

THE COST OF WAR

Afghan Experiences of Conflict, 1978 – 2009



Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	1
Map	2
Executive Summary	3
Introduction	6
Historical Context	7
Experiences of Conflict	16
Recommendations	26
Annex A: Methodology and Respondent Profile	34
Annex B: Summary of Key Findings	37
Bibliography.....	47
Endnotes	51

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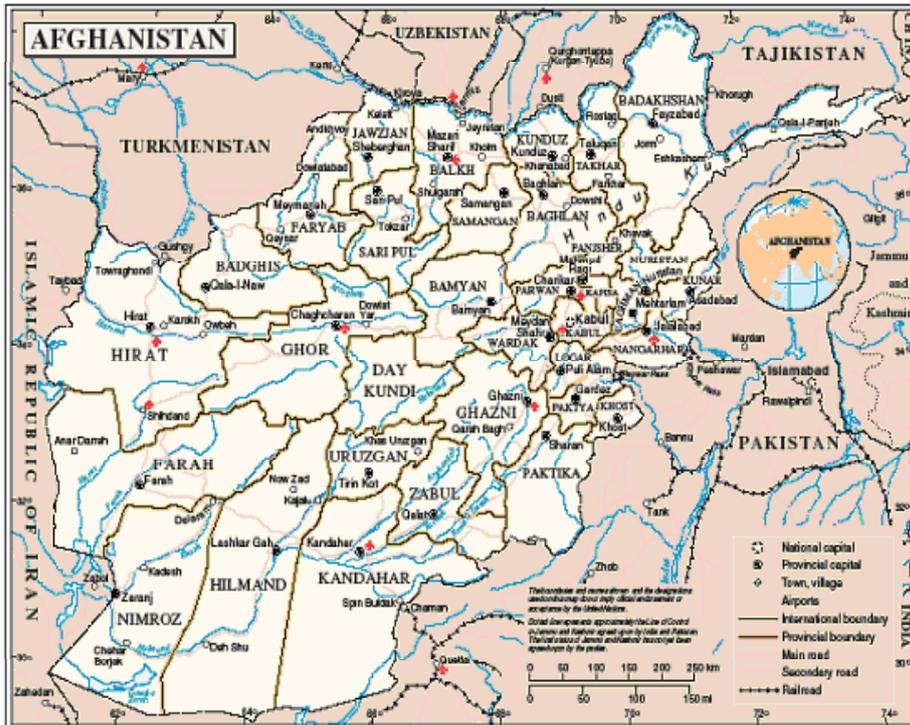
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Cover photo: David Gill

Interior photos: Travis Beard, Gulbuddin Elham, David Gill, Ashley Jackson

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Map



Credit: UN Cartographic Center

Executive Summary

The past three decades of war and disorder have had a devastating impact on the Afghan people. Millions have been killed, millions more have been forced to flee their homes and the country's infrastructure and forests have all but been destroyed. The social fabric of the country is fractured and state institutions are fragile and weak.

Much has been written about the wars in Afghanistan and the basic narrative of the conflict, in one form or another, has been repeated in countless books, academic articles and news reports. But the voices of ordinary Afghans are often absent from these accounts, and yet it is the Afghan people who are most affected by the violence.

To better understand how Afghans have experienced and understand the conflict, eight non-governmental organizations operating in Afghanistan conducted research in 14 provinces across the country. This research focused on individual experiences of the past thirty years of conflict, perceptions of the current conflict and recommendations for alleviating the violence and addressing its root causes.

This research does not aim to provide a full accounting of the fighting or to represent the views and experiences of all Afghans. Rather, it seeks to more fully articulate Afghan experiences of the conflict and its recommendations seek to convey the aspirations that Afghans have for peace and the future of their country.

Experiences of Conflict

Three decades of war created a lot of problems for us. We migrated to Pakistan, our houses were destroyed, our land and property were grabbed by warlords, the economy was badly affected, our sons and daughters were deprived of education, our women were insulted... schools, hospitals, roads and factories were destroyed and fear of war has caused many mental problems. – Male, Kunar

After decades of relative stability, the overthrow of Daoud Khan in 1978 and the subsequent invasion by Soviet forces in 1979 marked the beginning of a prolonged period of conflict. As mujahadeen resistance groups grew in strength, waging guerrilla warfare and drawing Soviet forces further into the conflict, the abuses committed by both sides intensified. In the years of conflict that followed, more than 870,000 Afghans were killed, three million were maimed or wounded, a million were internally displaced and over five million were forced to flee the country.

Soviet forces withdrew in 1989, leaving the government increasingly reliant on militias to maintain control. While many Afghans hoped that the departure of Soviet forces would bring peace, the country became increasingly unstable. Through the first half of the 1990s, as mujahadeen factions turned on one another and waged bloody battles for control, civilians were subject to arbitrary, retaliatory and often random violence including robbery, torture, imprisonment and rape.

The Taliban emerged out of the chaos of the civil war, quickly capturing territory and promising security to a war-weary population. Instead, their repressive policies resulted in increased poverty, widespread human rights abuses, ethnic persecution and killings and continued displacement and refugee movement into Pakistan, Iran and other neighboring countries.

After the fall of the Taliban in late 2001, many Afghans were again hopeful that the violence would end and that their lives would improve. But in 2006, the security situation sharply deteriorated and violence is now at its highest levels since 2001. Though life has improved for some Afghans, still nearly half of the population lives below the poverty line, more than a quarter

of a million individuals remain displaced inside the country due to the conflict and nearly three million remain in Pakistan and Iran.

A whole generation has grown up never having experienced peace and many Afghans are struggling to cope with the psychological, economic, social and physical ramifications of the conflicts, past and present. Interviews and group discussions conducted with over 700 Afghans help illustrate the impact and scale of the violence over the past three decades:

- Approximately two in five (43%) individuals reported having property destroyed, a quarter (25%) land destroyed and one in three (34%) were robbed during the conflict. The causes and perceived motivations behind these violations were varied but often this was tied to larger patterns of violence deliberately targeting civilians, making many individuals feel unsafe, and negatively affecting their ability to earn an income or feed their family.
- Three in four people (76%) reported being forced to leave their homes at some point during the conflict. Of these, 41% were internally displaced, 42% were externally displaced and 17% were both internally and externally displaced. Many individuals were displaced multiple times, moving from one place to another in search of security, only to be forced to flee once again months or years later or after having returned home again.
- Migration is a critical survival strategy for most Afghans. Notions of “choice” are complex, given the protracted nature of the conflict and how deeply intertwined the violence is with poverty for many Afghans. When asked about the current conflict, 17% stated that they are currently thinking of leaving the country.
- More than one in ten (13%) individuals reported being imprisoned. Detention was most often described as arbitrary and linked with harassment, extortion and threats from parties to the conflict or local power holders, and many survivors describe family members playing bribes or elders negotiating for their safe release.
- One in five (21%) of individuals reported being tortured. Roughly half of the reported cases of torture were linked with imprisonment and most often, torture was driven by perceived ethnicity, political affiliations or, in the case of many women, the perceived affiliations or actions of male family members.
- Just 1% of individuals reported receiving any compensation or apology for the harm done to them. None of the reported instances of compensation or apology were provided by those perceived to be directly responsible for causing harm. Rather, these actions were undertaken by individuals, such as community elders or neighbors, who expressed regret at not having been able to offer greater protection for those harmed.
- Seven in ten (70%) individuals saw unemployment and poverty as a major cause of the conflict, while almost half (48%) pointed to the corruption and ineffectiveness of the Afghan government. Other factors that individuals identified as major drivers of the conflict were: the Taliban (36%); interference by other countries (25%); Al Qaeda (18%); the presence of international forces (18%); lack of support from the international community (17%); warlords (15%); and criminal groups (14%).

Recommendations

We need peace. Afghans have seen the worst wars and worst periods. Now all Afghans are tired of war and conflict. We need peace to educate our children and have a good life. – Male, Kunduz

The individuals consulted overwhelmingly expressed a desire for peace, which they saw as not just an end to the physical violence of war but included respect for basic human rights, the alleviation of poverty, an effective and accountable government and access to basic services such as healthcare and education. Indeed, individuals saw poverty and corruption as the two major drivers of the current conflict and felt that addressing these factors is essential to establishing security.

When asked about what should be done to alleviate the conflict, individuals were eager to explore solutions. Based on the views expressed and the ideas proposed by individuals interviewed, the following steps are recommended to address the causes of conflict and ensure greater protection of civilians:

To the Afghan Government

- Take serious steps to establish the rule of law at all levels, crack down on corruption and end the culture of impunity and patronage, including through root and branch reform of the police and judiciary.
- Investigate crimes and abuses associated with the conflict and pursue justice, acknowledgement, reconciliation and redress.

To the International Community

- Commit and deliver not just more aid, but more effective aid for humanitarian, reconstruction and development activities throughout the country.
- Hold the Afghan government accountable and provide more support for it to tackle corruption and criminality.
- Provide strong support for local peacebuilding and conflict resolution initiatives, led by civil society, and urge the Afghan government to pursue justice, acknowledgement, reconciliation and redress for abuses caused during the past three decades of conflict.
- Establish a regional peace process, including all regional powers, to end adverse interference in Afghanistan's affairs and provide constructive support for its security and economic development.

To Pro-Government Forces

- Do more to protect civilians, including tightening restrictions on the use of force.
- Ensure respect for Afghan culture, history and traditions.
- Ensure transparent and timely investigations are conducted of all allegations of harm to civilians and establish effective, responsive and equitable mechanisms of redress.⁶⁰

To Anti-Government Elements

- Immediately discontinue the targeting of civilians and taking refuge in populated civilian areas.
- Express grievances and demands through political dialogue rather than violence.

Introduction

With the political instability and upheaval that began in the late 1970s, Afghanistan descended into a pattern of conflict, instability and chaos that has continued through the present. More than two million Afghans are estimated to have been killed, over a million disabled and state institutions all but collapsed. Rape of women and children became an all too common occurrence, as did arbitrary detentions, summary executions and torture. Though no accurate counts exists of those who have disappeared, many Afghans still do not know what has happened to missing family members.

Though much has been written about the wars in Afghanistan, the accounts, perspectives and perceptions of ordinary Afghans are often missing. There have been few systematic efforts to examine the damage caused to Afghans by the past three decades of war and little documentation is available on the crimes committed against the Afghan people. There is widespread impunity for war-related abuses and efforts to establish accountability have been largely abandoned, with surprisingly little focus on transitional justice and reconciliation. And yet, unless the Afghan people are given an opportunity to come to terms with their past, there is little prospect for sustainable peace.

This report does not aim to provide a comprehensive catalogue of the violence and abuse associated with the past decades of conflict. Given the sample size and the diversity of experiences from province to province (and indeed, from district to district in some areas), the findings of this research cannot be construed as representative. Nor can the findings be interpreted as reflecting the full range of experiences and voices of a population that is so ethnically, religiously and linguistically varied.

Rather, it reflects the lived experience of conflict in Afghanistan among a relatively geographically diverse population. It seeks to build on existing efforts, particularly those of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, to understand the roots and impact of conflict. Perhaps more importantly, it represents the views and desires of those who have suffered greatly but have had little power to influence the actors, events and circumstances that have caused them so much harm.

This report is divided into three main sections. The first section provides a brief overview of the complex, chaotic series of conflicts that has plagued Afghanistan since 1978. Emphasizing the impact that conflict has had on ordinary Afghans, this historical narrative is meant to help to ground the broader research findings. The second section focuses on research findings related to individual experiences and perceptions of the conflict over the past three decades. The final section explores recommendations for ending the violence, alleviating the conflict and pursuing appropriate forms of acknowledgement and redress for harm caused.

Historical Context

Communist Rule and Soviet Occupation (1979 – 1992)

After decades of a relatively stable monarchy, the long-reigning Zahir Shah was overthrown by his cousin, Mohammad Daoud Khan, in 1973.² By the late 1970s, Daoud's attempts at reform were faltering. Dissatisfaction with Daoud fuelled the growth of national communist parties, which had begun to receive significant support from the Soviet Union. In 1978, Daoud and his family were executed in a communist coup led by Nur Mohammad Taraki.

Taraki, like his successor Hafizullah Amin, employed suppression and violence – including mass arrests, torture and summary executions – to implement socialist reforms. Many well-educated Afghans, landed elites and religious leaders, the primary targets of the regime's violence, fled the country. The brutality sparked resistance from Islamic factions, who would later become known as the mujahadeen, which ignited the country in a series of violent uprisings in the spring of 1979. Amin, the leader of a rival Communist faction, overthrew Taraki in October 1979.

As the conflict intensified, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in late December 1979. Though initial Soviet troop presence was light, the Soviets were drawn further into the conflict by the growing resistance movement. While Afghan government and Soviet forces retained control of most cities, mujahadeen factions waged a guerrilla war in rural areas. This meant that major urban areas, such as Kabul, were relatively unscathed while contested rural areas bore the brunt of the conflict.

Though many factions were loosely aligned at various points during the conflict, the mujahadeen were never a unified movement. Mujahadeen groups were largely fragmented, often determined by ethnic, religious and tribal links and diverse in terms of both size and capability. Led by "commanders," typical mujahadeen military operations were focused on hit-and-run tactics and ambushes, including shelling government targets, sabotage of infrastructure, assassinations and rocket attacks on both civilian and military targets. The common mujahadeen practice of taking shelter in and launching attacks from villages placed civilians directly in the crossfire.

In an attempt to kill or capture mujahadeen fighters and drive civilians out of villages where they took shelter, Soviet and government forces employed brutal tactics that were not only direct violations of international law but, it has been argued, genocidal in nature³. Common tactics included launching airstrikes on civilian areas, laying mines in rural areas to cut off resistance transport and supply routes and conducting violent raids on villages suspected of harboring mujahadeen. Suspected "collaborators" were detained and often tortured; many simply disappeared.

