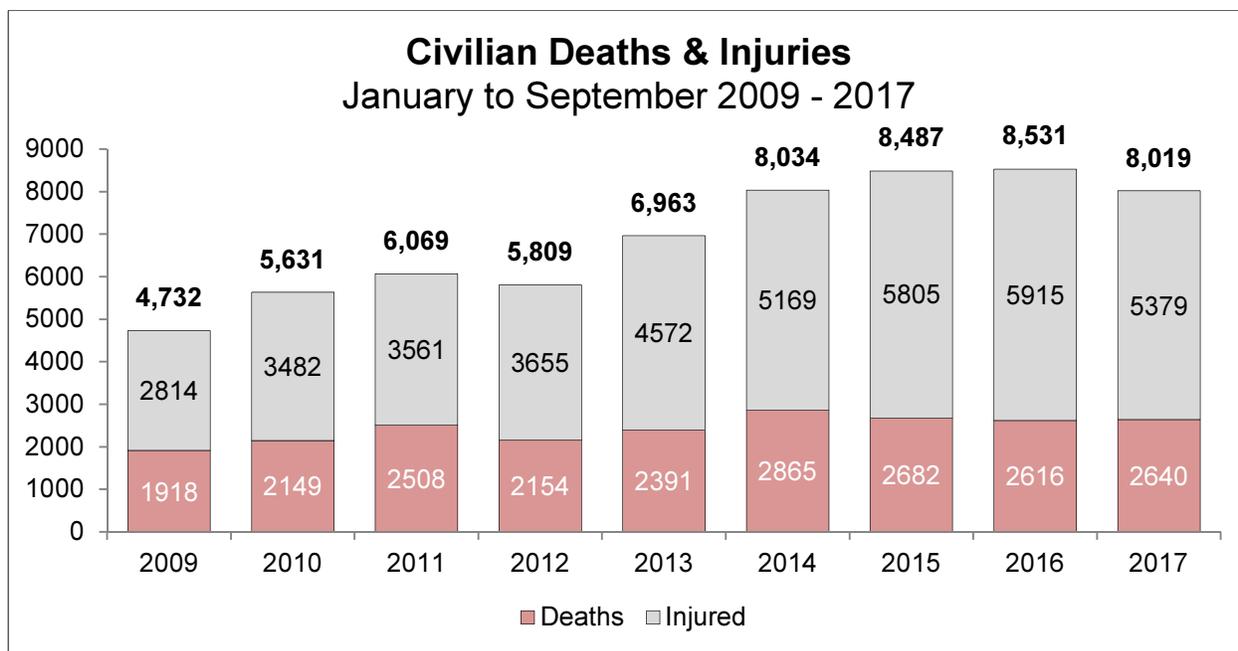




**QUARTERLY REPORT ON THE PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS IN ARMED CONFLICT:
1 JANUARY TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2017**

