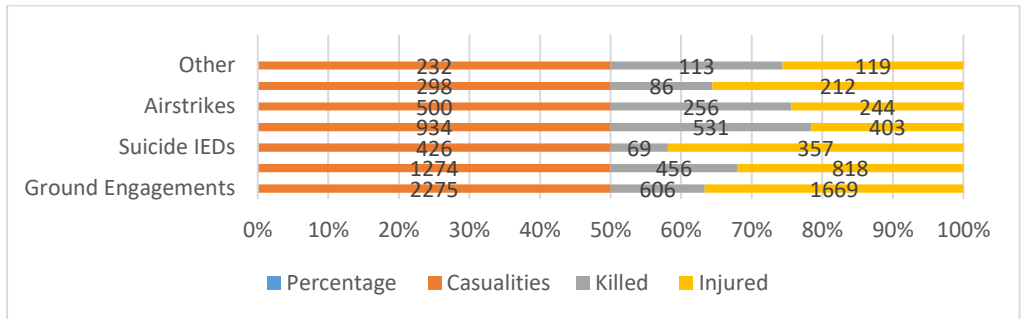**Figure 1: Civilian Casualties (1 January to 30 September 2009-2020)[12]**

**Figure 2: Civilian Casualties by Incident Type (1 January to 30 September 2020)[13]**



| | Casualties | Killed | Injured |
|---|---|---|---|
| Other | 232 | 113 | 119 |
| | 298 | 86 | 212 |
| Airstrikes | 500 | 256 | 244 |
| | 934 | 531 | 403 |
| Suicide IEDs | 426 | 69 | 357 |
| | 1274 | 456 | 818 |
| Ground Engagements | 2275 | 606 | 1669 |

■ Percentage ■ Casualties ■ Killed ■ Injured

From 1 January to 30 September 2020, ground engagements continued to be the leading cause of civilian casualties, representing 38 per cent of the overall total[14]. While the number of civilians killed from this incident type increased by four per cent in comparison to last year, the number of injured civilians decreased by 13 per cent[15]. The vast majority of civilian casualties from ground engagements are attributed to Afghan national security forces and the Taliban, particularly from the use of indirect fire (mortars, rockets and grenades) in populated areas. For example, on 17 August, a mortar round fired during a ground engagement between the Taliban and the Afghan National Army impacted a civilian home in Andar district, Ghazni province. As a result, three women and two boys were killed and seven others, including three boys, two girls, a man and a woman, sustained injuries.

From 1 January to 30 September, the use of suicide and non-suicide IEDs by Anti-Government Elements was the second leading cause of civilian casualties, representing 29 per cent of the overall total[16]. Although civilian casualties from suicide and complex attacks, as well as the overall civilian casualties from non-suicide IEDs, decreased in comparison to the first nine months of 2019,[17]UNAMA documented a 43 per cent increase of civilian casualties from pressure-plate IEDs, almost all attributed to the Taliban.

The third leading cause, targeted killings, caused 16 per cent of civilian casualties from 1 January to 30 September 2020, a 39 per cent increase in the number of civilian casualties in comparison to the same period last year[18].

For example, on 19 August a senior employee of the Ministry of Education was killed and his driver was injured in Kabul city by a magnetic IED attached to their vehicle. On 11 September, in Herat city, near a mosque used by the Shi'a Muslim population, two armed men on a motorcycle opened fire on civilians coming out of the mosque after their evening

prayers. As a result, three civilians, including two men and one boy, were killed and six others sustained injuries, including three men, two women and a boy.

In contrast to the national trend of an overall reduction in civilian casualties, there were nine provinces where civilian casualties increased. From 1 January to 30 September 2020 more civilian casualties occurred in Balkh, Samangan, Jawzjan, Badakhshan, Ghor, Kapisa, Logar, Khost and Bamyan provinces in comparison to the same period last year.

The civilian casualties in Balkh, Samangan and Badakhshan more than doubled in comparison to the first nine months of 2019[19]. There is also a growing concern about the high levels of harm experienced by women and children in Afghanistan.

More than four out of every 10 civilian casualties were children or women. Child casualties amounted to 31 per cent[20] of all civilian casualties in the first nine months of 2020 and women casualties to 13 per cent[21]. The frequent fighting in populated areas had a particular impact on women and children, who made up more than two-thirds of civilian casualties from indirect fire, including mortars, rockets, and grenades during ground engagements be-tween the Taliban and the Afghan national security forces.

