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Weekly Analysis is one of CSRS' publications, which significantly analyses weekly economic and political events in Afghanistan and the region. The prime motive behind this is to provide strategic insights and policy solutions to decision-making institutions and individuals in order to help them to design best policies. Weekly Analysis is published in local languages (Pashto and Dari) and international languages (English and Arabic).

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## Preface

As the past years, 2017 was also a challenging year for Afghans and particularly the civilian casualties remained high. The statistics of the international organizations show that since the formation of the NUG the overall number of civilian casualties in the country has increased.

Currently, on the one hand, the peace process is facing a deadlock and, on the other hand, the war strategy of the US and Afghan Government has also raised concern about the situation. The statistics of civilian casualties, and in light of the current situation the war strategy of the US and Afghan governments are issues that are analyzed in the first part of the Weekly Analysis of the Center for Strategic and Regional Studies (CSRS).

In the second part of the analysis, you would read about the condition of IDPs in the country. Currently, Afghanistan is the second country in the world that have a large number of IDPs and the recent statistics show that in the past six weeks 17000 people were displaced in this country. Until now, the Afghan government has not implemented any constructive plan to improve IDPs situation in the country, which has led in their worsened condition. What is the condition of IDPs in Afghanistan? What is the Afghan Government's strategy towards IDPs? These are the questions answered in the second part of the analysis.

## The strategy of war and the fate of the security situation



Based on the annual report of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), 2017 was another bloody year for Afghans and more than 10000 civilian casualties were recorded in this year. The beginning of 2018 was even bloodier than that of 2017. This increase in civilian casualties was due to the heavy attacks and explosions of the oppositions of the government as well as the airstrikes of the US and NATO forces.

UNAMA's report shows increase in civilian casualties at a time that, due to the war strategy of the US, the foreign soldiers in Afghanistan are returning to the battlefield and have increased their air attacks. Currently, on the one hand, the number of foreign forces in Afghanistan is increasing and on the other hand, peace talks between the Taliban and the Afghan Government does not seem to be likely.

Why is the current war escalating day after day? Will the US and Afghan government's current strategy of war will bring security and stability in the country?

## Civilian casualties

Based on the statistics of UNAMA, since 2007, when UNAMA started documenting civilian casualties, until the end of 2017 an overall number of 84246 civilians were either injured or killed in the war between the government and its armed oppositions.

According to the annual report of UNAMA and the UN Human Rights Office, released a few days ago, the civilian casualty rate is still very high. The report writes that between 1 January 2017 and end of December 2017, 3438 civilians are killed and 7015 other are injured. Overall, 10453 civilians casualties have been recorded in this year.<sup>1</sup> However, this is not the exact statistics of civilian casualties, but it shows that Afghans have passed another bloody year.

Overall, compared to 2015 and 2016, civilian casualties in 2017 have decreased; however, the casualties of women and children in this year are high. In 2017, 359 women were killed and 865 other were injured, which indicates a 5% increase compared to 2016. Moreover, 861 children were killed in this year and 2318 children were wounded, which shows a 10% increase compared to 2016. On the other hand, it seems the increase in the airstrikes of the Afghan and foreign forces and the increase in civilian casualties due to these attacks has undermined the fact that in 2017, civilian casualties has decreased in comparison to 2016.

Based on the statistics of UNAMA, it is the fourth consecutive year that the civilian casualties exceed 10 thousand people. Besides that, the Afghans are living in more and more fear and insecurity. UNAMA accepts that their statistics do not fully represent the disasters that the war brings upon Afghans.

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<sup>1</sup> UNAMA, 2017 Annual Report on Civilians Casualties in Afghanistan, 15 Feb 2018, See it online: <https://unama.unmissions.org/afghanistan-10000-civilian-casualties-2017-un-report-suicide-attacks-and-ieds-caused-high-number>

## **The Responsibility of civilian casualties**

The war strategies of the engaged parties in the Afghan war and unrealistic approach toward the peace process are the main reasons behind the current war and its prolongation in the country. In this regard all parties engaged in this war have some part, particularly considering the fact that since the formation of the NUG the civilian casualties has increased more than ever.

UNAMA also introduces the responsible parties for civilian casualties and it attributes most of the responsibility for civilian casualties to the Taliban. However, on the one hand, UNAMA's report does not include the civilian casualties for which they do not have enough evidence to put them in the category of civilian casualties neither do they include the casualties of the incidents to which they do not have access. In the meanwhile the civilian casualties caused by the airstrikes and drone attacks of foreign forces are not included in these reports either. Overall, UNAMA shows the civilians casualties caused by foreign forces very low, something that contradicts with the facts on the ground.