"During the communist period, people were harmed by both sides: the Communists and the mujahadeen. People had nothing that was theirs and couldn't be stolen, even their own wife."

– Male, Herat

"One day, the Russians started attacks by land and air, with 15 or 20 airplanes that were meant to bomb the mujahadeen hiding on our village. About 40 innocent elders, women and children were killed and the Russians took away 35 people, who are still missing." – Male, Nangarhar



The toll inflicted by both sides was devastating. An estimated 870,000 Afghans were killed between 1978 and 1987 – an average of 240 each day.⁴ Bombings were often indiscriminate, with between 800 and 1,000 civilians reported to have been killed in a single day in one district of Faryab province.⁵ Over half of the country’s irrigation systems were destroyed and agricultural production even on cultivatable lands fell sharply due to displacement and other factors.⁶

*“The communist forces surrounded our villages and were shooting with heavy weapons into our village. They didn’t let any of the civilians escape, and we had no hope of surviving.”
– Female, Kunduz*

The fighting left an estimated 1.2 million Afghans disabled and three million maimed or wounded. Land mines alone killed 25,000 Afghans during the war and up to fifty people were estimated to be injured by mines each week.⁷ During the conflict, over five million – nearly a fifth of the population – fled to Pakistan or Iran and two million were displaced within the country.⁸

Many refugees settled in camps near the Iran and Pakistan borders or migrated to nearby cities. While life for some refugees offered economic and other opportunities, insecurity, lack of access to basic services and scarce resources made life extremely difficult for the majority. In Pakistan, in particular, women were often confined to domestic spaces and faced greater restrictions than those placed upon them in Afghanistan. Access to healthcare, education and income earning opportunities was extremely limited, with most refugees living in absolute poverty. A survey undertaken shortly after the end of the war among refugees in Quetta found that two in every three children were malnourished.⁹

Refugee camps and communities, particularly in Pakistan, were highly politicized spaces. Registration with an approved mujahadeen political party was often required by the Government of Pakistan to acquire temporary status and access the basic services and resources that were available. Food distribution was often subverted or controlled by local leaders

and several camps were known to be under the control of mujahadeen commanders or their proxies.

Pakistan funnelled substantial support to the mujahadeen, much of which was supplied by the United States, Saudi Arabia and other countries. Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence directorate served as a conduit for these countries to provide weapons and other assistance to mujahadeen. The US alone supplied approximately \$3 billion in economic and covert military assistance to mujahadeen groups between 1980 and 1989.

As their casualties mounted and domestic opinion turned against the war, the Soviets began planning for withdrawal, which was formally agreed to under the Geneva Accords in April 1988. With the Soviet withdrawal and subsequent end of the Cold War, the US considered its strategic objectives achieved. It showed little interest in helping to rebuild the country, US aid dramatically decreased and its attentions shifted elsewhere.

With Soviet withdrawal, Dr. Najibullah Ahmedzai, the former director of intelligence who took over in 1986, remained in control. Though he managed to retain his grip on power for several more years to the surprise of many observers, Najibullah became increasingly reliant on pro-government militias for support and on continuing Russian aid to purchase their loyalty.

In March 1992, Najibullah agreed to step down once an interim government was formed. This drove once loyal militias to switch sides and provoked rebellions led primarily by Uzbek and Tajik commanders from the north allied with mujahadeen commander Ahmad Shah Massoud of the Islamic Society, a predominantly Tajik faction headed by Burhannudin Rabbani. The Najibullah government finally collapsed one month later, in April 1992.¹⁰

Civil War (1992 – 1996)

With the tenuous support of major mujahadeen factions, a rotating presidency was agreed upon with Sibghatullah Mojadeddi, leader of the Afghan National Liberation Front, occupying the first rotation and Rabbani succeeding him. The new Islamic government declared shari'a law, including severe restrictions on women, but could do little else with its weak power base and limited territorial control, holding few areas of the countryside and only parts of the capital. Even sections of Kabul ostensibly under government control were rocketed by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hezbe-Islami faction, which refused any alliance with the new government.

Though Rabbani had agreed to step down in December 1992, he ultimately refused. Mujahadeen factions previously allied with the government mutinied and what unity had been established between the commanders quickly unravelled as overt civil war erupted. The country disintegrated into chaos.

Though many mujahadeen factions claimed religious grounding in Islam, this was not an ideologically-driven conflict nor was it one that enjoyed popular support. It was a war for power and control. Alliances and hostilities between mujahadeen factions were largely based on personal loyalties, many of which were purely tactical and short-lived.

“During the communist period, the Russians put a check point on our land and we couldn't cultivate – it was nearly a hundred acres. After years, the land turned into forest and we lost our livelihood. My father and the rest of my family had to go to the center of Kunduz and I went to Pakistan to work.” – Male, Kunduz

“The mujahadeen burned our house and our land, and took all of our belongings. My husband was a teacher, so they said that he was an infidel. They took him away for ten days and tortured him. They killed him and threw the body – in pieces – in front of our house. I was all alone and had to care for our children.” – Female, Badakhshan

As agreements broke down and territory changed hands through violence, local populations were subjected to retaliatory punishments by victorious forces.¹¹

Human rights violations, including executions, abduction, imprisonment, sexual violence and other forms of torture, were committed by all factions. The death toll is difficult to determine but by one estimate, 10,000 individuals were killed in 1993 alone.¹² The struggle for control of Kabul, which included bloody street battles and random rocketing, left hundreds, if not thousands, dead or wounded.

“Poor people suffered the most because they could not escape. Their sons were killed fighting with the mujahadeen and the rest of the family had to live under rocket attacks. Only the people with money were able to go to a more secure place.” – Male, Balkh

The number of Afghans imprisoned during this period is similarly hard to quantify but a 1995 Amnesty International report states that “thousands” of individuals were abducted and few were heard from again.¹³ The abduction of women, sexual violence and forced marriages markedly increased. Rape of women and girls appears to have been condoned by militia leaders as a weapon of war, to further terrorize civilian populations, as well as a way of “rewarding” fighters.¹⁴

In mujahadeen-controlled areas, girls were often forbidden from attending school and women from working outside the home. In contested areas, the threat of sexual violence or “dishonor” by the mujahadeen caused many families to keep their girls away from school and to marry them at younger ages for the sake of “protection.” Many boys, as young as twelve years old, were recruited to fight under warlord-led factions – a practice that continued under the Taliban.¹⁶

In the absence of national government, basic services broke down and infrastructure all but collapsed: by 1994, approximately 60% of schools had no building.¹⁷ The absence of regular salaries for most fighting forces meant that they relied on predatory tactics such as “taxes” levied at checkpoints, robbery and varying forms of organized, and often disorganized, crime.¹⁸ The mujahadeen, seen by many Afghans as heroes during the Soviet occupation, became reviled and feared for the chaos they wrought.

“When the mujahadeen groups were fighting, each family had a member in one or another of the groups. There is no family that was not affected; some lost relatives and some lost their property from rocket attacks. Families were not able to trust each other; people were angry and confused.” – Male, Balkh

After the Soviet withdrawal, an estimated 1.2 million Afghans returned from Pakistan alone in the hope of being able to live in peace. But millions were soon forced to flee. By 1994, more than a million Afghans were living in Pakistan and just under a million in Iran.¹⁹

In 1993, the Taliban, a relatively unknown Pashtun movement based in Kandahar, began to acquire strength and influence. They vowed to put an end to the violence and establish order, swiftly administering harsh punishments to alleged criminals and eliminating checkpoints. Drawing their fighting forces primarily from a young, uneducated, male refugee population in Pakistan and with financial and technical support from the Government of Pakistan, they seized control of Kandahar in November 1994. As they sought to expand their reach, they encountered little resistance from a war-weary population. By September 1995, the Taliban gained control of most of the eastern, western and southern provinces and eventually seized Kabul the following year.

Taliban Rule (1996 – 2001)

Once in power, the Taliban enforced a strict set of rules, based on an extremist interpretation of Islam and shari'a law. Education for girls was all but abolished. Women were banned from work, aside from female health workers, and were not allowed to leave home without a male escort and a full-length burqa. The wars had created tens of thousands of widows, yet they were subject to the same draconian laws and many were reliant on assistance from international agencies or reduced to begging on the streets. The impact on women, particularly in urban areas, was severe: 81% of women surveyed in Kabul reported a decline in their mental condition, 42% met the conditions for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and 21% said that they "quite often" or "very often" had suicidal thoughts.²⁰

"The Taliban destroyed our country in the name of Islam." – Female, Kunar

While women and girls were specifically singled out for discrimination and abuse, men and boys were also subject to gender-based restrictions and violence. Men were required to have long beards and wear the traditional shalwar kameez. Thousands of men were imprisoned and tortured, and many were subject to extortion, physical abuse and sexual violence.²¹

The Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and the Suppression of Vice employed brutal tactics, most commonly public beatings of both men and women, to enforce the law. Adulterers and other criminals were executed in Kabul's sports stadium on Fridays and men, women and children were corralled in and forced to watch. Television, radio, music, dancing and pastimes such as kite flying were banned. Non-Muslim cultural sites, including the Buddha statues in Bamiyan, were destroyed. National landmarks and museums, many of which were also looted and damaged during the civil war period, were defaced and raided.

"During the Taliban period, our life was bad because we didn't have the freedom to go outside." – Female, Kandahar

This cultural assault aimed not only to rewrite Afghanistan's past but also formed part of concerted efforts to subjugate and eliminate minority ethnic and religious groups. Non-Pashtun ethnic groups, particularly the Hazara, were persecuted, subject to ethnic cleansing and massacred. An estimated 300 Hazara men, women and children were deliberately killed while seeking shelter in a mosque in Yakaolang in January 2001 while an estimated 2,000 Afghans, including many Hazara, were massacred in an attack on Mazar-e-Sharif in November 1998.²²

"All of the periods of the war were bad, but the worst was the Taliban era because they kept people ignorant and all of the schools were closed." – Male, Kandahar

Access to even the most basic services was extremely limited. In Kabul, one poorly equipped and barely functioning hospital was open to the half million women in the city and 87% of women in Kabul reported that they experienced decreased access to health services.²³ As women had comprised the majority of teachers, access to education for boys, who were still permitted to attend school, also declined sharply.

The economy came to a standstill. Reportedly, the only functioning factories in Afghanistan were funded by international organizations to manufacture orthopaedic limbs. Afghans became heavily dependent on external support even for basic nutrition, exacerbated by a severe drought in 2000, with approximately half of Kabul's population reliant on food aid delivered by humanitarian agencies.²⁴

“Taliban killed my husband and my children lost their father. All of our land and houses were burned by Taliban and we had to leave our villages and go to Pakistan.” – Female, Kabul

Once again, many displaced Afghans returned home hoping that the new regime would restore order. But the influx of returnees was short-lived. Refugees continued to flow into Pakistan, Iran and other countries once it became apparent that the violence of the civil war had not been eliminated but merely replaced with new forms of repression and abuse. In September 2001, nearly 1.5 million Afghan refugees resided in Iran and two million in Pakistan.

As a consequence of their manifest and widespread abuse of human rights and the deepening poverty and unemployment, the Taliban soon lost the domestic support they had enjoyed initially. What little international support they had received also quickly faded as the scale and severity of their repression, and links to Al Qaeda, became apparent.²⁵

Still, the war inside Afghanistan continued. While the Taliban consolidated control, various warlords began to ally with Rabbani, Massoud and Ismail Khan, forming the Northern Alliance. The Alliance included Uzbek factions led by Abdul Rashid Dostum, Hazara Shiite and anti-Taliban Pashtun Islamist factions led by Abd-e-Rab Rasul Sayyaf. With financial support from India, Iran and Russia, the Northern Alliance attacked both military and civilian targets controlled by the Taliban – but with little military success. By September 2001, the Taliban controlled nearly 80% of Afghanistan.

The Current Conflict (2001 – present)

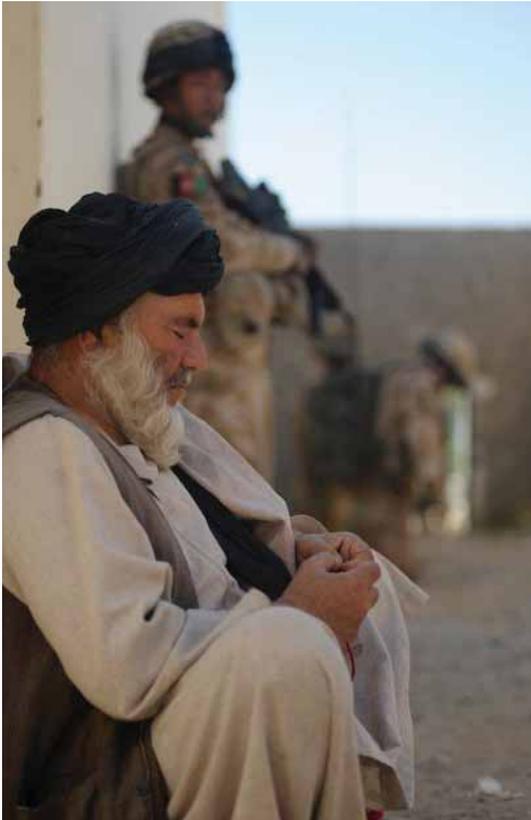
“The current war is much more dangerous for innocent people because of suicide attacks.” – Female, Kunduz

On October 7, 2001, a coalition of international forces, led by the US, declared war on the Taliban government. Following the September 11 attacks, the US and its allies pursued military action with the primary stated goal of eliminating Afghanistan as a safe haven for international terrorists. Well-publicized human rights abuses by the Taliban, particularly their treatment of women, also helped bolster public and political support for the war in the West.

