

Afghan civilian casualties rose 3 per cent in 2016: UN report

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Kabul: Civilian casualties in war-torn Afghanistan hit a record high in 2016. According to the United Nations, civilians killed and wounded in the land-locked nation previous year increased by three per cent compared to the 2015.

File - Afghan woman walks past site of suicide attack in Jalalabad

In its annual report released on Monday, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) noted that with nearly 11,500 people -- one third of them children -- killed or wounded as Afghan forces struggle to contain growing insecurity.

Between January 1 and December 31, 2016, the mission documented 11,418 civilian casualties -- 3,498 deaths and 7,920 wounded, the annual report titled "Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Afghanistan" said.

The mission said that "conflict-related violence exacted a heavy toll on Afghanistan in 2016, with an overall deterioration in civilian protection and the highest-total civilian casualties recorded since 2009, when UNAMA began systematic documentation of civilian casualties".

Among children, the UNAMA recorded 923 deaths and 2,589 wounded -- a 24 per cent increase from 2015, and the highest number of child casualties recorded in a single year.

The report said that the disproportionate rise in child casualties across Afghanistan in 2016 resulted mainly from a 66 per cent increase in casualties from left-over or discarded munitions.

"This appalling conflict destroys lives and tears communities apart in every corner of Afghanistan," the report quoted Tadamichi Yamamoto, United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, as saying. "Real protection of civilians requires commitment and demonstrated concrete actions to protect civilians from harm and for parties to the conflict to ensure accountability for indiscriminate and deliberate acts of civilian harm."

UNAMA attributed 61 per cent of civilian deaths and injuries to what it called anti-government elements, mainly the Taliban, and 24 per cent to pro-government forces. Of those pro-government forces, it attributed 20 per cent to the Afghan national security forces, 2 per cent to pro-government armed groups and 2 per cent to international military forces.

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