# [UN renews call for protection of Afghan civilians, after casualty figures spike in 2016](#)

6 February 2017 – Attacks in Afghanistan by the Taliban, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) and pro-Government troops killed or injured more children and other civilians in 2016 than at any other time since the United Nations began keeping records, it was announced today.

According to the new UN report, some 11,418 civilian casualties were confirmed last year – including 2,589 children – an increase of 24 per cent since the previous high in 2015.

Releasing the casualty figures at a press conference in the Afghan capital of Kabul, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Tadamichi Yamamoto, called the killing and maiming of thousands of Afghan civilians "deeply harrowing and largely preventable."

"All parties to the conflict must take immediate concrete measures to protect the ordinary Afghan men, women and children whose lives are being shattered," said Mr. Yamamoto, who is also the head of the UN Assistance Mission in the country (UNAMA).

A breakdown of the figures shows that 3,498 people were killed, among them 923 children, and 7,920 civilians were injured, including 2,589 children.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, said the casualty figures painted a picture of the most vulnerable sectors of society paying the highest price.



*Source: UNAMA Annual Report 2016 Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*

"Children have been killed, blinded, crippled – or inadvertently caused the death of their friends – while playing with unexploded ordnance that is negligently left behind by parties to the conflict," Mr. Zeid said. His Office, known by the acronym OHCHR, works annually with UNAMA to produce the report.

In addition to figures, the report includes excerpt of interviews with survivors of violence.

One of the interviews is with a mother who survived a mortar attack during a ground engagement in the Bala Buluk district of Farah province, in the western part of Afghanistan.

Aftermath of an explosion in the centre of Kabul, Afghanistan, on the corner of Passport Lane and the Indian Embassy. Photo: UNAMA/Jawad Jalali (file)

"It was the day before Ramadan when a number of Taliban entered my village," she told UNAMA during a telephone interview in June 2016. "While we were walking to my husband's tricycle, a mortar shell landed nearby. My mother-in-law and I hit the ground injured and my newborn baby was hit by shrapnel in the chest. He died after a few minutes."

UN investigators found that anti-Government forces, mainly the Taliban, were responsible for almost two-thirds of the casualties, while pro-Government forces were responsible for almost one-quarter. In addition, casualties caused by airstrikes carried out by Afghan and international forces nearly doubled since 2015.

**AUDIO**: Civilian casualties in Afghanistan reached record levels last year, according to the UN Mission there, UNAMA. *Credit: UN News*