

[Afghanistan: top UN official denounces 'extreme' suffering of civilians in Ghazni](#)

With the death toll rising after days of intense fighting for Afghanistan's second most populous city, Ghazni, the Head of the United Nations mission in the country ([UNAMA](#)) said on Wednesday that the situation was "unacceptable" and called on warring parties to lay down their arms and seek a political solution to the conflict.

"The Taliban's attack against Ghazni city, and the subsequent fighting in densely populated urban spaces, has again caused terrible suffering to civilians caught in the conflict," said [Tadamichi Yamamoto](#), in a [statement](#).

According to the UN [Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs \(OCHA\)](#), when the fighting began, [about 270,000 residents](#) were trapped in the city, which is located about 150 km south-west of Afghanistan's capital Kabul. Many seem to have fled the town, according to sources on the ground.

In five days of hostilities, about 150 civilians may have been killed in the fighting, along with hundreds of Government and Taliban fighters.

The fighting in Ghazni must stop and the fighting in Afghanistan must stop – *Tadamichi Yamamoto*

Although hostilities reportedly subsided in the city by Monday evening, reliable sources on the ground are reporting that Ghazni Public Hospital continues to be "overwhelmed by a continuous influx" of injured members of the government forces, Taliban fighters and civilians.

From the humanitarian perspective, the situation in Ghazni "remains particularly grim", UN Special Representative Yamamoto explained. "The fighting has led to electricity outages along with water and food shortages," he noted, adding that "communication networks and media outlets have been shuttered, and roads remain blocked, preventing freedom of movement for families seeking safety."

"Humanitarian actors ready and willing to supply desperately needed assistance must be given explicit, public and absolute guarantees by all parties to the conflict that they will be allowed to operate safely, without hindrance or any attempts to interfere with distribution carried out under humanitarian principles," he stated.

In July, UNAMA highlighted the tragic toll that the conflict has had on Afghans in 2018, as the first half of the year was the deadliest for civilians since UNAMA began documenting civilian casualties in 2009. This,

despite the unprecedented but brief ceasefire between the Government and the Taliban in mid-June to mark the end of Ramadan, which was the first one to be honored in nearly 20 years of conflict.

“Equally unacceptable”, added Mr. Yamamoto, is that the fighting has “exacerbated deep-rooted wounds dividing Afghan communities at a time when cohesion is more crucial than ever before”.

The UNAMA chief appealed to all warring parties and the international community to help bring hostilities to an end. “The fighting in Ghazni must stop and the fighting in Afghanistan must stop”, he said, stressing that “the United Nations continues to maintain that there can be no military solution to the conflict in Afghanistan”.

Referring to the June ceasefire, the Special Representative said that “it illustrated to all Afghans, especially those too young to have known anything but war, what peace looks like.”

He added that the UN “stands ready to support any endeavours that would advance” an Afghan-led negotiated settlement. “Confidence-building steps that immediately reduce violence are crucial, and talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban are necessary to identify and expand common ground”.