The same is true about UNAMA's 2017 report, which attributes the responsibility for 65% of the civilian casualties to the anti-government elements. The report says that the pro-government forces were responsible only for the 19% of the casualties, 16 the Afghan Force and only 2% the foreign forces.

Attributing only 2% of the civilian casualties to the foreign forces is astonishing because in 2017 their role in the war and in the battleground was more than the past several years. Based on UNAMA's report, the airstrikes carried out by pro-government forces has killed and injured 631 people (295 killed and 336 injured). This rate increased a 7% increase compared to 2016 and is the highest rate of civilian casualties caused by air attacks in a year since 2009, and this number of casualties is 6% of the overall civilian casualties in 2017. The NUG has also been silent against the airstrikes of the foreign forces in the past year, which is one of the reasons behind the increase in these attacks and the civilian casualties caused by them.

## The future situation

To a greater extent, the NUG failed in its peace process and, therefore, it focused on the war. That is why there are concerns that 2018 will be even bloodier for Afghans. Since the beginning of 2018, the airstrikes of the foreign forces have also augmented and they have also used B52 bomber for their attacks. Overall, this strategy of the US in Afghanistan has complicated the situation.

In its recent report, the International Crisis Group has criticized the US for their war strategy and has blamed this strategy for the further escalation of the insecurities in 2018. Based on this report, between 2009 and 2012, the US has more than 100 thousand soldiers in Afghanistan and still could not defeat the Taliban through military means, while currently this group controls more territory of the country than ever since 2001.<sup>2</sup>

Due to the US's emphasize on the war in Afghanistan, regional and international players such as Russia, China and Iran are suspicious of the US military presence in Afghanistan and believe that Washington does not want stability in Afghanistan and is only seeking the continuation of its military presence in the region. That is why that the involvements of these countries are increasing in the country on a daily basis.

Concerns about the security situation in 2018 are also increasing due to the boycott of the peace process by the Afghan Government and the US. After the peace process was boycotted by the US, through an open letter, the Taliban have called on the US Congress and people to pressurize on their government to alter their strategy from war to peace. The Taliban's letter has three reasons:

**First;** the Taliban are under pressure due to the war strategy of the US and Afghan Government. Moreover, civilian casualties are increasing due to their attacks, which have negative consequences for them.

**Second;** through this letter, the Taliban wanted to challenge the US saying that the US does not want peace and stability in Afghanistan and it only wants the continuation of the war.

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<sup>2</sup> International Crisis Group, 31 Jan 2018, See it online:

<https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/dangerous-escalation-afghanistan>

**Third;** the Taliban's this letter shows that this group does not intend to engage in peace talks with the Afghan Government and they believe the US to be the main party of the peace talks because this group has always said that the Afghan Government does not have any authority.

Overall, this letter shows that this group will continue to fight against the government and the foreign forces. In response to this letter of the Taliban, the US Secretary of States said: "The Taliban must first conduct peace talks with the Afghan Government."

Seeing the war and peace strategy of the Afghan government in the past, one can say that currently the Afghan Government has either lost its way or is unconsciously pursuing the current strategy, which brings neither peace nor security. Anyway, if both the Afghan Government and the Taliban want to enter the peace process from a stronger position, this process of peace will never begin, as experience in the past years have proved.

## The condition of the Internally Displaced Peoples (IDPs) in Afghanistan



Based on the report of the UN Organization for Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA), from the beginning of 2018 until 19 February, more than 17000 Afghans are displaced inside Afghanistan.<sup>3</sup>

In its recent report, this UN organ has said the insecurity and the continuation of war in the country as the main reasons behind the intensified IDP situation in Afghanistan. Besides the war, natural disasters, worst economic condition, poverty and unemployment and lack of investments in infrastructural areas are other factors that have played a role in displacing the people in the country.

Here you would read about the situation of the IDPs in Afghanistan and the policies of the National Unity Government (NUG) to address this issue.

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<sup>3</sup> See it online:

<https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/afghanistan/document/afghanistan-weekly-field-report-12-18-february-2018>



## **IDPs and their human rights**

IDP is someone who is forced to leave his/her residence due to armed conflict, natural disasters, poverty, etc. These people usually lose their belongings and have problems in areas of livelihood, shelter, education, job opportunities, etc.

