

**ABOUT**

Between 1 January and 31 December, **UNAMA documented 10,453 civilian casualties (3,438 deaths and 7,015 injured)**. The overall continuation in high numbers of civilian casualties underscores the **enormous human cost of the ongoing armed conflict**.

**2017 was the fourth consecutive year where UNAMA recorded more than 10,000 civilian casualties.** Civilian casualties from combined improvised explosive device (IED) tactics continued to rise – mainly due to an increase in civilian casualties from suicide and complex attacks.

**In 2017 the mission recorded almost 2,300 civilian casualties from suicide and complex attacks, which increased by 17 per cent compared to previous record numbers from 2016.**

Photo: © Reuters/Omar Sobhani



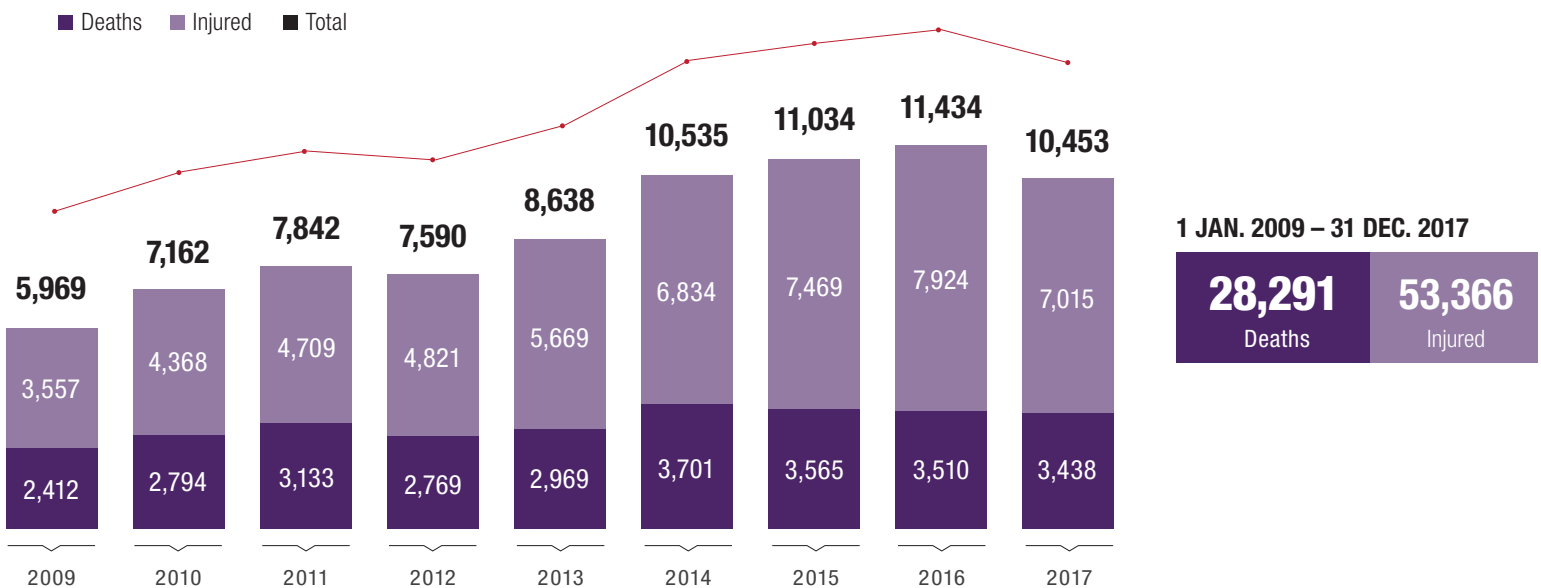
A victim is carried from an Imam Zaman Shi'a Mosque in Kabul city following an attack against the mosque on 25 August 2017.



*My mother, my niece and I were praying on the second floor of the mosque. We had just finished laying out our prayer mats when we heard gunshots and everyone started to run towards the main doors. They started to fire towards us from downstairs and people rushed back towards the prayer room and this is when my poor mother was shot dead and she fell to the ground.*

**Victim of 25 August complex attack on a Shi'a mosque in Kabul city that killed 35 civilians and injured another 65. Daesh/Islamic State-Khorasan Province claimed responsibility for the attack.**