Military action by US forces was minimal and the majority of Taliban either fled to Pakistan or dissolved into the local population. There was a heavy reliance on airstrikes along with a small number of US special operations forces supporting anti-Taliban factions. There were few actual battles between US and Taliban fighters, particularly in the north, with the majority of ground combat between the Taliban and Northern Alliance.

The Taliban hold on power crumbled after it lost Mazar-e-Sharif to forces loyal to the Northern Alliance. By November 2001, the Northern Alliance occupied Kabul and the Taliban surrendered Kandahar the following month. In May 2003, the US announced an end to major combat operations.

In the autumn and winter of 2001, international news showed footage of jubilant Afghans celebrating the fall of the Taliban. However, these images of relief and optimism often served to obscure more sinister aspects of the intervention. Reprisals against Pashtuns, mass killings of Taliban forces and abuses committed by US forces have been documented.²⁶ This includes the atrocities committed at Dasht-e-Leili, where Northern Alliance



forces led by Dostum are believed to have shot, tortured and suffocated up to 2,000 alleged Taliban as well as ethnically-motivated violence, including rape, robbery and murder of Pashtuns living in the north.²⁷

In November 2001, the UN invited major Afghan factions, excluding the Taliban, to a conference in Bonn, Germany. On December 5, 2001, the Bonn Agreement was signed, forming an interim administration headed by Hamid Karzai and authorizing an international peacekeeping force to maintain security in Kabul.

Unlike most peace agreements, Bonn did not force the warring factions to lay down their arms; nor did it institute a process for

establishing truth or accountability for past crimes. Rather, it marked a clear continuation of a policy of cooption of warlords and commanders to achieve US objectives. Al Qaeda and the Taliban were excluded from this process and many of the participating factions were still being armed by the US to fight against them. Bonn further legitimized these warlords by granting them prominent positions and power within the interim government.

Though there were attempts to include provisions in the Bonn agreement that would deny amnesty to war criminals, many Bonn participants (including those that would be vulnerable to investigation) moved to block such measures. They also successfully resisted any provisions that would require them to disarm their forces.²⁸ As a result, the text contains no reference to any agreement to disarm and demobilize combatants.²⁹

The following June, an “emergency” Loya Jirga provided representative input into the transitional authority and the Afghan constitution was adopted in January 2004. Forces serving in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) remained largely confined to Kabul, until expanding into the north, west and south of the country in 2004, 2005 and 2006, respectively. The UN also initially pursued a “light footprint” approach, opening only two provincial-level offices before 2006.

State-building efforts were sparse in a country that desperately needed law, order and institutions capable of delivering basic services. As a result, the reach of the government remained largely limited to the capital. The capacity building and formalization of the Afghan security forces, including the Afghan National Army, was largely neglected until the emergence of the insurgency.

“The current conflict has caused lots of tension and concern among people. People are very concerned about their future. At the beginning, people had hope but the ineffectiveness of the current government and bombardments of civilians by international forces made people hate the government and created more opportunities for the anti-government forces.” – Female, Herat

“The current fighting is very bad. At night, the Taliban come and take shelter in our villages and then leave. The next day, when the coalition forces become aware of the Taliban in our areas, they bomb us.” – Male, Helmand

“The current fighting has caused poor economic conditions and increased unemployment. Many youth are addicted to drugs. Different types of violence have increased, including domestic violence.”
– Female, Parwan

Afghanistan remains one of the poorest, least developed countries in the world. Nearly half of the population lives in poverty, more than half of all children suffer from chronic malnutrition and up to 40% are believed to be unemployed.³⁰

With regard to access to services, some progress was made in the early years after the fall of the Taliban, particularly in health and education. Enrolment of children in primary school has increased to more than six million and hundreds of midwives have been trained. But the challenges remaining even in these sectors are daunting: currently, one in five children dies before the age of five, one in eight women dies from pregnancy-related complications and two million children, two-thirds of whom are girls, do not attend primary school.³¹

Though international aid to Afghanistan has unquestionably had a significant impact on the lives of Afghans, not only has the volume been insufficient but much of it has been delivered in ways that are ineffective or wasteful. Nearly 40% of all aid since 2001 has returned to donor countries in the form of profits or remuneration, and a large share of aid has failed to reach the poorest Afghans.³²

Though Afghanistan was promised – and desperately required – a “Marshall Plan” of its own to reconstruct the country and shore up security, this never materialized. The levels of aid and other resources committed to Afghanistan in the years immediately after the fall of the Taliban were insufficient to address the problems it was facing. What aid was promised was slow to be delivered and the subsequent invasion of Iraq further diverted political attention and resources away from Afghanistan.³³

Together, these factors created power vacuums in some areas or further empowered warlords and their militias in other areas. They also left many Afghans disillusioned, enduring social and economic hardship and vulnerable to emerging anti-government factions.

In 2006, the security situation rapidly deteriorated. Roadside and other bomb attacks nearly doubled from the previous year, suicide attacks increased six-fold and there were more than a thousand civilian casualties.³⁴ Security deteriorated further throughout 2009, when violence reached its highest levels since the fall of the Taliban. The Taliban and other militants extended their control throughout the south and east, and into some western, northern and central provinces. Nearly half of the country is currently considered too dangerous for the UN and other international agencies to access.³⁵

“We have lost everything in our lives because of the war. Now the killers are in power. They are not thinking about what is best for the country and are only thinking about how they can benefit.” – Male, Faryab

More than 250,000 Afghans, mainly in the south and east, remain internally displaced due to the current conflict.³⁶ Although more than five million Afghan refugees returned between 2002 and 2008, more than two million registered refugees remain in Pakistan and 900,000 in Iran.³⁷

Many refugees are young, have never known Afghanistan to be at peace, have spent most of their lives outside of their country and have not been able to develop the skills that would enable them to integrate into life in Afghanistan. According to a recent survey of refugees living in Pakistan, 71% reported having no formal education, 89% having no skills and 71% no monthly income.³⁸

While there is less direct harm caused to civilians in the current conflict than in many previous periods of conflict, civilians bear the brunt of the violence and are often targets of insurgent activity. In 2008, an average of three Afghans were summarily executed by anti-government elements every four days for any perceived association with the Afghan government or international forces.³⁹ Civilian deaths resulting from international military actions also remain high, with more than 750 Afghans killed by airstrikes between January 2008 and June 2009.⁴⁰

In highly contested areas, the violence against civilians is generally worse. Many Afghan civilians are caught between a government, widely viewed as corrupt, that can provide few basic services and little protection, criminal groups and warlords, in some cases linked to the government, that extort and suppress the local population, and insurgents that systematically use violence and terror against civilians for their own ends. In many parts of the country, Afghans simply have nowhere to turn.

In more secure areas of the country, Afghans are still struggling to overcome the effects of three decades of war and disorder. Though two-thirds of the identified mines in Afghanistan have been successfully cleared, 15% of the population is estimated to be living in mine-contaminated areas.⁴¹ The lack of transparent resource management and voracious logging, which reached its height under the Taliban, continues to devastate the country's natural resources and has depleted up to half of its forests.⁴²

Like the physical scars of the war, the mental scars also run deep. Two in three Afghans are believed to suffer from depression or some other form of mental disorder.⁴³ Similarly, a 2004 study of women in Nangarhar province found that 20% met conditions for PTSD, 38.5% suffered from depression and 51.8% from anxiety.⁴⁴

Little has been done to address the legacy of the past. Although a transitional justice action plan was released in 2005 and endorsed by Karzai, the Afghan government has been slow to act upon its recommendations. The Afghan parliament subsequently passed a resolution that granted amnesty to individuals alleged to have committed war crimes prior to 2001.⁴⁵

“Now many Afghans are jobless so families are sending their young people to other countries for work; sometimes they get killed or just disappear.” – Male, Faryab

“The current problems are the consequences of the past conflict. Families sell their daughters for money to save the other family members from starvation. Children are doing hard labor instead of going to school because they do not have fathers and they are the bread winners.” – Male, Balkh

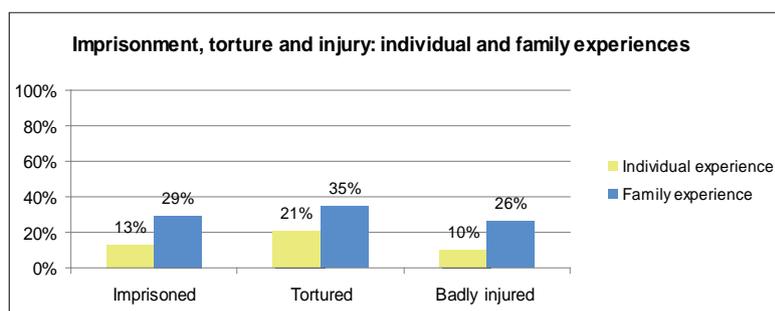
Experiences of Conflict

To better appreciate how Afghans have suffered from and sought to cope with the violence, research was conducted in 14 provinces across Afghanistan from January through April 2009 with 704 randomly selected Afghan men and women. This research consisted of structured interviews as well as gender-segregated group discussions in each location and focused on: 1) individual experiences of the past three decades of conflict, 2) perceptions and experiences of the current conflict, and 3) recommendations for key national and international power holders with regard to the conflict. This section focuses on experiences and perceptions of conflict while recommendations are covered in the final section.

Selected provinces were scattered across Afghanistan to provide a reasonably diverse picture of the conflicts, with four in the north of the country (Badakhshan, Kunduz, Balkh and Faryab), three in the east (Kunar, Nangarhar and Paktia), two in the south (Kandahar and Helmand), four in the center (Daikundi, Bamiyan, Kabul and Parwan) and one in the west (Herat). The majority of the selected research sites were not experiencing active conflict at the time the research was conducted. As with any research, there are a number of limiting factors, which are further elaborated in Annex A, and a summary of the results can be found in Annex B.

Imprisonment, Torture⁴⁶ and Injury

Approximately one in ten individuals reported being imprisoned at least once and 29% reported having one or more family member imprisoned at some point since 1979. The majority of these imprisonments occurred during the communist and Taliban eras.



Of those imprisoned, roughly one third (32%) were female and two thirds (68%) were male. Women were slightly more likely to be imprisoned during the Taliban period, comprising 37% of those imprisoned, than during the communist and civil war periods. Detainment and imprisonment was most often described as arbitrary and preceded and/or followed by harassment, threats and violence. Survivors often described their families paying bribes or elders negotiating for their release.

“During the Taliban period, all the men in my family left the village so only me, my sisters and my mother were left. The Taliban accused us of spying and imprisoned us. After many talks, we were released...but we were still afraid that the Taliban would kill us, so we escaped into the mountains. We had nothing to eat and were starving.” – Female, Bamiyan

One in five (21%) individuals reported being tortured at least once during the conflict. The majority of these incidents took place either during the Taliban (38%) or the civil war periods (29%). On average, 37% of those who reported that they had been tortured were female. However, this fluctuated over time, with women comprising 24% of those tortured during the communist period but 44% during the civil war and 42% during the Taliban period.

“My worst experience was when my whole family was arrested and imprisoned by the mujahadeen. They beat us and tortured us and accused us of being Khalq [communists]. They took all of our assets and our land. Then the communists arrested my father. They accused him of being a mujahadeen and killed him.” – Male, Kabul



Of those individuals who reported being tortured, roughly half were also imprisoned. Torture, and to some extent imprisonment, was not necessarily tied to formal state institutions or justice systems, many of which were nonexistent during different periods of the conflict, but to those actors with the monopoly on power and violence.

“My father and grandfather were imprisoned and tortured by the mujahadeen. My father and uncle studied in Russia so they said that they were spies. When the mujahadeen let them go, the communists took them away. They said that they were mujahadeen collaborators and tortured them. They put them in water so that they couldn’t breathe, they used electricity on them and they beat them. My grandfather died and my father has very bad mental problems now.” – Female, Herat

“The mujahadeen destroyed our shop and our home and they threatened my family. They tortured my uncle and the mental impact killed him. We had to flee to Pakistan and my grandfather became very sad and he does not speak anymore.” – Female, Kunduz

During the current conflict, no individuals reported being imprisoned and just 1% reported having a family member imprisoned; 1% reported being tortured and 1% reported a family member being tortured. The majority of these incidents were reported in increasingly insecure southern and eastern provinces which are underrepresented in this survey.

One in ten (10%) individuals stated that they were badly injured as a result of the conflict and a quarter (26%) reported that someone in their family had been badly injured. Many of these injuries and the resultant disabilities were often linked to experiences of torture, combat or explosive remnants of war.

“During the Communist era, many of our relatives were martyred and wounded even those who were not fighting. My two uncles were disabled in mine explosion.” – Male, Helmand

“The Taliban imprisoned me and my brother. They asked us for weapons but we had none. Then they asked us for three million Afghani [approximately US\$ 60,000], but we had no money to pay. They beat and tortured us for many days. They injured my wrist and I still feel a lot of pain there.” – Male, Bamiyan

“My one son was martyred and now another is wounded. Some of these bombs look like toys. My son picked one of them up and it exploded. He was injured and has been in hospital for the last two months.” – Male, Kandahar

These incidents were fairly evenly spread throughout the communist, civil war and Taliban eras, with only a small number occurring during the current conflict. While this research found relatively few incidents of injury reported during the current conflict, national statistics find that unexploded ordnance from the past three decades of conflict cause an estimated 50 to 55 deaths per month and 2.7% of the population lives with a disability, many of them war-related.⁴⁷

Sexual Violence

The majority of individuals were extremely reluctant to talk about personal experiences of sexual violence, particularly given the taboos and stigma associated with such topics in Afghan society. However, very few individuals disputed that sexual violence related to conflict occurred.⁴⁸ Women frequently stated that sexual violence happened in their community and men frequently noted instances where women were raped or “dishonored,” particularly during the civil war period. Sexual violence against men and boys was rarely mentioned. When it was discussed, individuals often described sexual violence as being linked to other experiences of torture and or with imprisonment.