Considering their human dignity and rights, governments are committed to certain obligations and responsibilities towards them. The first principle of the UN regulation regarding IDPs states: "IDPs shall have all the rights and freedoms that other citizens of a country have on the basis of national and international laws. IDPs shall not be discriminated in benefiting from their rights and freedoms."<sup>4</sup>

In the meanwhile, the International Declaration of Human Rights states: "Everyone has the right to maintain the level of live, health and prosperity of himself and his family in areas of food, shelter, healthcare and required social services. In addition, everyone has the right to have a dignified livelihood while he loses the means of livelihood due to unemployment, illness, being aged, widow, and any other factor out of his will."<sup>5</sup>

## **IDPs in Afghanistan**

In 1990s, many Afghans were living in cities, far from their homes, due to the civil war in the country. After 2001 and with the beginning of the US and NATO attacks on various regions of Afghanistan, the number of IDPs increased to 1.2 million people in Afghanistan. However, when security was maintained in the country, this number reduced to 650 thousand people.

Between 2001 and 2006, when the IDP situation was getting better, the number of IDPs was also decreasing. Nevertheless, after 2007, with the increasing insecurity in some provinces of the country, the number of IDPs increased as well. In this year, there were 153718 IDPs in Afghanistan. However, this number increased to 916435 in 2015 and in 2016, the number of IDPs increased to 1.5 million.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Read more here:

[http://morr.gov.af/Content/Media/Documents/IDPGP\\_Dari\\_Final21720121014149591458322570.pdf](http://morr.gov.af/Content/Media/Documents/IDPGP_Dari_Final21720121014149591458322570.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> For more information click on the link bellow:

<http://www.aihrc.org.af/media/files/Laws/Elamia%20ha/Elamiya%20huguqe%20bashar.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> CSRS, "A glimpse into the situation of IDPs in 2017", 28 Asad 1396 [solar year]:

Due to the worst security situation in the past year, the number of IDPs was rising and based on the remarks of the officials in the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations, only in 2017, 600 thousand Afghans are displaced due to the war in the country.

In the current year (2018), the reports of the international organizations show a high number of IDPs in the country and considering the worst security situation in the beginning of this year, it seems that the number of IDPs will continue to rise in this year as well. Overall, the reasons behind the increase in the number of IDPs is the increasing insecurity, armed conflict, unemployment and poverty and natural disasters.

### **NUG's Strategy towards IDPs**

Although the Afghan government has some plans for IDPs, the situation on the ground shows that IDPs live in worst conditions and the government has failed to address their condition.

Based on the “National Development Strategy of Afghanistan”, several organs are responsible in addressing the condition of IDPs. Some part of this strategy states: “In order to address the issues of returnees and IDPs, the government must work in promoting the capacity of the relevant ministries including Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Urban Development, Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Education, etc.”<sup>7</sup>

“The National Policy of IDPs”, approved by the Ministers’ Council on 25 November 2013 and officially implementable as of February 2014, is another document that is prepared by the Afghan government to address the IDPs situation in the country.<sup>8</sup>

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<http://csrskabul.com/pa/?p=3728>

<sup>7</sup> The National Development Strategy of Afghanistan: “The refugees, returnees and IDPs strategy”:

[http://morr.gov.af/Content/Media/Documents/DariRefugeeStrategy\\_final1992011829118381458322570.pdf](http://morr.gov.af/Content/Media/Documents/DariRefugeeStrategy_final1992011829118381458322570.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations, “National Policy of IDPs”:

<http://morr.gov.af/Content/Media/Documents/NationalIDPPolicy-FINAL-Dari26201484817936553325325.pdf>

In its 2016 report, Amnesty International has expressed concern about the bad situation of IDPs and has written that the National Policy of IDPs is yet to be implemented properly and that there are many challenges in this regard.

Although the Afghan Government and some national and international organizations are providing assistance such as food and basic live tools, these aids are, on the one hand, very less and, on the other hand, is not a fundamental aids that can help IDPs become self-sufficient.

The Afghan Government and the international community have not paid attention to the fundamental needs of IDPs. Most of them are living in tents and their children not only do not have access to education but also beg on the streets to feed their families.

Overall, as any other issue in Afghanistan, this issue is also related to peace and stability in the country and as long as the war continues the NUG will not be able to bring any fundamental changes in the lives of the IDPs.

The End

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**Note:** Please let us know your feedback and suggestions for the improvement of Weekly analysis.