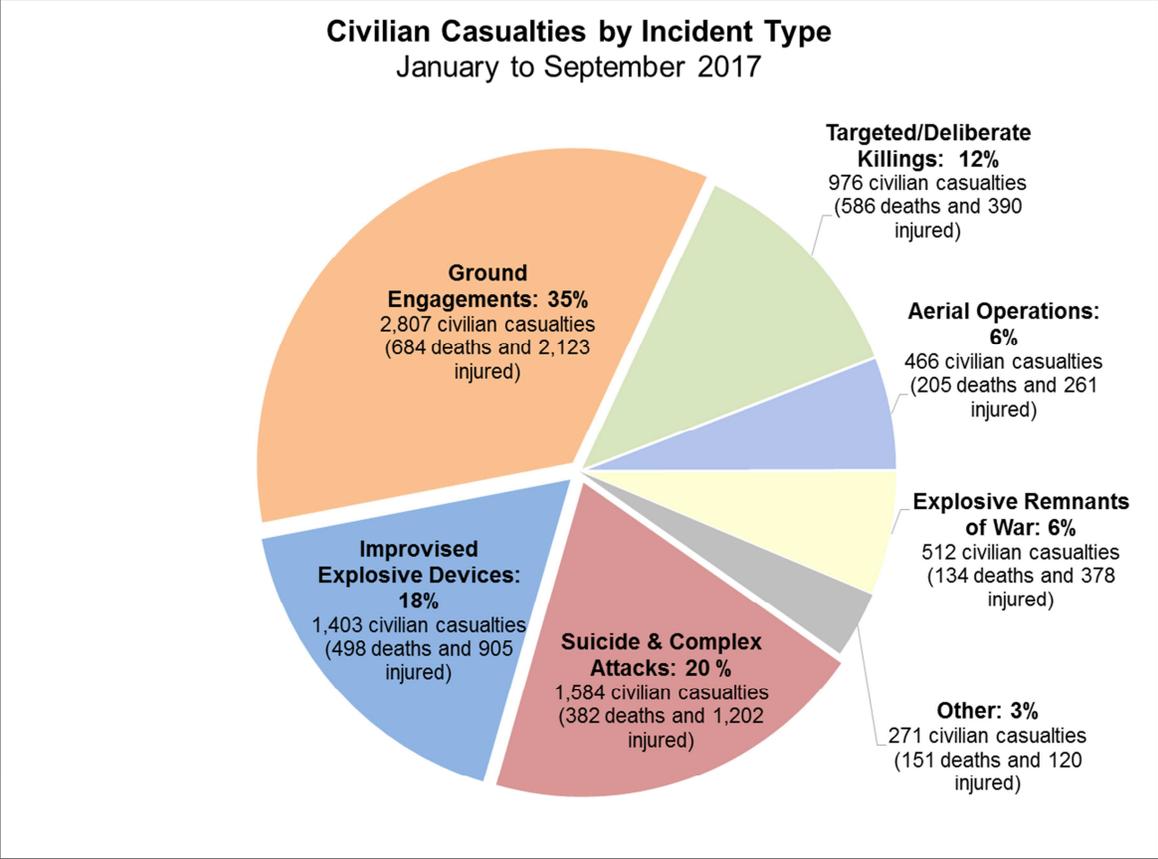
The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) urges parties to the conflict to intensify efforts to protect civilians from harm, as data released today reveals that the number of civilians killed by armed conflict remains on par with 2016.

Altogether, from 1 January to 30 September 2017, UNAMA documented 8,019 civilian casualties (2,640 deaths and 5,379 injured), representing an overall decrease in civilian casualties of six per cent compared to the same period in 2016. Civilian deaths increased by one per cent while the number of injured civilians reduced by nine per cent.



As ground engagements continued to cause most civilian casualties, suicide and complex attacks, and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) took a heavy toll on Afghan civilians, with those living in the provinces of Kabul, Helmand, Nangarhar, Kandahar, and Faryab suffering the heaviest losses.

While UNAMA welcomes the decrease in civilians injured by armed conflict, the mission notes with deep concern that civilian deaths remain at high levels. Suicide and complex attacks, targeted and deliberate killings, pressure—plate IEDs and aerial attacks caused increasing numbers of civilian deaths during the first nine months of 2017.



Reduction in civilian casualties from ground fighting

UNAMA recorded a 15 per cent reduction in civilian casualties from ground engagements between parties to the conflict compared to the same period in 2016. The six per cent overall reduction in civilian casualties arose primarily from a substantial decline in the number of civilians killed and injured by Pro-Government Forces during ground fighting with Anti-Government Elements.

Civilian casualties attributed to Pro-Government Forces during ground fighting decreased by 37 per cent to 849 civilian casualties (228 deaths and 621 injured) whereas civilian casualties attributed to Anti-Government Elements during ground engagements rose by seven per cent to 1,150 civilian casualties (255 deaths and 895 injured), mainly due to increases in civilians killed and injured by small arms fire. The remaining civilian casualties occurred as a result of cross-fire where UNAMA could not identify the specific perpetrator.

UNAMA commends Pro-Government Forces for efforts taken to reduce civilian casualties during ground engagements, notably in the northeastern region, but recognises that the dynamics of the conflict, particularly in the southern region where front-lines have remained relatively static, may also have contributed to this trend. UNAMA documented significant increases in civilian casualties from ground fighting in Laghman, Faryab and Farah provinces.