“My cousin was abducted and raped during the mujahadeen time. It was very bad. She had to leave school. All of the girls in my village were kept home from school after that, because of fear of the mujahadeen.” – Female, Herat

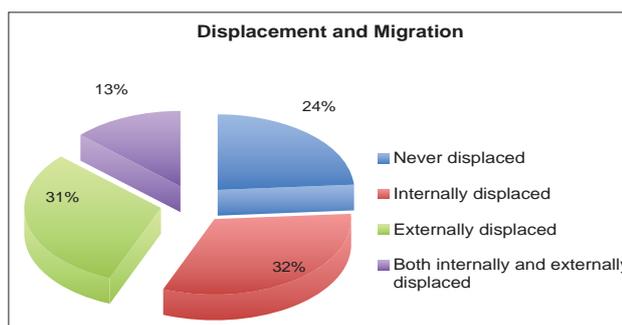
“Women in our district suffered the most, especially during the mujahadeen period since both sides raped many women from the other side’s ethnic group.” – Male, Kunduz

“The majority of those who have suffered are women. Some are widows and sometimes they were raped, sexually assaulted or physically attacked during the war.” – Female, Daikundi

Many individuals portrayed sexual violence against men, women and children as a weapon of war to either inflict terror or to punish the female relatives of men who were targeted because of their ethnicity or political affiliation. Women, in particular, discussed the ramifications of such acts. They frequently mentioned restrictions on their involvement in public life, including their ability to attend school or to work outside of the home, and early marriage, both of which were perceived by men as measures necessary to “protect the honor” of women and their families.

Displacement and Migration

Three in four individuals (76%) interviewed were forced to leave their homes at some point during the past three decades of conflict, consistent with findings published by the International Committee of the Red Cross in 2009.⁴⁹ Of these, 41% were internally displaced,



42% were externally displaced, most frequently travelling to Pakistan and/or Iran, and 17% were both internally and externally displaced at various points during the conflict. Many individuals were displaced multiple times, fleeing to a more secure place only to have the fighting reach them again months later or once they had returned home, forcing them to migrate once again.

Overall, women were slightly more likely than men to have been internally, but not externally, displaced, while men were slightly more likely to have been externally displaced. However, the diversity and complexity of experiences makes it difficult, if not impossible, to undertake any generalized analysis. Migration, both forced and voluntary, is a part of life for most individuals and a critical physical and economic survival strategy.⁵⁰



For many individuals, the relationship between poverty and the conflict is deeply intertwined so that a complex mix of these factors often influences decisions to leave their community or country. The notion of choice related to migration is especially complex in Afghanistan, where the conflict has been protracted and mobile. While some described fleeing direct violence, many others fled ahead of anticipated violence or for lack of other options once their property, agricultural land or other productive assets had been destroyed.

“As the result of the war, we lost access to our lands, our orchards dried up and we had to leave our places to go to Iran. During the displacement period, all of us, even our children, were working and so they could not go to school.” – Male, Herat

“My most bitter experience was fleeing the Taliban. I witnessed so many massacres and arrests. We were very scared. We had to walk to the Sadaat valley and it was very cold. I saw women and children who were not able to walk left behind in the bushes because nobody could help them to a safer place.” – Female, Bamiyan

Poorer individuals frequently stated that they wanted to leave the country or their province because of insecurity at a specific point during the conflict, but were unable to do so because they lacked financial resources. When their community was affected by fighting or experienced greater levels of insecurity, they were likely to seek temporary refuge in a nearby village or district.

“Especially in our country, the poor people have suffered a lot. They did not have money to move to other countries. Some did not even have enough money to escape to the cities from their villages. Their children were not educated. Their land was destroyed.” – Male, Parwan

The majority of displaced people felt that they were able to live with dignity while in exile (84%) to at least some extent. As other research has shown, the preservation of their dignity, and that of their family members, can be a powerful motivating factor in the decision to leave their homes.⁵¹ However, individuals often expressed hardship and despair associated with these experiences – regardless of whether they felt that they were able to live with dignity or not.

“We were refugees and lived in Pakistani villages or Afghan refugee camps. Time passed when we weren’t given rations and when we used to earn money through doing hard labor all day.” – Male, Nangarhar

“It is too difficult to live life in tents. After being displaced, we lived in tents and all of my children were sick. Our country’s army and education systems were destroyed; we couldn’t go back to our homeland. My children were deprived of an education and when we returned home, there was nothing. The irrigation systems, canals and forests were destroyed. We buried our relatives in foreign countries and left them there. Our many youths were martyred and their graves are still not known.” – Male, Paktia

“During emigration, we had lots of problems. We had no money, we had no access to education, we had no shelter and, since we were Afghan, we had no dignity in our host country.” – Female, Herat

Given the varied nature of the conflicts over time and the fact that many individuals were displaced multiple times, the calculation of risk and the decision to migrate is also very closely tied to local understandings of the conflict at a specific point in time. When asked about the current conflict, 17% stated that they are currently thinking of leaving Afghanistan.

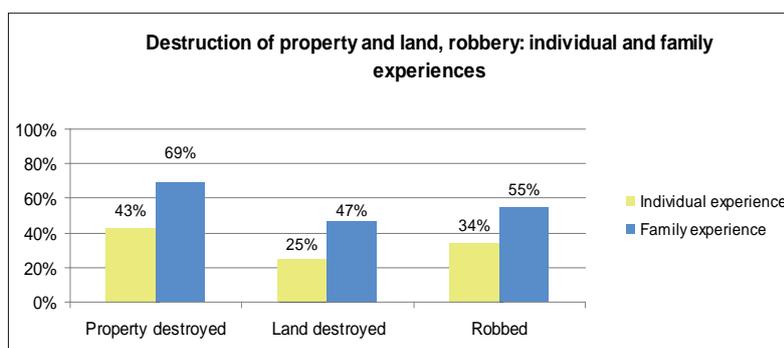
“The market was bombed and we had to leave our village because of the current fighting. The international forces bombed our village. In Kandahar, we have a lot of problems – no electricity, no jobs and many other problems. I really want to leave Afghanistan with my family, but we have no money right now so we have to stay.” – Male, Kandahar

“The impact of the war was very much; we are still suffering. Now, me and my family are afraid of what will happen if the war continues since there is no other place for us to go. In our area, sometimes there is food available and sometimes not.” – Male, Kunduz

While many individuals who responded that they were thinking of leaving the country resided in insecure areas, such as Kandahar, Paktia and Helmand, nearly as many did not live in insecure areas, underscoring the complex motivations behind decisions to migrate. Of those who responded that they were thinking of leaving, 80% stated that they wish to leave with their families while 20% are thinking of leaving alone.

Damage to Property and Theft

Approximately two in five (43%) individuals had property destroyed, with the majority of this damage (71%) occurring during either the communist or Taliban governments and very little (2%) occurring during the current conflict.



A quarter (25%) of individuals had land destroyed, with the majority of this damage was reported as occurring during the communist government period (42%) with nearly half as much occurring during the Taliban (27%) and civil war periods (22%). Part of this may reflect the tactics and specific weapons most frequently deployed in the fighting, with the largest number of mines laid and widespread aerial bombardment during the communist period. Additionally, 47% of individuals reported that someone in their family had land destroyed.

“During the communist era, the government soldiers came to our house and said we were hiding mujahadeen. When we opened the door to show them that we were not hiding anyone, they looted our house. They tied us up and put us in a separate room so that we couldn’t listen. They stole our property and they beat us. We survived, but there was no government or legal authority at that time that we could go to for help.” – Male, Nangarhar

“The Taliban burnt our homes. They called themselves Muslims, but they burnt our homes that had Holy Quran and other sacred things inside. They burnt our fruit trees and tried to uproot orchards. In that time, people could hardly have cars so they used donkeys. But they even set fire to the donkeys so that we would have nothing.” – Male, Parwan

The destruction and loss of property is most commonly attributed to bombardment and rocket attacks, opportunistic raids or looting and other intentional attacks accompanied by harassment. Often land was rendered unusable through military occupation, the laying of mines, the destruction of irrigation or other water supply systems or other deliberate action to decimate cultivable land. During the Soviet period, property damage was generally concentrated in rural areas while this shifted somewhat to urban areas during the civil war period and largely focused on areas of resistance during the Taliban period, with the north and center of the country being most adversely affected.

The destruction of property or land was generally not an isolated incident but often tied to larger patterns of violence deliberately targeting civilians, including robbery and theft. One in three individuals (34%) stated that they were robbed at some point during the conflict and more than half (55%) stated that a family member had been robbed. Many individuals related that such experiences made them feel unsafe in their own communities or eliminated their source of income, often contributing to decisions to migrate elsewhere.

With regard to the current conflict, very little property damage (2% to individuals, 1% to family members), land damage and destruction (1% to individuals, 1% to family members) and robberies (1% to individuals, 1% to family members) were reported. In general, these incidents were much more likely than not to have occurred in the more conflict-affected southern and eastern provinces surveyed.

Trauma

The psychological impact of conflict is extremely difficult to measure, particularly during such a prolonged period. Nevertheless, the subject was frequently raised by individuals in the course of interviews or group discussions. Individuals often described memory loss, fear and anxiety or expressed concern about the psychological impact on children.

“Because of the years of war, lots of civilians were killed and their houses were destroyed so people were living in fear. And they had no hope for peace.” – Female, Parwan

“Children have suffered a lot, and they were mentally impacted because they had witnessed killings and torture. Sometimes they were hungry for days and had to walk long distances during displacement.” – Female, Bamiyan

“What do you think the effect that two million Afghans martyred, 70% of Afghanistan destroyed and our economy eliminated has had on us? Half our people are mad. A man who is thirty or forty years old looks like he is seventy years old. We always live in fear. We are not secure anywhere in Afghanistan, whether in Kabul or Jalalabad.” – Male, Nangarhar

There was a clear link between fear and anxiety, and insecurity associated with the current conflict. Many individuals, even in areas that are considered to be relatively secure, indicated that the continuing conflict impeded their ability to heal psychologically or forced them to relive painful experiences. One example of this is airstrikes. Some individuals felt the current airstrikes brought up “bad memories” of the pervasive and indiscriminate bombardments by Soviet forces during the communist period.

“The bombings of civilians by Russians are just the same as the bombings of civilians by the Americans happening now.” – Male, Herat



The unpredictable nature of suicide bombs and other improvised explosive devices, and the fact that they are a relatively new feature of the war, also added to anxiety about the current conflict.

“In urban areas, they live in fear of suicide attacks and remote controlled bombs.” – Male, Kandahar

“People living in rural areas as well as urban areas have both suffered. Women and children faced a lot of anxiety over things like abduction, suicide attacks and the remote control bombs that were recently laid in bazaar.” – Female, Kandahar

Redress

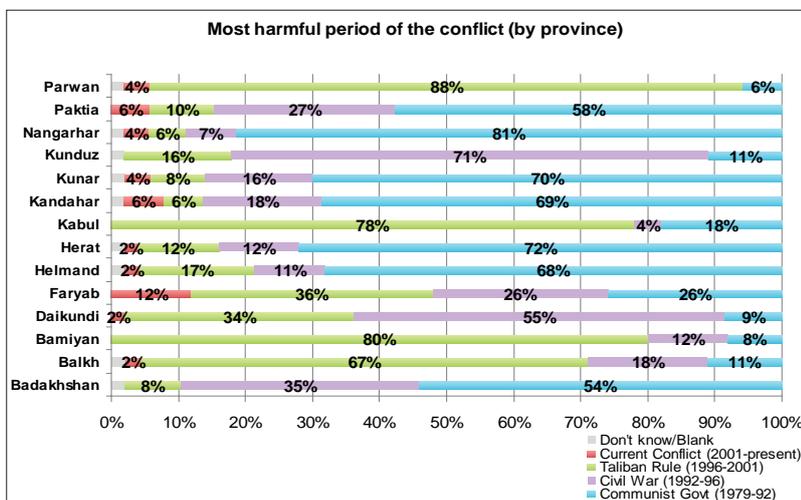
Approximately 1% of individuals reported receiving any apology or compensation for harmful experiences related to the conflict. Those that had received some form of redress were most likely to say that they had received an apology from a neutral party, such as a village leader or a neighbor who expressed guilt over not being able to help protect them, their family or property. While being compensated for loss of life or material damage is generally important to many survivors regardless of the source, research conducted by the Campaign for Innocent Victims in Conflict (CIVIC) found that apology or other forms of redress provided directly by those perceived to be responsible for causing harm is much more likely to be positively received and provide a sense of closure.⁵²

Perceptions of the Current Conflict

When asked what the most harmful period of the conflict was, 38% named the Communist period, 22% named the civil war and 33% named the Taliban. This follows the general research findings, with most of harmful impact being reported during previous periods of conflict.

However, as the graph below illustrates, there was significant regional variation in how people perceived the harm of previous periods of the conflict, demonstrating again how much these experiences varied across Afghanistan.

On average, only 3% named the current conflict as the most harmful period – the same proportion as those who refrained from



answering the question. This was particularly surprising with regard to more insecure areas, such as Kandahar and Helmand. However, these findings may be partially attributable to the fact that researchers had limited access to areas experiencing active conflict and the relatively short period of the current conflict as compared to previous periods of conflict.

While many felt that the current conflict was comparatively less harmful, they had varying perceptions of how it was different from previous stages of conflict.

“The current war is different because now we have suicide attacks, remote controlled bombs, abductions, human trafficking and such criminality.” – Male, Kandahar

“The only difference between the current and previous wars is that before the fighting was in 80% of the country; now it is only in 40%.” – Male, Parwan

“Previously, the war was fought face to face. But now you cannot predict when something like a suicide attack will happen.” – Male, Kabul

“Wars have no difference. The mujahadeen killed my father and then the Taliban tortured and killed my brother. It is always the people who are suffering.” – Female, Daikundi

In areas experiencing active conflict, however, the harm was evident. Individuals discussed the direct impact of violence, including harassment, airstrikes and suicide bombs, as well as fear and anxiety. Many were also worried about the impact on education for their children, with security conditions forcing the closure of schools, and their ability to earn a livelihood.