Broadly speaking, terrorism has negatively affected the national economy. The government's income from tax collection is reduced particularly in insecure areas. The environment in all such areas is not suitable for investment and thus investors do not consider any opportunities there. This has affected the overall economic climate of the country and has worsened the life standard of people residing in those areas.

Due to government's focus on war and anti-terrorism campaign, poor presence and weak writ at the local level, decentralized political dynamics and local warlords, the Afghan Government is incapable of administering justice at district and village level. . Therefore, state's ability to dispense and people's right of access to justice have been adversely affected and victims of human rights' violation cannot avail the state protection against such violations[22].

In countries under conflict, democracy is under fire. Conducting free and fair elections in such situations is near to impossible because monitoring of the process, the polling centers and the voting is very difficult, and this is why electoral fraud, rigging and hijacking of elections take place. The experience in Afghanistan has shown that during the last three presidential and parliamentary elections, many voters could not vote due to insecurity, or because poling centers were not operational on the elections day, or they

were threatened of grave consequences if they tried to vote. Fingers of those who voted were cut to warn the others[23].

## 4. Worldwide Governance Indicators in Afghanistan Context

From World Bank's[24] definition, good governance is measured by six indicators. In 1999, Dani, Aart & Pablo published for the first time the world governance indicators at the World Bank Institute. The indicators are as follow:

(1) **Voice and Accountability**: This indicator measures whether a country's citizens have the freedom of expression, freedom of association, a free media, and whether they are able to participate in selecting their government or not.

(2) **Political Stability and Absence of Violence/ Terrorism:** It measures how much the government is disturbed or destabilized by unconstitutional means like violence, terrorism, etc.

(3) **Government Effectiveness:** It measures how much the government is able to provide quality public services; it also measures government's independence from political pressures and the quality of policy formulation.

(4) **Regulatory Quality:** This indicator measures how much the government promotes the private sector development by measuring the ability of the government to provide proper policies, rules, and regulations.

(5) **Rule of Law:** It measures the ability of the government to enforce rules and regulations in the society and effectiveness of police and court in tackling the crimes and violence, and establishment of peaceful social order in which citizens can avail all types of rights.

(6) **Control of Corruption:** It measures the ability of the government to control corruption in every sector of the society. In a corrupted society, the public power is exercised for private gain, i.e., the state power is used by elites for serving private interests. With the help of these indicators we can came to know how a country could achieve the goal of good governance.

Now we investigate the magnitude and trend of Afghanistan governance with the help of World Bank's Worldwide Governance indicators (WGI). The six indicators mentioned above are used in measuring governance of Afghanistan as Voice and Accountability (VA), Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism (PSAT), Government

Effectiveness (GE), Regulatory Quality (RL), Rule of Law (RL), and Control of Corruption (CC).

The WGI are in standard normal units of the governance indicator, ranging from around –2.5 to 2.5, –2.5 is the lowest value and +2.5 is the highest. Following Afghanistan's governance indicators as presented in Table 1 below, the magnitude of the different indicators is presented. Among the six indicators, VA shows good and negative values and GE and RL are also good and show negative values, but not close to -2.5 whereas CC, RQ, and PSAT have negative values and among them PSAT is the highly negative.

From the mean values (Table 1) of the six indicators, where the mean value of PSAT is -1.270 which means Afghanistan is unable to ensure political stability and absence of violence or terrorism. PSAT and RL hold the top most variability [standard deviation, (SD)]. And RL and GE are the top most indicators which have the highest coefficient of variation (CV).

From the trend of the governance indicators (Figure 1), it is clear that PSAT has improved in the last few years though the increment is not significant whereas VA is consistent throughout the period. RL has worsened over the years. GE has slightly improved during the last two years. Finally, CC and RQ have improved slightly in the last phase. As a whole, the trend of PSAT shows that this indicator of governance is the poorest one among the six and the trend is not positive even in the last few years.

