



Press Release

Civilians Trapped in Kunduz Conflict Need Urgent Protection

Parties to the armed conflict must ensure civilians are protected from harm. National and international human rights groups should investigate alleged violations of International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law.

Kabul, Afghanistan- Two weeks after the fall of Kunduz to the Taliban and the ensuing operations led by Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), assisted by the International Military Forces, to reclaim the city from the Taliban, the human and security situation in Kunduz remained dire.

In the past two weeks of armed conflict in Kunduz, widespread human rights violations have allegedly taken place in this city, which were unprecedented in the past 14 years of armed conflict in the country. Indiscriminate killing of civilians, burning and looting private properties and assets, destroying public infrastructures, attacking and intimidating journalists, incinerating media offices and human rights organizations, raping women and girls, using civilians as human shield, torture and extrajudicial killings are among the crimes that are allegedly committed by parties to the conflict and their associated armed groups. Moreover, thousands of civilians including children and women are internally displaced since the conflict erupted in Kunduz province without adequate assistance for their needs.

Independent investigation into the crimes in Kunduz must be undertaken urgently by national and international human rights groups before any evidence on the ground is damaged or lost.

The international Military Forces (Resolute Support) air strike on the Doctors without Borders' run hospital in Kunduz city requires independent investigation and swift action to prevent such a tragic re-occurrence.

The Civilian Protection Group notes that the primary responsibility to protect civilians remains with the Afghan government. But civilians in Kunduz have been left defenseless against the Taliban's attacks and assaults.

The Civilian Protection Group urges all parties to the conflict to take serious and concrete measures to protect the lives and properties of civilians and respect their human dignity and makes the following recommendations:

To the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

1. The Government of Afghanistan as the principle responsible and accountable to the security and safety of Afghans must immediately provide security to the people of Kunduz through increased military and police patrols and to prevent revenge attacks by all sides;

2. Urgently address the humanitarian needs of Kunduz civilians and coordinate and facilitate humanitarian agencies' return to Kunduz;
3. Investigate crimes of armed groups; government or security personnel engaged in unlawful acts in Kunduz;
4. Investigate, acknowledge and compensate civilians harmed as well as damage to civilian properties.

To the International Military Forces Present in Afghanistan

1. While the Civilian Protection Group welcomes the Intentional Military Forces and the US government for taking responsibility for and investigating the attack on the Doctors Without Borders' Hospital in Kunduz and assurances to compensate civilians harmed, the Group strongly urges them to make their findings public, hold persons responsible for failure to follow rules, and ensure that such action will not reoccur in future.

To the Taliban

1. Adhere to the definition of civilians as defined by the International Humanitarian Law, International Customary and Islamic Laws, and must avoid harm to those who do not directly take part in armed conflicts. Any misconduct against defined civilians is a crime under international humanitarian and Islamic Laws;
2. Uphold the rights of injured combatants, war prisoners, women, children and displaced people, and protect them from any harm;
3. Avoid arbitrary arrests, extrajudicial killings and must not use civilians as human shield;
4. The Taliban must not allow their fighters and other armed groups in areas under their control to harm or persecute civilians. The Taliban shall be accounted for any harm made to civilians in areas controlled by them;
5. The Taliban must not force civilians to enter fighting or involve them in any hostilities on their behalf. The Taliban must not damage public infrastructures and loot private or governmental properties;
6. Allow humanitarian organizations to provide humanitarian assistance to the civilians caught in the conflict and displaced people of Kunduz.

To UNAMA and the Afghanistan Human Rights Independent Commission

1. Launch an investigation into crimes that took place in Kunduz province and make their findings public;
2. Share findings with the International Criminal Court (ICC) should their investigation suggests violations of IHL during Kunduz offensive.

To Humanitarian Aid Organizations

1. Accelerate humanitarian assistance to the people affected by the conflict in Kunduz.

Civilian Protection Group

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