“In the current conflict, the Taliban take shelter in our villages and then our villages are bombed. Civilians are trapped and vulnerable even in their villages...the root cause of the fighting in our area is that Taliban and al Qaeda come to our villages and then international forces bomb our villages. We hope that you will convey this message to the United Nations.” – Male, Kandahar

“Because of the current war, our children are deprived of education and our schools are closed.” – Female, Helmand

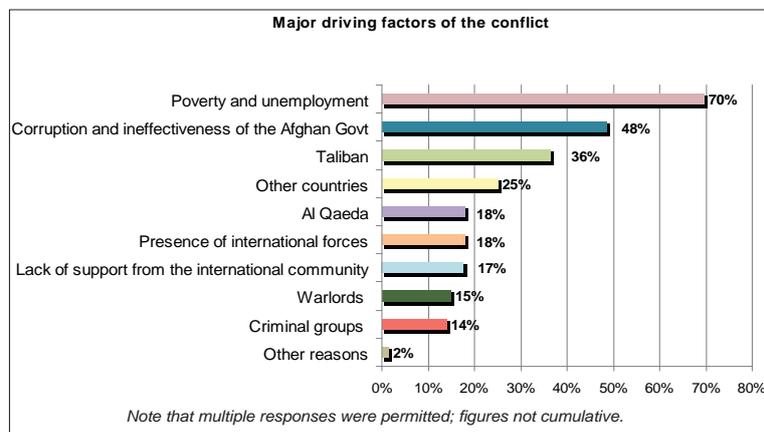
In areas where there has been less physical violence during the current period of conflict, individuals were more likely to express fear or anxiety about the conflict spreading or frustration with the government, poverty and lack of employment opportunities.

“Currently, our village is safe but I really worry that the war will reach us and that I won’t be able to go to school anymore.” – Female, Daikundi

“The current fighting hasn’t damaged us till now. We only suffer the problems of unemployment, bribes and corruption. – Female, Paktia

“The current war is not as destructive as previous wars but it hinders the development of Afghanistan, especially the progress of women. The social participation of women has increased a bit but they do not feel mentally secure. The threats from Taliban and abductions has impacted our lives a lot.” – Female, Herat

When asked what the major causes of the conflict were, individuals often saw the current situation as the outcome of a complex mix of





factors. As such, individuals were permitted to name multiple causes out of a list of ten possible factors. However, the majority (70%) named unemployment and poverty as major driving factors, and drew a clear causal link between the structural violence of poverty and the physical violence of war.

“If people are employed, the fighting will end.” – Male, Kandahar

“We thank God that the fighting we saw during Taliban does not exist now, even though still they do suicide attacks. The main harm of the current conflict is poverty and unemployment. If there are employment opportunities for the people, there won’t be killings.” – Female, Kabul

“If the people are jobless, they are capable of anything.” – Male, Parwan

Just under half of all individuals (48%) identified the corruption and ineffectiveness of the Afghan government as a major cause. However, this response was much more frequently stated in southern and eastern province such as Helmand, Kandahar, Nangarhar and Paktia. Corruption was often linked to the activities of criminal groups, named by 14% as a driver, or warlords, named by 15%, and their perceived links to the government.

“The root causes of the current fighting are administrative corruption, warlords and anti-government forces.” – Male, Helmand

“Irresponsibility of the central government and presence of warlords in power are the main causes of the current war. These are the reasons that people do not trust the government.” – Male, Faryab

Slightly more than one third (36%) of all individuals saw the Taliban as a driving factor, with joblessness, poverty and frustration with the current government often driving individual decisions to join the Taliban. However, individuals in the Pashtun majority southern and eastern provinces (aside from Kunar) were much less likely to see the Taliban as a major driving factor than individuals in the central and northern provinces, and more likely to point to poverty, corruption and the presence of international forces.

“Taliban are the main cause of the current conflict in Afghanistan. They kill innocent people by suicide attacks, they kill children and women.” – Female, Kabul

“The main cause of the conflict is Taliban and warlords who do not want Afghanistan to be secure.” – Female, Faryab

Often linked to this, a quarter of all individuals saw interference by other countries as a major cause. These countries, the most frequently named being neighboring countries such as Pakistan and Iran, were seen to play a supporting role to insurgent factions and continuing to destabilize the country. Individuals residing in provinces that directly bordered other countries were much more likely to name other countries as a driving factor than those that did not.

“Pakistan should stop supporting the Taliban. We want peace.” – Female, Parwan

“The Taliban, Pakistan, Al Qaeda and other countries who support the Taliban are supporting the fighting now.” – Female, Balkh

“The current conflict is due to interference of Pakistan, Iran and other countries, along with poverty and unemployment.” – Male, Badakhshan

Among other major factors, 18% named Al Qaeda and the presence of international forces while 17% named lack of support from the international community. Men, in general, were more likely than women to see international forces as a driving factor as were individuals in areas experiencing active conflict, such as Helmand, Kandahar and Kunar.

“The current security is only because of the presence of international forces. The people who are in the government are all warlords. Otherwise, [if international forces were to leave] they will start fighting again and kill innocent people.” – Female, Faryab

“Unemployment and illiteracy, the presence of international forces and interference from neighboring countries has created this situation.” – Male, Parwan

“The main causes of the current conflict are Al Qaeda, Taliban, terrorists, drug smugglers and mafia groups who are the enemy of humanity and peace in Afghanistan.” – Male, Kunduz

Recommendations

Through individual interviews and focus group discussions, individuals were asked open-ended questions about what they felt should be done to alleviate the conflict and if they had specific messages for key powerholders, such as the Afghan government, the international community, the Taliban and others. Individuals who participated in this research overwhelmingly articulated a desire for the conflict to end and had strong recommendations for those who they felt had the ability to bring about positive changes. There was a widespread perception that corruption, poverty, harm caused to civilians by parties to the conflict and injustice are fuelling the spread of insecurity, and their recommendations reflect the need to address these root causes of conflict.

The full range of proposals made by individuals in the course of the research cannot be reflected here. While quotes from interviews and group discussions are interspersed throughout this section, key themes were extrapolated from the research to form the basis of the following set of policy recommendations, which aim to translate these calls for action into concrete steps that can be undertaken by decision makers. Although the following recommendations are directed at four main parties, individuals felt it was critical for leaders within Afghan civil society as well as religious leaders also use their influence to bring pressure on these actors to improve protection of civilians and address the drivers of conflict.

To the Government of Afghanistan

Recommendation 1: Take serious steps to establish the rule of law at all levels, crack down on corruption and end the culture of impunity and patronage, including root and branch reform of the police and judiciary.

“First, the government administration should be cleared of corrupt people. They are mainly district governors, district chiefs of police and judges at the moment in provinces; they are also one of the causes of insecurity.” – Male, Kabul

“The government must start paying attention to its people.” – Female, Daikundi

“Our national policy makers should leave their personal interests aside and they should fight to end corruption.” – Female, Herat

“The government should eliminate corruption and should not appoint warlords in the government.” – Male, Balkh

Given that nearly half of all individuals interviewed saw government corruption and ineffectiveness as a driving factor of the conflict, the Afghan government must demonstrate a stronger commitment to addressing corruption, increasing transparency and improving the rule of law. Beyond rigorous implementation and monitoring of the government anti-corruption strategy, government procedures should be streamlined, more effective oversight, audit and monitoring procedures should be established and the capacities of line ministries and local government should be strengthened. This includes top to bottom reform of the police and judiciary, including establishing a professional and operationally autonomous police force and an independent judiciary. Oversight within the justice system should be enhanced and current obstacles to enforcing laws and procedures should be addressed, particularly with regard to detention.

Many individuals saw a link between warlords continuing to hold positions of power, at all levels of government, spreading insecurity and a lack of confidence in the government. The laws that prohibit criminals or those otherwise engaged in or linked to illegal activities from running for or holding public office must be strengthened and rigorously enforced. Efforts to date have been largely ad hoc, uneven, temporary and largely ineffective. All officials and power-holders who are believed to have links to criminal networks must be subject to thorough and independent



investigation, including those at the highest levels of government, and prosecuted accordingly. Those found guilty of serious crimes or abuses should be barred from government office.

Government appointments should be made on merit, based on criteria relevant to the position as well as the local context, and minimum governing standards should be adopted to ensure ethical behavior and to punish any transgressions.⁵³ Existing procedures and mechanisms to keep human rights abusers out of unelected government posts must also be strengthened and fully enforced. Potential reforms include, but are not limited to, expanding the mandate of the Electoral Complaints Commission to investigate the human rights records of candidates and disqualify them from running if they are found to be guilty of abuses, establishing a proper and transparent mechanism for vetting police (particularly senior officers), clarifying and strengthening the role of the President's advisory council on appointments and establishing clear guidelines on appointments for the civil service commission requiring the investigation of human rights abuse claims.

Recommendation 2: Investigate crimes and abuses associated with the conflict and pursue justice, acknowledgement, reconciliation and redress.

"Unfortunately, now all of those killers and warlords are in power and are sitting safely in their seats. Still, there is a lot of fear of them; therefore people can not trust any government entity." – Male, Kunduz

"War criminals should be punished by the government." – Male, Faryab

"Justice should be brought." – Female, Kabul

Without justice, there is little prospect of lasting peace. Though the primary concern among individuals consulted in this research was to ensure that such criminals are no longer permitted to

be involved in government, there was a strong desire for an opportunity to draw a line under the violence of the past three decades and move forward.⁵⁴

The Afghan government should renew and revitalize its commitment the Action Plan on Peace, Reconciliation and Justice. In particular, key action two, focused on ensuring credibility and accountability in state institutions, should be urgently implemented. To be meaningful and appropriate, the specific forms of investigation, documentation, redress and forgiveness for past abuses must be determined by the Afghan people, and must not only focus on criminal responsibility. The action plan provides a solid basis for moving forward but the Afghan government and international community must devote more resources and attention to operationalizing and implementing its broad recommendations. Undoubtedly, this will include a wide range of measures implemented at all levels, possibly including but not limited to local reconciliation, investigations of large scale incidents, truth commissions, memorials or museums and reparations.

To the International Community

Recommendation 1: Commit and deliver not just more aid, but more effective aid for humanitarian, reconstruction and development activities throughout the country.

“Employment opportunities should be created and schools should be built so that our children can be educated.” – Female, Helmand

“The international community should spend their assistance effectively as currently it does not reach poor people.” – Male, Kabul

“NGOs should spend money in the right way and in a way that builds our country’s future.” – Male, Nangarhar

“International aid should be fairly and equally distributed to all people of Afghanistan.” – Female, Bamiyan

“Why are the international donors wasting their money? Instead they should invest in establishing factories and other industries that will create employment for the people.” – Male, Faryab

Individuals consulted in this research overwhelmingly felt that poverty and unemployment were the main drivers of the current conflict. They not only wanted the international community, together with the Afghan government, to rebuild Afghanistan and provide income earning opportunities, but they saw poverty alleviation as an essential precondition to the creation of security. Many individuals felt that though much had been promised to the Afghan people, little had actually been delivered – creating frustration and disillusionment and ultimately undermining stability. In particular, individuals called for better measures to ensure that economic development and aid reach those who need it the most.

Clearly, the long term reconstruction of Afghanistan, which will require sustained political will, extensive resources and decades of support, is not only in the interests of Afghans but in the interests of regional and global stability. There needs to not only be more aid, but more effective aid. The lack of coordination and overall effectiveness of aid is a complex problem, but one that must be urgently addressed as it has undermined reconstruction efforts and created mistrust among many Afghans. Immediately, there should be a commitment to full transparency, including strong monitoring and evaluation, by donors in all assistance activities (including the Commander’s Emergency Response Fund) – without which it is impossible to identify and address problems, as well as to understand and replicate successes. The Joint Coordination Monitoring Board (JCMB)⁵⁵ has failed to sufficiently enhance coordination and transparency. The JCMB, along with the UNAMA Aid Effectiveness unit, must demonstrate genuine commitment to enhancing aid effectiveness and improving donor accountability. If they are unable to meet these goals, an independent commission should be established, in coordination with the Ministry of Finance, to collate information on aid

flows, undertake regular monitoring and evaluation of all donors, publicly report on the delivery of aid and make recommendations on aid effectiveness.

The emphasis of many donors' strategies on quick impact projects and the use of expensive consultants must be reevaluated and redirected to meet Afghan needs, particularly the creation of income generation opportunities, and address the underlying causes of poverty. Alongside this, more support must be directed towards the Afghan government and the private sector to ensure that they are able to support and direct economic growth and poverty alleviation over the long term.

Recommendation 2: Hold the Afghan government accountable and provide more support for it to tackle corruption and criminality.



“Put pressure on the central government to dismiss corrupt criminals from official posts and don't let Afghans with power misuse it for their own profit.” – Female, Kunar

“We want the Afghan government to root out corruption and serve the nation.” – Male, Paktia

Tackling corruption and establishing justice and rule of law is essential given that corruption, criminality and warlordism is perceived to be fuelling the conflict, and the international community has a critical role to play. The UN, donor governments and others must crack down on corruption both in their own systems and within the Afghan government. While donors must be more accountable for their own actions, they must also pressure the Afghan government to be more accountable and take concrete action to reduce corruption. Aid must be premised on the ability and willingness of the government to demonstrate a genuine commitment to these goals, and there should be consequences if they fail to do so.