## CIVILIAN DEATHS AND INJURED JANUARY TO DECEMBER 2009–2017

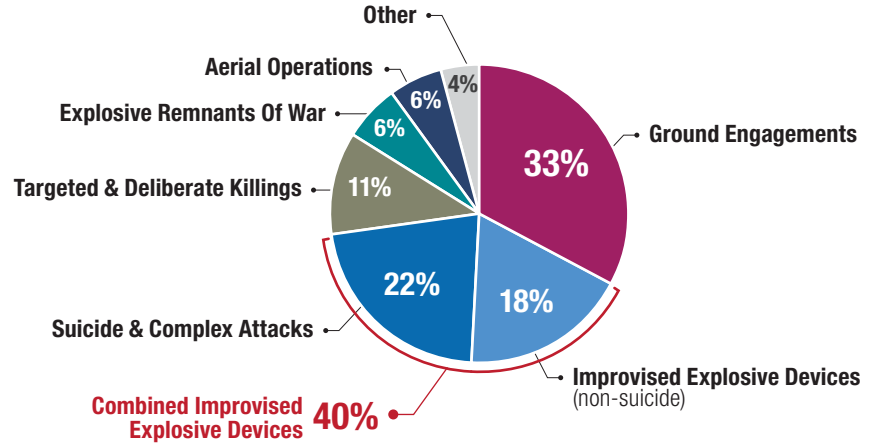


Please see the full version of UNAMA's 2017 Annual Report on Protection of Civilians for more details, available at: <https://unama.unmissions.org/protection-of-civilians-reports>

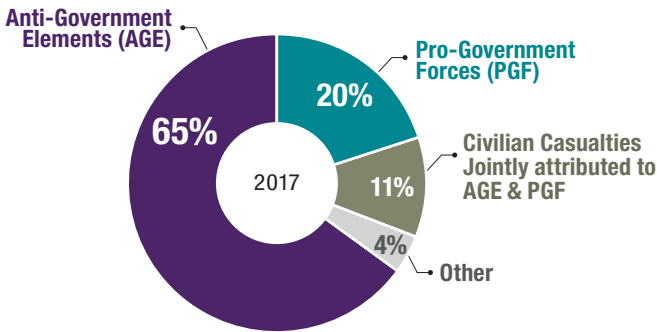
The figures mentioned in this fact sheet do not reflect a complete overview of the human rights violations in Afghanistan but only relate to the cases documented and verified by UNAMA through OHCHR methodology and standards. Statistics on the number of violations reported may increase or decrease over a given period of time due to numerous factors outside the control and/or knowledge of UNAMA, and must therefore be used with caution. All civilian casualties documented by UNAMA are verified by at least three independent types of sources.

## LEADING CAUSES OF CIVILIAN CASUALTIES JANUARY TO DECEMBER 2017

Combined IED tactics caused **4,151 civilian casualties (1,229 deaths and 2,922 injured)**, comprising 40 per cent of all civilian casualties in 2017. The majority of civilian casualties from these devices occurred in the context of suicide and complex attacks, followed by pressure-plate IED detonations. Of particular concern, **UNAMA recorded a significant increase in sectarian-motivated suicide and complex attacks, as well as the deadliest single suicide attack from a large suicide vehicle-borne IED on 31 May in Kabul city centre.**



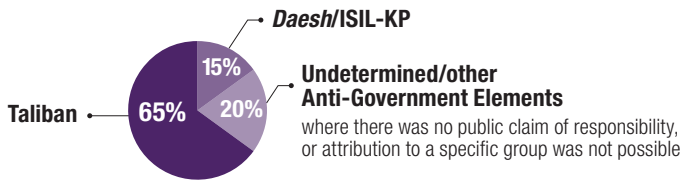
## ATTRIBUTION OF RESPONSIBILITY



*I was taking ablution when I suddenly heard some firing - Taliban had come to our village and attacked the police. The police responded by firing a mortar. When I saw smoke near our house, I immediately started running home and found our house damaged. I saw the dead body of my 10 day old grandchild in the middle of the compound. Three of my other family members were also injured. It all happened so fast.*

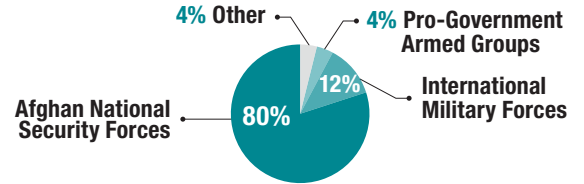
Head of family whose 10-day-old grandchild was killed while three family members, including two children, were injured by a mortar fired by Afghan national security forces during a ground engagement with Taliban in Arghandab district, Zabul province on 6 July 2017.