**Table 1: Estimates of Different Indicators of Worldwide Governance Indicators**

| Year | CC. Est | GE. Est | PSAT. Est | RQ. Est | RL. Est | VA. Est |
|------|---------|---------|-----------|---------|---------|---------|
| 2005 | -1.44 | -1.21 | -2.07 | -1.63 | -1.65 | -1.12 |
| 2006 | -1.43 | -1.43 | -2.22 | -1.66 | -1.86 | -1.11 |
| 2007 | -1.58 | -1.40 | -2.14 | -1.68 | -1.82 | -1.05 |
| 2008 | -1.63 | -1.49 | -2.19 | -1.62 | -1.86 | -1.16 |
| 2009 | -1.53 | -1.48 | -2.15 | -1.67 | -1.84 | -1.37 |
| 2010 | -1.63 | -1.45 | -2.15 | -1.53 | -1.84 | -1.40 |
| 2011 | -1.57 | -1.44 | -2.10 | -1.54 | -1.89 | -1.33 |
| 2012 | -1.41 | -1.36 | -2.11 | -1.19 | -1.64 | -1.26 |
| 2013 | -1.43 | -1.38 | -2.19 | -1.19 | -1.59 | -1.24 |
| 2014 | -1.35 | -1.33 | -2.11 | -1.11 | -1.44 | -1.13 |
| 2015 | -1.34 | -1.32 | -2.21 | -0.97 | -1.50 | -1.11 |
| 2016 | -1.52 | -1.22 | -2.07 | -1.32 | -1.49 | -1.03 |
| 2017 | -1.51 | -1.33 | -2.12 | -1.33 | -1.56 | -0.99 |
| 2018 | -1.49 | -1.45 | -2.14 | -1.132 | -1.66 | -0.99 |

**Note:** *Whereas, Est. denotes Estimate, CC denotes Control of Corruption; GE denotes Government Effectiveness; PSAT denotes Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism;*

*RQ denotes Regulatory Quality; RL denotes Rule of Law and VA denotes Voice and Accountability.*

*Source: World Bank Data.*

## 4.1. Measures Already Taken by the Government

In recent years, government of Afghanistan has taken  measures to improve the quality of administration to achieve good governance and tackle the problem of terrorism. Furthermore, it has strengthened the quality of its justice system to ensure that fair and impartial justice is accessible to all citizens. The government seems to be actively involved in addressing this issue like National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA) and Women in Government (WIG)  for the pursuit of national peace and reconstruction and participation in government.

The Government of Afghanistan uses  ICT  to  improve  efficiency, effectiveness, and transparency as well as increase capacity to deliver quality  services  to Afghan citizens  and  increase  their  participation in governance. The depletion of human resources as a result of four decade-long conflict is a major problem for the country's administrative capacity, on both national and sub-national levels. A number of programs have been put in place to address this problem, mostly in the form of substantial international assistance to Afghan institutions such the Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission. For instance, UNDP, one of the key contributors in this area, sponsors the 3-year National Institution Building Project (NIBP), launched in January 2010 to replace two previous UNDP projects[25].

Celebrating Right to Know Day on 28th Sept, which guarantees access to Information to promote good governance in Afghanistan. This Day is to make people aware about its commitment to provide a transparent and accountable administration in country.[26]

**Table 2: Summary Statistics of the Worldwide Governance Indicators for 2005-2018.**

|  | CC. Est | GE. Est | PSAT. Est | RQ. Est | RL. Est | VA. Est |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mean | -0.30 | -0.07 | -1.27 | -0.63 | 0.65 | 0.42 |
| Minimum | -0.36 | -0.23 | -1.40 | -1.54 | -0.08 | 0.34 |
| Maximum | -0.29 | 0.12 | -0.89 | -0.15 | 0.32 | 0.45 |
| Standard Deviation | -0.08 | -0.10 | 0.76 | 0.87 | 0.21 | 0.04 |
| Co-Variance | -0.21 | -1.83 | -0.25 | -0.34 | 2.32 | 0.08 |

*Note: Whereas, Est. denotes Estimate, CC denotes Control of Corruption; GE denotes Government Effectiveness; PSAT denotes Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism; RQ denotes Regulatory Quality; RL denotes Rule of Law and VA denotes Voice and Accountability.*