In addition to supporting the steps recommended above, donors must stop giving direct or indirect political or financial support to power brokers who are engaged in criminal, corrupt or oppressive practices. Donors should also provide greater support for the Afghan government to institute stronger vetting processes, which include investigations of allegations of human rights abuses, among presidential appointees, electoral candidates, police officials, the judiciary and civil servants.

Recommendation 3: Provide strong support for local peace-building and conflict resolution initiatives, led by civil society, and urge the Afghan government to pursue justice, acknowledgement, reconciliation and redress for abuses caused during the past three decades of conflict.

“Ordinary people have no trust anymore.” – Male, Herat

“Conflict not only killed people and destroyed their houses. It also destroyed their whole lives and their sense of trust. Children who have lost their fathers and grown up in the conflict do not trust anyone. We are scared of everything, because we fear the conflict might start again.” – Female, Faryab

The conflict has severely damaged the social fabric of the country. The violence has divided and uprooted communities, created and perpetuated ethnic tensions and turned neighbors and families against one another. Forgiveness, reconciliation and conflict resolution at the local level are critical to establishing lasting peace in Afghanistan.⁵⁶ Donors should provide greater support for community-based peacebuilding initiatives, which have often proven to be effective at mediating local conflicts and helping to restore social cohesion.

At a higher level, the international community should assist the Afghan people to address human rights abuses associated with the conflict. Post-Taliban policies of cooption supported by major donors have obstructed efforts to bring about acknowledgment of and justice for past abuses. Recognizing that such policies ultimately undermine security, rule of law and human rights, there must be a shift towards supporting accountability, acknowledgement and appropriate forms of justice.

The international community must push the Government of Afghanistan to fulfil the commitments it has made to pursue transitional justice, including its agreement to implement the Action Plan on Peace, Justice and Reconciliation as stated in the Afghanistan Compact. While the 2008 deadline for implementation has long passed, the international community should pressure the Government of Afghanistan to meet this commitment within the next two years.

Recommendation 4: Establish a regional peace process, including all regional powers, to end adverse interference in Afghanistan's affairs and provide constructive support for its security and economic development.

"Unless the interference by neighboring countries stops, Afghanistan will be forever a battlefield and a danger to the whole world." – Male, Kunar

"The international community should create an opportunity to end the fighting." – Female, Kabul

"We are infamous in the outside world for conflict and violence. However, foreigners, including Muslims, were also involved, both with the government and anti-government forces." – Male, Herat

Regional and international interference played a major role in creating chaos in Afghanistan; regional cooperation and genuine political will is required to establish stability. A political framework that would seek, through dialogue, to address regional political rivalries, grievances and disputes could be instrumental in establishing such a regional commitment. This framework should aim to enhance mutual regional cooperation, especially on security issues, and would seek to entrench Afghanistan's political neutrality, sovereignty and territorial integrity. It should also formalize a common commitment to non-interference in Afghanistan's internal affairs from all regional powers and neighboring states.

To Pro-Government Forces⁸⁷

Recommendation 1: Do more to protect civilians, including tightening restrictions on the use of force.

"They should fight only in places where there are Taliban and anti-government forces and they should not kill civilians." – Female, Kabul

"There should be better coordination in order to prevent killing civilians and innocent people in military air operations." – Male, Badakhshan

There was a strong desire to see parties to the conflict, on both sides, prioritize the safety and wellbeing of Afghan civilians. All possible measures should be taken to distinguish between

civilians and combatants but both Afghan and international forces. While civilian casualties caused by pro-government forces decreased in the beginning of 2009 and recent ISAF strategic directives have tightened the rules governing the use of force with the aim of reducing harm to civilians within ISAF, there has been a lack of a truly unified command, which may limit the scope of enforcement for such measures.⁵⁸



ISAF rules governing the escalation of force and execution of airstrikes should be further tightened, and there should be rigorous monitoring to ensure full operational compliance with these guidelines. Specifically, airstrikes near or in civilian areas should be avoided and military intelligence should be subject to more rigorous scrutiny and higher levels of verification. Military bases, both Afghan and international, should not be located in areas that place civilians at further risk, such as cities or other highly populated areas.

There was a widespread perception that international and Afghan forces were not held accountable for their actions, so more should be done to enable Afghans to access complaints mechanisms, ensure such claims are investigated and see that those responsible for abuses are punished. International mentors and advisers to Afghan forces, commanders of the Afghan forces and international forces conducting joint operations with Afghan forces should expand and enhance efforts to prevent abuses against civilians by Afghan forces and ensure that they are trained in and comply with international humanitarian law. Additionally, all Special Forces units and foreign government security agencies should operate according to international and Afghan law and fall within clear and coherent chains of command, and their activities should be subject to rigorous oversight.

Recommendation 2: Demonstrate greater respect for Afghan culture, history and traditions.

“Our request to foreigners involved in military and reconstruction activities is for them to respect Afghan culture and beliefs.” – Female, Kunar

“International forces should consider Afghan culture and traditions.” – Male, Nangarhar

“International forces should reduce their patrols in villages... They should avoid unnecessary searching of homes in rural areas.” – Male, Nangarhar

The perceived over-reliance on airstrikes and the execution of house searches that are aggressive and abusive were seen as unnecessary and offensive. Though ISAF has recently placed restrictions on potentially harmful tactics, including raids, it was widely felt that more must be done to ensure that Afghan values, history and culture are respected by both Afghan and international forces.

Night raids, in particular, are viewed as a serious invasion of privacy, generate resentment and fear and have even led to community outcry and protests in some areas. Further, they can be

extremely dangerous with individuals getting caught in the confusion and crossfire. Many families in Afghanistan possess firearms and are likely to react if they believe they are in danger or do not understand what is happening. While this recommendation applies primarily to international forces, it is not sufficient to say that Afghan forces should lead such operations, as the current policy dictates; research has shown that such actions are unlikely to be viewed as any more “respectful” regardless of whether they are led by Afghan or international forces.⁵⁹

Night raids should be avoided when possible but if they are carried out, much more needs to be done to ensure that civilians are not harmed in the process. Negotiations with village elders to take suspects into custody or warning villagers beforehand by loudspeaker can help reduce the likelihood of violent confrontation and civilian casualties. Again, these recommendations must apply to all international and Afghan forces – including Special Forces – to be truly effective.



Recommendation 3: Ensure transparent and timely investigations are conducted of all allegations of harm to civilians and provide effective, responsive and equitable mechanisms of redress.

“Somebody reported that we had Taliban in our home so the international forces attacked our home at night. They killed my father, my sister and my mother and they took my brother away. They claimed my family was Taliban and Al Qaeda. When the people demonstrated and told them that we are innocent people, all they said was that it was an accident. My niece still has nightmares and calls for her mother.” – Female, Nangarhar

Many individuals felt that when civilians are harmed in the course of military operations, more must be done to investigate, explain and provide redress. Many Afghans may be fearful of approaching those that caused them harm and even if they do, they are unlikely to get results given that investigation and condolence processes are often ad hoc, overly bureaucratic and vary depending on the nationality of the forces involved.

A unified, comprehensive mechanism across all international and national forces for providing redress to those who suffer losses should be established. Clear, consistent rules on investigations and eligibility must be agreed upon and all forms of redress must be sufficient and reflect the degree of harm caused. International forces and Afghan National Security Forces must effectively work together on these issues to avoid conflict, confusion and duplication of efforts.

To ensure affected individuals can access investigation and compensation mechanisms, relevant representatives must be easily accessible in all conflict-affected areas and communities should be made fully aware of the investigation and claims process. Redress must not be limited to

cash payments or reconstruction projects; research with survivors of the conflict has shown that explanations and apologies are critically important to those that have been harmed.

To Anti-Government Elements

Recommendation 1: Immediately discontinue the targeting of civilians and taking refuge in highly populated civilian areas.

“We request the Taliban to stop the killings.” – Female, Kabul

“The Taliban should stop suicide attacks.” – Male, Kabul

“There is fighting because the Taliban hide in our villages and then International forces bombard our villages while in urban areas, suicide attacks and remote control bombs threaten our lives.”
– Male, Kandahar

“Taliban should understand that they are killing other Muslims and they have to pay for it in next world.” – Female, Bamian

The Taliban and other insurgent groups should immediately stop targeting civilians, which was widely seen as illegitimate regardless of whether intended targets were perceived to be associated with the government, international forces or the international community. The use of improvised explosive devices (particularly pressure-activated devices), suicide bombs and other tactics that are likely to harm civilians and attacks in areas populated by civilians should also be avoided.

Additionally, Taliban and other insurgents should immediately halt the practice of taking refuge in civilian areas. This tactic knowingly puts civilians on the front lines, often leading to civilian injury or death and extensive damage to civilian property. It may also lead to loss of assets or income, decreased access to basic services and increased levels of displacement, as some individuals may be afraid to stay in their villages with armed opposition groups present.

Recommendation 2: Express grievances and demands through political dialogue rather than violence.

“Our message to Taliban is that they should take part in government.” – Male, Herat

“The Taliban should not fight; they should express their demands through dialogue.” – Male, Kabul

“Our message to Taliban is that if they are really Muslim, then why are they fighting against the government since the government is also an Islamic government?” – Male, Balkh

There was a clear preference expressed by individuals for the Taliban to abandon the use of violence, which was seen as neither legitimate nor necessary. Violence was primarily seen as killing or harming other Afghans, undermining human security and interfering with access to basic services like health and education. Perceived insurgent links to criminal groups were also seen as decreasing legitimacy and exacerbating security conditions.

Although many of these groups were excluded from the Bonn process, it was widely felt that anti-government groups should articulate their demands through the national political process or through local decision-making structures and peacebuilding mechanisms. Insurgent groups should also immediately desist from engagement in criminal activities, such as extortion and drug trafficking, and eliminate links with criminal groups or actors.

ANNEX A: Methodology and Respondent Profile

Methodology

Together, eight organizations designed and conducted the field research. Structured interviews were conducted with 704 respondents from January through April 2009 in 14 provinces. Gender-segregated group discussions were also conducted at each interview location. The domains of inquiry focused on: 1) individual experiences of the past three decades of conflict, 2) perceptions and experiences of the current conflict, and 3) recommendations for key national and international power holders with regard to the conflict.

Male and female researchers were assigned in each province to gain community acceptance and ensure that respondents felt comfortable speaking openly. The majority of researchers were Afghans, and when possible, researchers were from the provinces being surveyed. The lead researcher, a non-Afghan, visited field research sites where possible. Individuals were selected at random for interviews and group discussions and researchers were given detailed training and instructions on how to conduct both interviews and focus group discussions. Researchers explained that participation was strictly voluntary and they could refuse to answer specific questions or choose to stop at any time. Individual interviews were conducted in a quiet space where only the researcher and the respondent were present to help put the respondent at ease and preserve confidentiality. Group discussions were facilitated by researchers, who explained the purpose of the discussion, asked a set of specific questions covering all three domains of inquiry and moderated discussions with the aim of ensuring that all participants were able to contribute.

Province	Individual Interviews			Group Discussions		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Badakhshan	22	25	47	3	3	6
Balkh	22	24	46	3	3	6
Bamiyan	26	29	55	3	3	6
Daikundi	25	23	48	3	3	6
Faryab	26	24	50	3	2	5
Helmand	29	19	48	3	2	5
Heart	25	25	50	3	4	7
Kabul	20	30	50	3	3	6
Kandahar	28	23	51	5	1	6
Kunar	25	26	51	3	3	6
Kunduz	28	23	51	3	3	6
Nangarhar	31	23	54	3	2	5
Paktia	32	20	52	3	3	6
Parwan	25	26	51	2	3	5
Total	364	340	704	43	38	81

Once field research was complete, the questionnaires were translated and submitted to the lead researcher at Oxfam for analysis. A series of workshops was held to help analyze the more qualitative aspects of the data. Participants included field researchers as well as individuals not previously connected with the research and a framework analysis approach was used to identify common themes and trends. With regard to quantitative analysis, select elements of the individual questionnaires were entered into a database and statistical analysis was performed. Additionally, desk research and interviews were conducted by the lead researcher with over fifty experts on Afghanistan and various aspects of the conflict to help contextualize the findings and deepen the analysis.

Gender

Overall, 48% of respondents were female and 52% were male. Though researchers aimed to interview an equal number of female and male respondents at each research site, this was not possible in some areas, particularly where access to women was more limited.

Age

The average age was 33.5 years old, 32.8 for women and 34.2 for men. Ages for respondents ranged from 12 to 87 years old, though a small proportion of respondents were unsure of their age. Although 43 was the median age, more than half of all respondents were between the ages of 20 and 40.

Geographic distribution and ethnicity

Research was distributed across 14 provinces in the east, west, north, south and center of the country with 35% of respondents residing in urban or peri-urban areas, and 65% in rural areas. Given the regional variance in experiences of the various conflicts, there are several important caveats.

Although respondents were not asked to disclose their ethnicity, the majority of research occurred outside of areas dominated by Pashtuns, the majority ethnic group. Within the selected provinces, security concerns often dictated which districts and villages were selected as research sites. In practice, few sites were experiencing active conflict at the time of the research (though this has now changed, with security having rapidly deteriorated in many areas since the conclusion of the field research phase). This limitation may have skewed findings to make the current conflict appear less harmful than is actually the case overall. Additionally, though individual quotes are used throughout this report, these quotes are anonymous and the specific villages and districts surveyed have not been disclosed for security reasons.

Limitations

No research process is perfect, particularly in Afghanistan, and there are a number of factors that may limit or influence the findings. In particular, the sensitive issues raised in this research are difficult to talk about in any context, but have specific limitations in Afghanistan.

In general, outsiders asking questions about experiences of conflict – particularly in the context of an ongoing conflict and where there has been widespread impunity for past abuses – is likely to inhibit responses, raise suspicions and even create anger. Research of this nature requires a high degree of trust for individuals to feel that are able to tell their story. Even then, they still may not feel comfortable discussing issues like sexual violence or mental illness.