### Anti-Government Elements



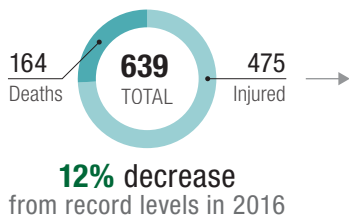
In 2017, Anti-Government Elements caused **6,768 civilian casualties (2,303 deaths and 4,465 injured)**, a three per cent decrease compared to last year.

### Pro-Government Forces



UNAMA attributed **2,108 civilian casualties (745 deaths and 1,363 injured)** to Pro-Government Forces in 2017, a 23 per cent decrease compared to last year.

## EXPLOSIVE REMNANTS OF WAR

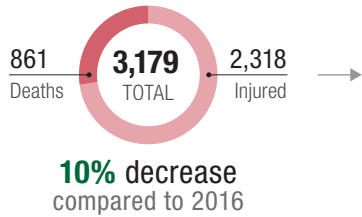


**81% of all ERW casualties in 2017 were children.**

UNAMA documented **518 child casualties (142 deaths and 376 injured)** from explosive remnants of war, including 440 boys and 78 girls.

**The Government** should adopt an action plan to meet obligations under Protocol V of the 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons on Explosive Remnants of War which came into effect on 9 February 2018 and allocate sufficient resources for implementation.

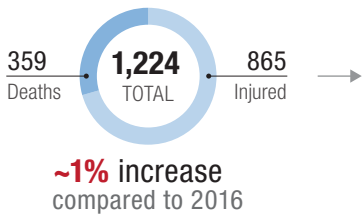
## CHILD CASUALTIES



**Children comprised 30% of all civilian casualties in Afghanistan in 2017.**

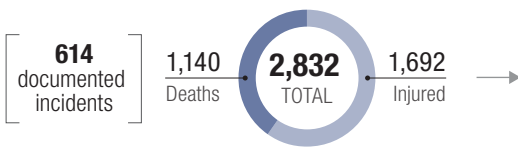
Children suffered mainly from ground engagements, and also suffered heavily from explosive remnants of war and IEDs. **Children increasingly suffered from pressure-plate IEDs, emphasizing the extreme harm posed by these indiscriminate, victim-activated devices.**

## WOMEN CASUALTIES



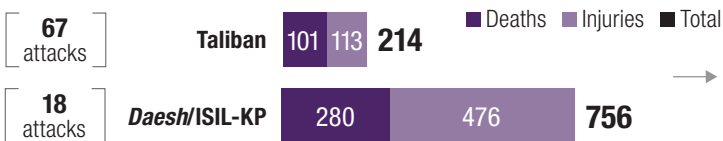
In 2017, women continued to suffer at levels comparable to 2016: contrary to the overall decrease in civilian casualties, women casualties increased by less than one per cent, and **women deaths increased by five per cent.** Ground engagements remained the leading cause of harm to women, despite UNAMA documenting a decrease of 11 per cent in women casualties from ground fighting. The next leading cause, suicide and complex attacks, caused more than double the number of women casualties in 2017 than in 2016.

## ATTACKS DELIBERATELY TARGETING CIVILIANS AND CIVILIAN OBJECTS



**583 of those casualties came from one attack** using extremely large amounts of explosives in Kabul city on 31 May.

### ATTACKS TARGETING CIVILIANS CLAIMED BY ANTI-GOVERNMENT ELEMENTS



**Attacks where Anti-Government Elements had deliberately targeted civilians accounted for 27 per cent of the total civilian casualties recorded in Afghanistan in 2017** – mainly from suicide and complex attacks directed at civilians or civilian objects.

**Parties to the conflict** must immediately cease such attacks and perpetrators must be held accountable – UNAMA reiterates that attacks deliberately directed at civilians and civilian objects and the deliberate killing and injuring of civilians constitute serious violations of international humanitarian law that may amount to war crimes.

## CIVILIAN CASUALTY MITIGATION POLICY AND CONVENTION ON CERTAIN CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS

In October 2017, the Government endorsed the National Policy on Civilian Casualty Prevention and Mitigation and its implementation plan, after several years in development. Afghanistan ratified the 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons including all amendments and Protocols, which came into effect in February 2018.