Women and children

Despite the overall reduction in civilian casualties, the failure of parties to the conflict to take adequate precautions to prevent harm to civilians continued to manifest in high levels of women and child casualties, and increased fatalities.

UNAMA documented 1,007 women casualties (298 deaths and 709 injured) during the first three quarters of 2017, a 13 per cent increase in overall women casualties. The armed conflict caused 2,480 child casualties (689 deaths and 1,791 injured), an overall decrease of one per cent on the same period last year with a five per cent increase in child deaths. While fewer women and children were killed and injured during ground engagements, the mission recorded increases in women and child casualties from suicide and complex attacks and aerial attacks. Child casualties from IEDs also increased.

Anti-Government Elements

UNAMA notes with concern that the number of civilian casualties attributed to Anti-Government Elements remained at high levels, including attacks targeting civilians. Anti-Government Elements caused 5,167 civilian casualties (1,760 deaths and 3,407 injured) during the first nine months of 2017, a one per cent decrease from last year. Of these civilian casualties, UNAMA attributed 66 per cent to Taliban, 10 per cent to *Daesh*/Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP), and the remainder to unidentified Anti-Government Elements, including self-proclaimed *Daesh*/ISKP.

Anti-Government Elements continued to target civilians intentionally using an array of tactics in attacks that amount to war crimes pursuant to international humanitarian law. Attacks directed against the Shia population as they attended mosques or religious ceremonies resulted in 278 civilian casualties (84 deaths and 194 injured) alone, contributing to the increase in women fatalities from suicide and complex attacks.

UNAMA also documented disturbing trends of intentional killings targeting religious leaders, civilians perceived to support the Government or Afghan national security forces, and continued attacks against civilian Government workers and judicial and prosecutorial figures.

The use of combined IED tactics by Anti-Government Elements (IEDs and suicide and complex attacks) accounted for 37 per cent of all civilian casualties – 2,987 civilian casualties (880 deaths and 2,107 injured). Although civilian casualties from suicide and complex attacks decreased overall by four per cent, civilian deaths increased by 13 per cent. While civilian casualties from IED detonations decreased by eight per cent, civilian deaths decreased by only one per cent.

The continued placement by Anti-Government Elements of indiscriminate and unlawful pressure-plate IEDs on roads used by civilians led to 803 civilian casualties (371 deaths and 432 injured). Overall casualties from pressure-plate IEDs remained on par with last year, although civilian deaths increased by 11 per cent. Children comprised one third of civilian casualties caused by the detonation of pressure-plate IEDs.

UNAMA is particularly concerned by increased numbers of civilian casualties from targeted and deliberate killings. Anti-Government Element attributed civilian casualties from this tactic increased by 13 per cent to 869 civilian casualties (530 deaths and 339 injured), with a 33 per cent spike in civilian deaths.

Pro-Government Forces

Civilian casualties attributed to Pro-Government Forces reduced by 19 per cent to 1,578 civilian casualties (560 deaths and 1,018 injured), over half of which occurred during ground fighting.

Notwithstanding this overall decrease, UNAMA reiterates its concern at continued increases in civilian casualties from aerial attacks, particularly among women and children. During the first nine months of 2017, the mission documented 466 civilian casualties (205 deaths and 261 injured), a 52 per cent increase in civilian casualties from air strikes compared to the same period in 2016.