Although researchers explained that participation was entirely voluntary and that respondents could refuse to answer questions or stop at any time, Afghan attitudes of hospitality towards the researchers, who would have likely been seen as guests, may have had the effect of making them feel compelled to participate. It also may have inhibited them from telling the complete truth about how they feel about the international community or other actors, particularly if they felt it might have offended researchers.

The organizations undertaking this research had established working relationships within many of the communities involved in this research. Prior to interviews, researchers explained that the organizations conducting this research were independent from and impartial to the parties to the conflict. Yet the underlying dynamics of both the conflict and aid organizations, who may not always be perceived as impartial, asking individuals highly sensitive questions about the conflict cannot be ignored and may have influenced the findings of this research.

Researchers also explained that this process was not tied to aid or any other benefits. However, research surveys – in Afghanistan or elsewhere – often have the effect of raising expectations. In asking someone to give several hours of their time to answer highly personal questions, it may

seem perfectly reasonable for them to implicitly expect something in return. Just as some may be hesitant to talk about the harm that they have experienced, some respondents may exaggerate the negative impact on their village in the hopes of attracting development projects. On the one hand, the pre-existing relationships between some of the research organizations and respondents' communities may have enabled researchers to have a higher degree of access and a greater ability to ask sensitive questions; on the other hand, it may have influenced the answers that respondents provided, particularly when talking about issues related aid or poverty.

Finally, Afghan social hierarchy and dynamics, especially among men, often ran counter to the environment researchers tried to create within group discussions. The result was that, in some cases, the voices of the elders and the powerful were most prominent, while others were generally deferential and less vocal. Although researchers facilitating group discussions tried to counteract these dynamics and ensure that all participants felt able to speak, they were not always successful. This meant that in some cases, one voice came to dominate what was meant to be a group discussion.

ANNEX B: Summary of Key Findings

Note that not all calculated percentages add up to 100%, particularly where multiple responses may have garnered less than 1%. The base used for percentage calculation is 704 (Male 364; Female 340) unless otherwise noted.

Imprisonment, Torture and Injury

1a. Were you imprisoned?

	Total	%	Male	% Male	Female	% Female
No	602	86%	296	49%	306	51%
Yes (Total)	97	13%	66	68%	31	32%
Yes, Communist Government (1979-92)	27	4%	19	70%	8	30%
Yes, Civil War (1992-96)	31	4%	22	71%	9	29%
Yes, Taliban Rule (1996-2001)	38	5%	24	63%	14	37%
Yes, Current Conflict (2001-present)	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Yes, Don't know time period/blank	1	0%	1	0%	0	0%
Don't know/Blank	5	1%	2	40%	3	60%

	Badakhshan	Balkh	Bamiyan	Daikundi	Faryab	Helmand	Herat	Kabul	Kandahar	Kunar	Kunduz	Nangarhar	Paktia	Parwan	Total
No	43	43	47	35	48	35	43	37	46	49	41	42	42	51	602
Yes (Total)	4	2	8	12	2	12	6	13	4	2	11	11	10	0	97
Yes, Communist Govt (1979-1992)	1	0	1	0	0	7	4	0	3	0	4	3	4	0	27
Yes, Civil War (1992-96)	3	1	2	12	0	1	0	1	0	0	5	2	3	0	31
Yes, Taliban Rule (1996-2001)	0	1	5	0	2	4	2	12	1	1	2	6	2	0	38
Yes, Current Conflict (2001-present)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Yes, Don't know when/Blank	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Don't know/Blank	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	5

1b. Was anyone in your family imprisoned?

	Total	%	Male	% Male	Female	% Female
No	493	70%	264	54%	229	46%
Yes (Total)	206	29%	98	48%	108	52%
Yes, Communist Government (1979-92)	73	10%	46	63%	27	37%
Yes, Civil War (1992-96)	56	8%	24	43%	32	57%
Yes, Taliban Rule (1996-2001)	70	10%	22	31%	48	69%
Yes, Current Conflict (2001-present)	5	1%	4	80%	1	20%
Yes, Don't know time period/blank	2	0%	0	0%	2	100%
Don't know/Blank	5	1%	2	40%	3	60%

	Badakhshan	Balkh	Bamiyan	Daikundi	Faryab	Helmand	Herat	Kabul	Kandahar	Kunar	Kunduz	Nangarhar	Paktia	Parwan	Total
No	34	40	29	30	42	35	25	32	38	44	34	29	38	43	493
Yes (Total)	13	6	26	17	7	11	25	18	13	6	17	25	14	8	206
Yes, Communist Govt (1979-1992)	2	0	4	0	0	7	13	0	10	4	3	21	9	0	73
Yes, Civil War (1992-96)	11	3	7	15	3	0	2	1	0	1	7	1	5	0	56
Yes, Taliban Rule (1996-2001)	0	3	15	1	4	4	9	15	3	1	6	1	0	8	70
Yes, Current Conflict (2001-present)	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	5
Yes, Don't know when/Blank	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
Don't know/Blank	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	5

2a. Were you tortured?

	Total	%	Male	% Male	Female	% Female
No	556	79%	272	49%	284	51%
Yes (Total)	145	21%	91	63%	54	37%
Yes, Communist Government (1979-92)	37	5%	28	76%	9	24%
Yes, Civil War (1992-96)	43	6%	24	56%	19	44%
Yes, Taliban Rule (1996-2001)	55	8%	32	58%	23	42%
Yes, Current Conflict (2001-present)	5	1%	3	60%	2	40%
Yes, Don't know time period/blank	5	1%	4	80%	1	20%
Don't know/Blank	3	0%	1	33%	2	67%

	Badakhshan	Balkh	Bamiyan	Daikundi	Faryab	Helmand	Herat	Kabul	Kandahar	Kunar	Kunduz	Nangarhar	Paktia	Parwan	Total
No	36	43	49	24	50	36	34	33	41	48	40	35	39	48	556
Yes (Total)	11	2	6	23	0	11	16	17	10	3	11	19	13	3	145
Yes, Communist Govt (1979-1992)	1	0	0	0	0	7	5	1	8	1	2	8	4	0	37
Yes, Civil War (1992-96)	10	0	1	18	0	2	0	0	0	1	5	2	4	0	43
Yes, Taliban Rule (1996-2001)	0	2	5	2	0	1	9	16	1	1	4	9	2	3	55
Yes, Current Conflict (2001-present)	0	0	0	3	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	5
Yes, Don't know when/Blank	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	5
Don't know/Blank	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	3							

2b. Was anyone in your family tortured?

	Total	%	Male	% Male	Female	% Female
No	454	65%	241	53%	213	47%
Yes (Total)	246	35%	120	49%	126	51%
Yes, Communist Government (1979-92)	100	14%	69	69%	31	31%
Yes, Civil War (1992-96)	63	9%	26	72%	37	28%
Yes, Taliban Rule (1996-2001)	76	11%	21	28%	55	72%
Yes, Current Conflict (2001-present)	5	1%	2	40%	3	60%
Yes, Don't know time period/blank	2	0%	2	100%	0	0%
Don't know/Blank	4	0%	3	75%	1	25%

	Badakhshan	Balkh	Bamiyan	Daikundi	Faryab	Helmand	Herat	Kabul	Kandahar	Kunar	Kunduz	Nangarhar	Paktia	Parwan	Total
No	33	43	21	19	45	22	25	31	31	43	36	30	33	42	454
Yes (Total)	14	2	34	28	5	25	25	18	20	8	15	24	19	9	246
Yes, Communist Govt (1979-1992)	3	0	7	1	0	19	11	1	14	6	5	20	13	0	100
Yes, Civil War (1992-96)	10	1	7	20	1	3	2	2	3	1	8	1	4	0	63
Yes, Taliban Rule (1996-2001)	1	1	20	6	4	3	11	15	2	1	2	0	1	9	76
Yes, Current Conflict (2001-present)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	1	0	5
Yes, Don't know when/Blank	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Don't know/Blank	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	4

3a. Were you badly injured as a soldier or a civilian?

Total	%	Male	% Male	Female	% Female	% Female
No	628	89%	322	51%	306	49%
Yes (Total)	70	10%	40	57%	30	43%
Yes, Communist Government (1979-92)	28	4%	18	64%	10	36%
Yes, Civil War (1992-96)	16	2%	8	50%	8	50%
Yes, Taliban Rule (1996-2001)	21	3%	11	52%	10	48%
Yes, Current Conflict (2001-present)	3	0%	1	33%	2	67%
Yes, Don't know time period/blank	2	0%	2	100%	0	0%
Don't know/Blank	6	1%	2	40%	4	60%

	Badakhshan	Balkh	Bamiyan	Daikundi	Faryab	Helmand	Herat	Kabul	Kandahar	Kunar	Kunduz	Nangarhar	Paktia	Parwan	Total
No	47	45	48	42	50	42	41	39	46	50	37	49	46	46	628
Yes (Total)	0	0	7	5	0	5	7	11	4	1	14	5	6	5	70
Yes, Communist Govt (1979-1992)	0	0	4	0	0	3	4	2	2	1	4	3	4	1	28
Yes, Civil War (1992-96)	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	3	0	0	8	2	0	0	16
Yes, Taliban Rule (1996-2001)	0	0	2	2	0	2	2	6	0	0	2	0	1	4	21
Yes, Current Conflict (2001-present)	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	3
Yes, Don't know when/Blank	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
Don't know/Blank	0	1	0	1	0	1	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	6

3b. Was anyone in your family badly injured as a soldier or a civilian?

Total	%	Male	% Male	Female	% Female	
No	520	74%	277	53%	243	47%
Yes (Total)	180	26%	85	47%	95	53%
Yes, Communist Government (1979-92)	69	10%	43	62%	26	38%
Yes, Civil War (1992-96)	59	8%	24	41%	35	59%
Yes, Taliban Rule (1996-2001)	42	6%	14	33%	28	67%
Yes, Current Conflict (2001-present)	8	1%	2	25%	6	75%
Yes, Don't know time period/blank	2	0%	2	100%	0	0%
Don't know/Blank	4	0%	2	50%	2	50%

	Badakhshan	Balkh	Bamiyan	Daikundi	Faryab	Helmand	Herat	Kabul	Kandahar	Kunar	Kunduz	Nangarhar	Paktia	Parwan	Total
No	41	39	42	32	41	37	29	35	40	44	28	35	35	42	520
Yes (Total)	6	7	13	15	9	9	21	14	11	7	23	19	17	9	180
Yes, Communist Govt (1979-1992)	1	0	4	1	0	5	14	2	6	4	9	18	5	0	69
Yes, Civil War (1992-96)	5	3	4	9	4	2	3	3	4	1	11	0	9	1	59
Yes, Taliban Rule (1996-2001)	0	4	5	4	5	2	2	8	0	0	3	0	1	8	42
Yes, Current Conflict (2001-present)	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	2	0	1	1	0	8
Yes, Don't know when/Blank	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
Don't know/Blank	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	4

Displacement and Migration

4a. Did the war force you to leave your home?

	Total	%	Male	% Male	Female	% Female
No	167	24%	82	49%	85	51%
Yes	533	76%	281	53%	252	47%
Don't know/Blank	4	0%	1	25%	3	75%

	Badakhshan	Balkh	Bamiyan	Daikundi	Faryab	Helmand	Herat	Kabul	Kandahar	Kunar	Kunduz	Nangarhar	Paktia	Parwan	Total
No	29	15	3	8	30	29	18	9	3	5	3	7	2	6	167
Yes	18	30	52	40	20	18	32	41	48	46	48	46	50	44	533
Don't know/Blank	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	4

4b. If so, where were you forced to go?

Base = 533 (Male 281; 252)

	Total	%	Male	% Male	Female	% Female
Inside Afghanistan	226	42%	101	45%	125	55%
Outside Afghanistan	216	41%	132	61%	84	29%
Both	91	17%	49	54%	43	46%

	Badakhshan	Balkh	Bamiyan	Daikundi	Faryab	Helmand	Herat	Kabul	Kandahar	Kunar	Kunduz	Nangarhar	Paktia	Parwan	Total
Inside Afghanistan	10	19	46	16	12	5	13	15	14	9	23	3	19	22	226
Outside Afghanistan	5	9	5	23	6	10	17	16	26	11	19	23	26	20	216
Both	3	2	1	1	2	3	2	10	8	26	6	20	5	2	91

4c. Were you able to live with dignity?

Base = 533 (Male 281; 252)

	Total	%	Male	% Male	Female	% Female
No	82	15%	46	56%	36	44%
To some extent	237	45%	127	38%	110	62%
Yes	214	40%	109	51%	105	49%

	Badakhshan	Balkh	Bamiyan	Daikundi	Faryab	Helmand	Herat	Kabul	Kandahar	Kunar	Kunduz	Nangarhar	Paktia	Parwan	Total
No	2	3	26	9	6	1	7	8	4	0	3	1	10	2	82
To some extent	10	13	15	20	7	13	21	3	30	28	38	5	22	12	237
Yes	6	14	11	11	7	4	4	30	14	18	7	40	18	30	214

5a. Are you currently thinking of leaving your community or the country?

	Total	%	Male	% Male	Female	% Female
No	579	82%	293	51%	286	49%
Yes	116	17%	68	59%	48	41%
Don't know/Blank	9	1%	3	33%	6	67%

	Badakhshan	Balkh	Bamiyan	Daikundi	Faryab	Helmand	Herat	Kabul	Kandahar	Kunar	Kunduz	Nangarhar	Paktia	Parwan	Total
No	44	43	47	35	48	37	31	43	31	43	45	50	33	49	579
Yes	3	2	8	11	2	10	18	7	19	7	6	3	19	1	116
Don't know/Blank	0	1	0	2	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	9

5b. If so, are you thinking of leaving with or without your family?