**Both the National Policy and the Convention, particularly Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War, require plans to be developed and concrete actions to be undertaken at the operational and tactical levels.**

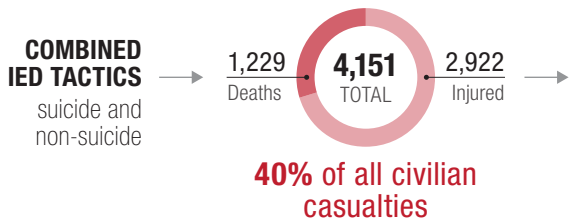
Photo: © Reuters/Omar Sobhani



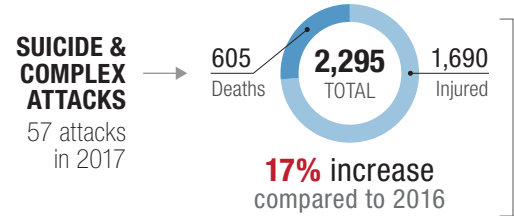
Photo: Wounded man lies on the ground at the site of a blast in Kabul, Afghanistan May 31, 2017.

## LEADING CAUSES OF CIVILIAN CASUALTIES

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Following the trend first observed in the first six months of 2017, suicide and complex attacks remained the leading cause of Anti-Government Element attributed civilian casualties.



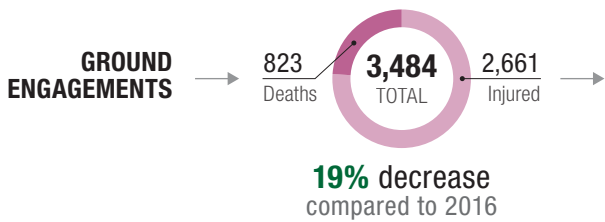
“ During the afternoon, my friend and I took our sheep for pasturing outside of our village. We were playing when I stepped on something which exploded. As a result, I lost my left foot and my friend’s eyes were injured by the dust of the explosion.

14 year-old boy, victim of a pressure-plate IED detonation in Imam Saheb district, Kunduz province, on 24 September 2017.

The most civilian casualties from suicide and complex attacks in a single year since UNAMA began documenting civilian casualties in 2009.

In 2017, Afghanistan experienced the **deadliest single incident recorded by UNAMA** when, on 31 May, a truck laden with explosives was detonated in the middle of Kabul city, causing **92 deaths and 491 injuries**.

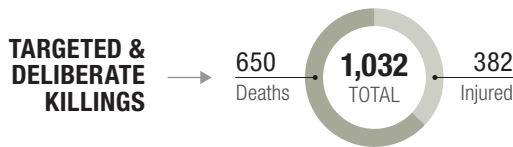
**Anti-Government Elements** must cease the indiscriminate and disproportionate use of all IEDs, including the use of body-borne IEDs and vehicle-borne IEDs during suicide and complex attacks, in areas frequented by civilians, and immediately stop using pressure-plate IEDs.



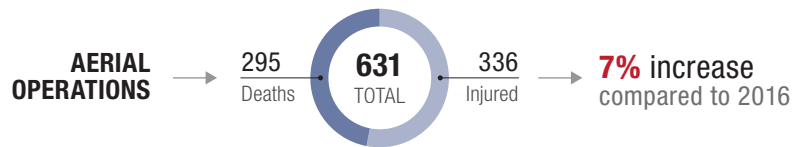
### SECOND LEADING CAUSE OF CIVILIAN CASUALTIES

Civilian casualties from ground engagements attributed to both Pro-Government Forces and Anti-Government Elements decreased in 2017, with Pro-Government Forces recording a significant 39 per cent decrease and Anti-Government Elements causing nine per cent fewer civilian casualties compared to 2016. Notwithstanding, ground engagements remained the second leading cause of civilian casualties in 2017, causing **33 per cent of all civilian casualties**.

## OTHER MAJOR CAUSES OF HARM TO CIVILIANS



**10% of all civilian casualties during the year.**<sup>1</sup> The number of such incidents perpetrated by Anti-Government Elements increased from 483 in 2016 to 570 in 2017, and the number of civilians killed in such incidents increased by 13%.



**Highest number recorded in a single year by UNAMA.** Comprising 6% of all civilian casualties in Afghanistan in 2017.

## ACCOUNTABILITY

The Government, Anti-Government Elements, and International Military Forces must conduct transparent post-operation reviews and investigations following allegations of civilian casualties involving their forces/members in line with obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law and ensuring compensation for victims and survivors. Persons found to have violated international humanitarian law or human rights law must be held accountable and prosecuted, where appropriate.

<sup>1</sup> This section examines incidents of targeted killings perpetrated by Anti-Government Elements. For details on the 69 incidents of killings of civilians by Pro-Government Forces outside of the context of ground engagements, search operations, escalation of force incidents, and other formal operations that caused 67 deaths and 58 injuries, see section on Pro-Government Forces.