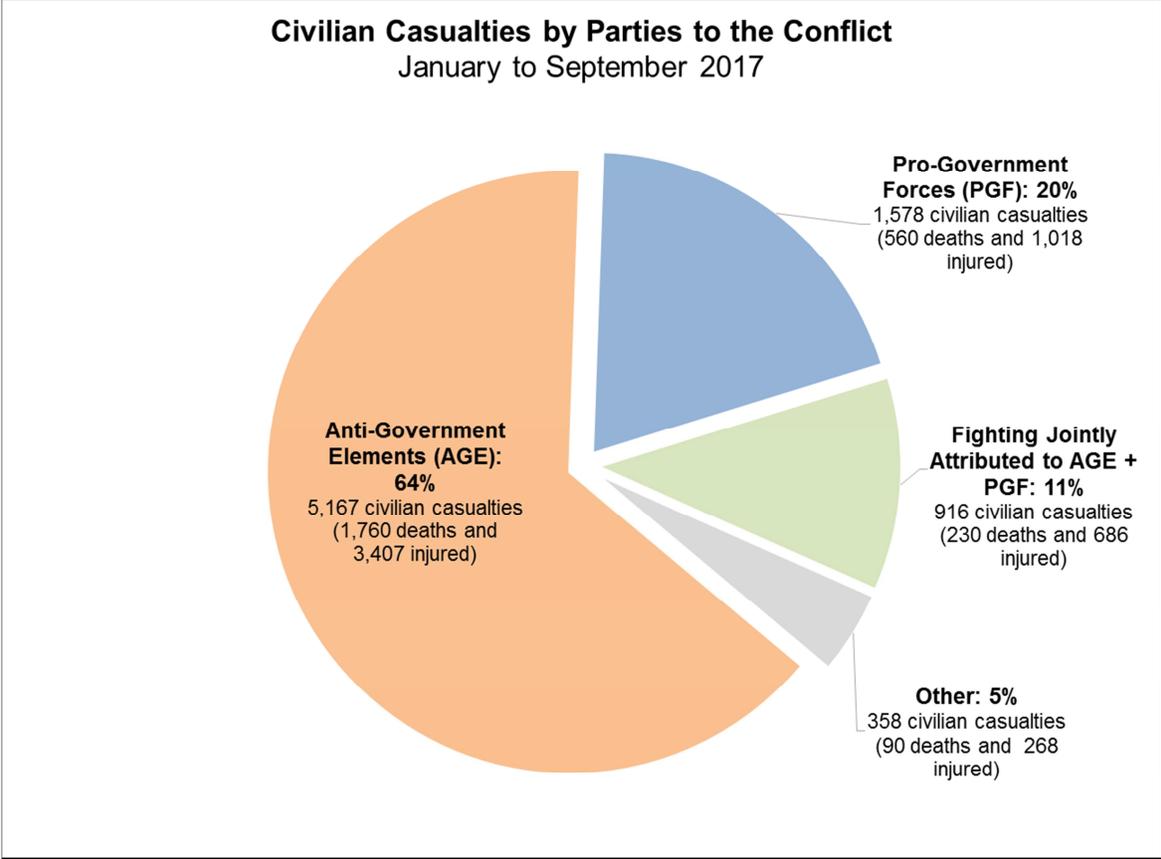
Women and children comprised more than two thirds – 68 per cent - of civilian casualties from aerial attacks. The mission attributed 38 per cent of all civilian casualties from air strikes to international military forces.

UNAMA welcomes the continued commitment of the Government of Afghanistan to mitigate civilian casualties, which has led to fewer civilian deaths and injuries from their operations, and the adoption of measures aimed at reducing harm. In October, the Government formally endorsed the National Policy on Civilian Casualty Prevention and Mitigation.

“The Government owes it to its citizens, particularly the victims of the armed conflict, to ensure full implementation of the policy through a concrete action plan.” said Tadamichi Yamamoto, the UN Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Afghanistan and head of UNAMA. “The Government must ensure the impartial examination and systematic tracking of civilian casualties and is legally obliged to ensure independent investigations into any incidents causing civilian casualties that may amount to serious violations of international humanitarian law.”

Earlier, in August, the Government formally ratified the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, including Protocol V concerning explosive remnants of war.

“Unexploded ordnance killed 134 civilians and injured 378 more – mostly children – during the first nine months of 2017. The implementation of this protocol, which will come into effect in February 2018, will prevent many similar and avoidable casualties from occurring in the future” said Danielle Bell, Chief of UNAMA’s Human Rights Service.



For more detailed information, please consult the UNAMA annual and midyear reports on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict that document the impact of the conflict on civilians in Afghanistan and include recommendations to protect civilians and civilian communities (available at: <http://unama.unmissions.org/protection-of-civilians-reports>). The next full report is expected in January 2018 and will cover the period 1 January to 31 December 2017.