Base = 116 (Male 68; 48)

	Total	%	Male	% Male	Female	% Female
With family	82	71%	47	57%	35	43%
Without family	21	18%	17	81%	4	19%
Don't know/Blank	13	11%	4	31%	9	69%

	Badakhshan	Balkh	Bamiyan	Daikundi	Faryab	Helmand	Herat	Kabul	Kandahar	Kunar	Kunduz	Nangarhar	Paktia	Parwan	Total
With family	1	1	6	8	1	4	13	3	18	7	6	3	10	1	82
Without family	0	0	1	2	0	5	3	2	1	0	0	0	7	0	21
Don't know/Blank	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	13

Damage to Property and Theft

6a. Did you have property destroyed?

	Total	%	Male	% Male	Female	% Female
No	398	57%	207	52%	191	48%
Yes (Total)	304	43%	157	52%	147	48%
Yes, Communist Government (1979-92)	122	17%	73	60%	49	40%
Yes, Civil War (1992-96)	63	9%	26	41%	37	59%
Yes, Taliban Rule (1996-2001)	95	13%	45	47%	50	53%
Yes, Current Conflict (2001-present)	13	2%	4	31%	9	69%
Yes, Don't know time period/blank	11	2%	2	18%	9	82%
Don't know/Blank	2	0%	2	100%	0	0%

	Badakhshan	Balkh	Bamiyan	Daikundi	Faryab	Helmand	Herat	Kabul	Kandahar	Kunar	Kunduz	Nangarhar	Paktia	Parwan	Total
No	30	42	29	41	47	16	33	8	15	29	19	31	24	34	398
Yes (Total)	17	3	26	6	3	32	17	42	36	22	32	23	28	17	304
Yes, Communist Govt (1979-1992)	5	1	1	1	1	26	11	4	21	11	12	16	12	0	122
Yes, Civil War (1992-96)	12	1	3	3	2	0	1	0	4	6	19	4	8	0	63
Yes, Taliban Rule (1996-2001)	0	1	22	1	0	3	5	38	1	3	1	2	1	17	95
Yes, Current Conflict (2001-present)	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	10	1	0	0	1	0	13
Yes, Don't know when/Blank	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	1	0	1	6	0	11
Don't know/Blank	0	1	0	1	0	2									

6b. Did anyone in your family have property destroyed?

	Total	%	Male	% Male	Female	% Female
No	216	31%	122	56%	94	44%
Yes (Total)	486	69%	241	50%	245	50%
Yes, Communist Government (1979-92)	261	37%	146	56%	115	44%
Yes, Civil War (1992-96)	83	12%	32	39%	51	61%
Yes, Taliban Rule (1996-2001)	132	19%	56	42%	76	58%
Yes, Current Conflict (2001-present)	6	1%	4	67%	2	33%
Yes, Don't know time period/blank	4	0%	3	75%	1	25%
Don't know/Blank	2	0%	1	50%	1	50%

	Badakhshan	Balkh	Bamiyan	Daikundi	Faryab	Helmand	Herat	Kabul	Kandahar	Kunar	Kunduz	Nangarhar	Paktia	Parwan	Total
No	26	36	11	37	41	14	9	4	2	1	9	6	17	3	216
Yes (Total)	21	10	44	10	9	34	41	46	49	49	42	48	35	48	486
Yes, Communist Govt (1979-1992)	10	2	6	3	3	32	31	10	39	41	15	45	20	4	261
Yes, Civil War (1992-96)	11	4	2	5	2	0	7	1	5	7	24	2	11	2	83
Yes, Taliban Rule (1996-2001)	0	4	35	1	3	2	2	35	2	1	3	1	1	42	132
Yes, Current Conflict (2001-present)	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	1	0	6
Yes, Don't know when/Blank	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	4
Don't know/Blank	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2

7a. Did you have land destroyed?

	Total	%	Male	% Male	Female	% Female
No	530	75%	277	52%	253	48%
Yes (Total)	171	25%	86	50%	85	50%
Yes, Communist Government (1979-92)	71	10%	38	54%	33	46%
Yes, Civil War (1992-96)	38	5%	17	45%	21	55%
Yes, Taliban Rule (1996-2001)	46	7%	21	46%	25	54%
Yes, Current Conflict (2001-present)	6	1%	2	33%	4	67%
Yes, Don't know time period/blank	10	1%	8	80%	2	20%
Don't know/Blank	3	0%	1	33%	2	67%

	Badakhshan	Balkh	Bamiyan	Daikundi	Faryab	Helmand	Herat	Kabul	Kandahar	Kunar	Kunduz	Nangarhar	Paktia	Parwan	Total
No	37	46	44	37	48	17	48	30	34	35	33	36	42	42	529
Yes (Total)	10	0	11	10	2	29	2	20	17	15	18	18	10	9	171
Yes, Communist Govt (1979-1992)	1	0	2	2	0	24	2	0	13	5	6	14	2	0	71
Yes, Civil War (1992-96)	7	0	2	6	1	1	0	0	1	5	10	3	2	0	38
Yes, Taliban Rule (1996-2001)	2	0	7	0	1	2	0	19	1	2	2	0	1	9	46
Yes, Current Conflict (2001-present)	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	6
Yes, Don't know when/Blank	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	1	0	1	5	0	10
Don't know/Blank	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	3

7b. Did anyone in your family have land destroyed?

	Total	%	Male	% Male	Female	% Female
No	375	53%	209	56%	166	44%
Yes (Total)	327	47%	154	47%	173	53%
Yes, Communist Government (1979-92)	173	25%	93	54%	80	46%
Yes, Civil War (1992-96)	48	7%	16	33%	32	67%
Yes, Taliban Rule (1996-2001)	94	13%	40	43%	54	57%
Yes, Current Conflict (2001-present)	8	1%	3	38%	5	62%
Yes, Don't know time period/blank	4	0%	2	50%	2	50%
Don't know/Blank	2	0%	1	50%	1	50%

	Badakhshan	Balkh	Bamiyan	Daikundi	Faryab	Helmand	Herat	Kabul	Kandahar	Kunar	Kunduz	Nangarhar	Paktia	Parwan	Total
No	25	45	36	29	48	16	28	25	27	8	22	15	38	13	375
Yes (Total)	22	1	19	19	2	32	22	24	24	42	29	39	14	38	327
Yes, Communist Govt (1979-1992)	10	0	2	3	0	27	15	4	18	34	11	37	9	3	173
Yes, Civil War (1992-96)	12	1	0	7	0	0	2	0	2	4	14	2	3	1	48
Yes, Taliban Rule (1996-2001)	0	0	2	2	1	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
Yes, Current Conflict (2001-present)	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	4
Yes, Don't know when/Blank	0	0	2	2	1	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
Don't know/Blank	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2

8a. Were you robbed?

	Total	%	Male	% Male	Female	% Female
No	460	65%	231	50%	229	50%
Yes (Total)	242	34%	133	55%	109	45%
Yes, Communist Government (1979-92)	67	10%	40	60%	27	40%
Yes, Civil War (1992-96)	73	10%	34	47%	39	53%
Yes, Taliban Rule (1996-2001)	80	11%	43	54%	37	45%
Yes, Current Conflict (2001-present)	9	1%	6	67%	3	33%
Yes, Don't know time period/blank	13	2%	10	77%	3	23%
Don't know/Blank	2	0%	0	0%	2	100%

	Badakhshan	Balkh	Bamiyan	Daikundi	Faryab	Helmand	Herat	Kabul	Kandahar	Kunar	Kunduz	Nangarhar	Paktia	Parwan	Total
No	39	36	21	22	46	27	40	23	42	39	27	38	21	39	460
Yes (Total)	8	10	34	25	4	20	10	27	9	12	24	16	31	12	242
Yes, Communist Govt (1979-1992)	0	0	1	1	0	17	5	1	5	2	5	9	21	0	67
Yes, Civil War (1992-96)	8	4	6	18	3	0	0	2	3	5	16	5	3	0	73
Yes, Taliban Rule (1996-2001)	0	4	27	3	1	1	3	23	0	2	2	1	1	12	80
Yes, Current Conflict (2001-present)	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	1	3	0	0	1	0	9
Yes, Don't know when/Blank	0	2	0	1	0	2	0	1	0	0	1	1	5	0	13
Don't know/Blank	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2							

8b. Was anyone in your family robbed?

	Total	%	Male	% Male	Female	% Female
No	316	45%	175	55%	141	45%
Yes (Total)	386	55%	188	49%	198	51%
Yes, Communist Government (1979-92)	118	17%	71	60%	47	40%
Yes, Civil War (1992-96)	124	17%	68	55%	56	45%
Yes, Taliban Rule (1996-2001)	136	19%	56	41%	80	59%
Yes, Current Conflict (2001-present)	6	1%	3	50%	3	50%
Yes, Don't know time period/blank	2	0%	1	50%	1	50%
Don't know/Blank	2	0%	1	50%	1	50%

	Badakhshan	Balkh	Bamiyan	Daikundi	Faryab	Helmand	Herat	Kabul	Kandahar	Kunar	Kunduz	Nangarhar	Paktia	Parwan	Total
No	31	32	6	16	44	25	21	18	36	18	14	27	20	8	316
Yes (Total)	16	14	49	31	6	22	29	32	15	33	37	27	32	43	386
Yes, Communist Govt (1979-1992)	3	1	3	2	0	21	14	4	10	7	7	24	19	3	118
Yes, Civil War (1992-96)	13	7	5	23	3	1	9	1	4	21	25	2	9	1	124
Yes, Taliban Rule (1996-2001)	0	6	41	5	3	0	6	27	0	4	5	0	0	39	136
Yes, Current Conflict (2001-present)	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	2	0	6
Yes, Don't know when/Blank	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
Don't know/Blank	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2							

Redress

9. Have you ever received any apology or compensation for these experiences?

	Total	%	Male	% Male	Female	% Female
No	672	95%	345	51%	327	49%
Yes	10	1%	9	90%	1	10%
Don't know/Blank	22	4%	10	45%	12	55%

	Badakhshan	Balkh	Bamiyan	Daikundi	Faryab	Helmand	Herat	Kabul	Kandahar	Kunar	Kunduz	Nangarhar	Paktia	Parwan	Total
No	47	45	51	46	46	47	47	48	49	45	51	52	47	51	672
Yes	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	1	1	4	0	0	1	0	10
Don't know/Blank	0	1	2	2	3	1	3	1	1	2	0	2	4	0	22

Perceptions of the Conflict

10. Which was the most harmful period of the conflict?

	Total	%	Male	% Male	Female	% Female
Communist Government (1979-92)	268	38%	154	57%	114	33%
Civil War (1992-96)	157	22%	83	53%	74	47%
Taliban Rule (1996-2001)	232	33%	101	44%	131	56%
Current Conflict (2001-present)	23	3%	13	57%	10	43%
Don't know/Blank	24	3%	13	54%	11	46%

	Badakhshan	Balkh	Bamiyan	Daikundi	Faryab	Helmand	Herat	Kabul	Kandahar	Kunar	Kunduz	Nangarhar	Paktia	Parwan	Total
Communist Govt (1979-1992)	24	5	4	4	2	32	36	9	35	35	6	44	28	4	268
Civil War (1992-96)	17	8	6	26	17	5	5	2	9	8	36	4	14	0	157
Taliban Rule (1996-2001)	4	30	43	16	20	8	6	38	3	4	8	2	5	45	232
Current Conflict (2001-present)	0	1	0	1	7	1	1	0	3	2	0	2	3	2	23
Don't know/Blank	2	2	2	1	4	2	2	1	1	2	1	2	2	0	24

11. What are the major driving factors of the current conflict?

Note that respondents were able to provide multiple responses to this question. Base = 704 (the number of total respondents) although the total number of responses was 1852.

	Total	%	Male	% Male	Female	% Female
Poverty and unemployment	490	70%	231	47%	259	53%
Corruption and ineffectiveness of the Afghan government	341	48%	191	56%	150	44%
Taliban	256	36%	124	48%	132	52%
Other countries	177	25%	80	45%	97	55%
Al Qaeda	126	18%	62	49%	64	51%
Presence of international forces	125	18%	78	62%	47	38%
Lack of support from the international community	123	17%	58	47%	65	53%
Warlords	106	15%	48	45%	58	55%
Criminal groups	99	14%	43	43%	56	37%
Other reasons	11	2%	5	45%	6	55%

	Badakhshan	Balkh	Bamiyan	Daikundi	Faryab	Helmand	Herat	Kabul	Kandahar	Kunar	Kunduz	Nangarhar	Paktia	Parwan	Total
Poverty and unemployment	40	15	20	39	40	43	23	39	42	50	33	35	33	38	490
Corruption and ineffectiveness of the Afghan government	16	13	28	19	10	40	20	7	37	41	35	16	35	24	341
Taliban	16	26	21	21	27	5	14	40	7	49	6	12	4	6	254
Other countries	23	21	22	4	24	2	14	7	7	2	16	22	6	7	177
Al Qaeda	8	14	4	4	24	6	5	2	17	24	14	1	2	1	126
Presence of international forces	0	5	5	3	1	14	20	2	18	24	7	13	8	5	125
Lack of support from the international community	6	9	1	1	5	39	1	13	2	33	6	1	5	1	123
Warlords	12	12	3	4	16	25	3	2	7	11	3	3	4	1	106
Criminal groups	17	15	2	2	15	19	5	0	4	3	6	1	9	1	99
Other reasons	0	1	2	0	6	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	11

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Endnotes

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⁴⁵Following this resolution, the Afghan parliament passed a revised resolution that granted general amnesty while also recognizing the rights of victims and their families to bring civil or criminal claims in 2007. The president did not sign the resolution into law and, as such, it is unlikely ever to become operative.

⁴⁶The UN Convention on Torture defines torture as "any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him, or a third person, information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity. It does not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in, or incidental to, lawful sanctions." Shakaja was the Dari term used to encapsulate this concept.

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