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Taliban violence shifts; Women, journalists are new targets in Afghanistan

Over half of the violence targeting civilians since the fall of Kabul in Afghanistan has been perpetrated by the Taliban, finds a joint data-backed research report by Afghan Peace Watch (APW) and Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) released in April.

APW, as a local partner of ACLED, recorded over 800 events since the organization resumed its work with renewed scope and methodology in December. Following the collapse of Afghanistan on August 15th, APW briefly stopped its operation for four months due to security reasons. Similarly, over 20% of incidents in ACLED's dataset on Afghanistan related to violence against civilians were collected by APW exclusively.

“Press freedom under the Taliban has been strictly censored and that has made reporting from Afghanistan extremely difficult,” notes Habib Khan, founder of APW and an author of the report. “But APW has managed to offer an accurate picture of the happenings on the ground through its widespread network of journalists and unique methodology tailored for a repressive environment.”

Without the APW data, violence targeting civilians by all actors in January 2022 would seem to decline in ACLED's dataset. However, the addition of APW data points to an increase in such events in January 2022.

Based on the collected data, the joint report findings outline the challenges of sourcing data in Afghanistan in the seven-month period (August 15 – March 15) after the fall of Kabul. The report highlights APW's data contribution to the ACLED dataset, examining how key trends concerning violence targeting civilians and women are better captured.

The report shows acts of violence against journalists increased in September last year under the Taliban, while political violence targeting women saw a **significant increase** in January and February.

“Since the fall of Kabul, civilians have continued to be targeted by the Taliban and the Islamic State (IS), as well as by unidentified armed groups. The Taliban has been the main perpetrator of

violence targeting civilians, perpetrating over half of the violence targeting civilians recorded by ACLED since August 15 2021,” reads the report.

One of the appalling trends the report discovers is the systematic targeting of former government officials and security forces, with nearly 30% of Taliban violence targeting civilians directed towards such individuals since August 15.

The report also includes an overview of the clashes between Taliban and anti-Taliban forces and between the Taliban and the Islamic State (IS). Data on Taliban infighting is also reviewed to understand the degree of cohesion in the group as they transitioned from insurgents to a de facto government.

The importance of credible reporting in the new media landscape in Afghanistan is noteworthy. The pioneering role of organizations such as APW becomes all the more important to reflect and echo the existing situation on the ground in Afghanistan under a repressive regime.

“Taking on the mantle of primary and credible information collection, we at APW commit to portraying the realities through our continuous work in an increasingly challenging environment for reporting,” said Sayed Niyam Alami, APW’s communications director and an author of the report.

APW receives and verifies violent incident reports from across Afghanistan in real-time using a network of over 200 unique sources. APW staff monitor around 120 social media accounts and web content in Dari, Pashto, Arabic, Uzbek, Urdu, and other regional languages and compile and verify photo and video evidence. APW data may be cross-referenced against and added to ACLED’s global data collection system. In this way, APW is committed to the highest standards of information reporting and verification in order to ensure accountability and better inform peace and humanitarian response efforts in Afghanistan.

Please [click here](#) to read the full report in English, Pashto and Dari on APW’s website.