*Source: Author's calculation based on World Bank Data.*

## Figure 1: Trends of Worldwide Governance Indicators
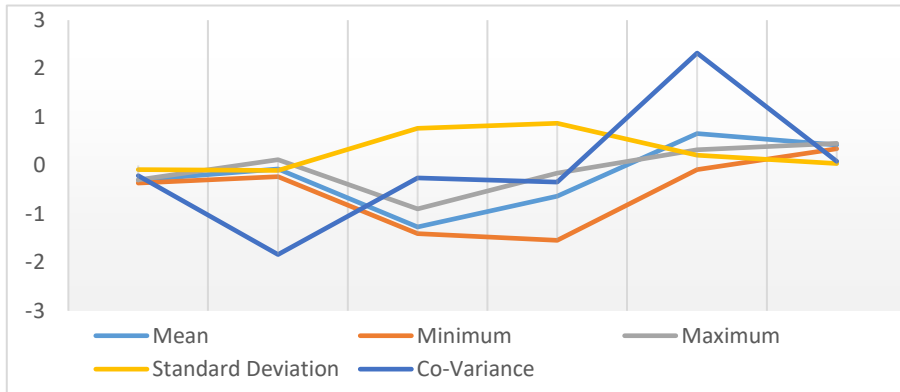


*Source: World Bank Data.*

## 5. Conclusion

In case different attributes of governance like accountability, impartiality, transparency, responsiveness, and rule of law can be implemented effectively, the quality of governance can be improved. It is always important on the part of the government to analyse its work thoroughly and to improve it whenever necessary. However, despite achieving success on several counts, there are still many challenges for the governance system in Afghanistan. Terrorism is one of them. Transparency in administration, strengthening the internal and external security system, development of consciousness, etc. can help immensely to eradicate the problem of terrorism. Here the remark of UN Secretary-General is very relevant when he said "Missiles may kill terrorists, but I am convinced that good governance will kill terrorism.[27]"

## 5.2. Recommendations

Some gross failure in almost every province has had a negative impact on internal security management. To tackle the problem of terrorism as a challenge to good governance, the government should carefully take some other steps to solve or sort out their failures. Although some of the changes may seem small, they are significant and even revolutionary in the Afghan context. While no one of them is a panacea, each would significantly improve Afghan governance so that it better meets the needs of its own people while increasing the legitimacy of its national government. These measures will also produce higher levels of popular trust needed to ensure

the country's long-term stability and greater regional cooperation. These are defined as follows:

- Fight the terrorism but instill a respect for the rule of law by eliminating banditry, impunity and lawlessness.
- Recognize and strengthen informal community institutions that deal with decision making, dispute resolution and consensus building at the village level in rural areas.
- Grant district administrators and provincial governors the authority to raise revenue and spend those funds on local services or development projects.
- Devolve the actual provision of local services to the provinces and districts, restricting the role of ministries in Kabul to providing funding and oversight and setting policy.
- Categorize all civilian project proposals as "life changing" or "life improving" and give the former top priority.
- Establish more regional technical schools, academies and universities to buttress Afghanistan's civilian sector.

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[9] *Ibid*.

[10] *Ibid*.

[11] Reports on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, < http://unama.unmis- sions.org/protection-of-civilians reports>

[12] *Ibid*.

[13] *Ibid*.

[14] From 1 January to 30 September 2020, UNAMA documented 2,275 civilian casualties (606 killed and 1,669 injured) from ground engagements. Pro-Government Forces were responsible for 986 civilian casualties (270 killed and 716 injured). Anti-Government Elements were responsible for 704 civilian casual- ties (177 killed and 527 injured). UNAMA also documented 585 civilian casualties (159 killed and 426 injured) to crossfire and other types of incidents.

[15] From 1 January to 30 September 2019, UNAMA documented 2,511 civilian casualties (583 killed and 1,928 injured) from ground engagements.

[16] From 1 January to 30 September 2020, UNAMA documented 1,700 civilian casualties (525 killed and 1,175 injured) from both suicide and non-suicideI EDs.

[17] From 1 January to 30 September 2019, UNAMA documented 3,443 civilian casualties (650 killed and 2,793 injured) from suicide and non-suicide IEDs.

[18] From 1 January to 30 September 2019, UNAMA documented 674 civilian casualties (398 killed and 276 injured) from targeted killings.

[19] From 1 January to 30 September 2020, UNAMA documented 553 civilian casualties (198 killed and 355 injured) in Balkh province; 135 civilian casualties (43 killed and 92 injured) in Badakhshan province; and 123 civilian casualties (11 killed and 112 injured) in Samangan province. In the same period in 2019, UNAMA documented 199 civilian casualties (88 killed and 111 injured) in Balkh province; 64 civilian casualties (31 killed and 33 injured) in Badakhshan province; and 45 civilian casualties (11 killed and 34 injured) in Samangan province.

[20] From 1 January to 30 September 2020, UNAMA documented 1,848 child casualties (553 killed and 1,295 injured).

[21] From 1 January to 30 September 2020, UNAMA documented 746 women casualties (251 killed and 495 injured).

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