

ACBAR



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Swedish Committee
for Afghanistan

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Joint Press Release

NGOs call for protection of civilians, aid workers and their facilities

The continued use of violence by all parties involved in the conflict against civilians, especially against health care and education facilities and personnel, is a serious violation of the International Humanitarian Law and human rights law. This should be stopped.

ACBAR and its national and international Non-Government Organisation (NGO) members are deeply concerned by the increase of attacks on facilities for health care and education. The recent attack of 8-9 July on a clinic of the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA) in Wardak province has cost the lives of four people and one person is missing.

"We strongly condemn the recent attack on our hospital as this is a gross violation of international law that obliges all parties to respect the sanctity of especially health care facilities and aid workers to treat all people in need of humanitarian assistance equally. Health care personnel as well as fixed and mobile medical units are to be treated with respect; under no circumstances should they face violence or the threat of it. Attacks on facilities of NGOs who deliver much needed basic services to Afghan people must be investigated independently," says Dr. Khalid Fahim – Programme Director of SCA.

So far in 2019, at least 65 incidents have been documented by the World Health Organization (WHO) affecting 168 health care facilities with 144 clinics closed and 36 health care providers killed, injured or abducted. Repeat of such violent incidents have earnestly put lives of civilians and aid workers at high risk and disturbed the NGO community to its core.

Education facilities are also targeted by the warring parties. UNICEF reports that 718 schools were closed due to insecurity, including those directly attacked or used by the armed groups which has denied education to 325,000 boys and girls. Moreover, there is an upsurge in attacks on girls schools which has a direct negative impact on access to education for girls.

"Afghanistan is one of the most dangerous places in the world. The first line responders for people in need are NGOs. Disrespect for the rule of law is a serious threat to the safety and lives of aid workers and the communities they work with. Any attack, intimidation or violence against aid workers results in delays of services and has harmful consequences for the lives of Afghan people for whom this is indeed a matter of life and death," says Mr. Bashir Khaliqi - Chairman of ACBAR.

The National Unity Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the international donor community are holding a Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB) meeting on Monday 22 July. We take this opportunity to call on all parties to the conflict to respect the International Humanitarian Law. We urge the Government to prioritize protection of civilians, aid workers and their facilities. Safeguarding humanitarian space whereby all Afghan people can receive basic health care and education services by the aid community is essential. We ask the Government to create an enabling environment for NGOs to operate. We request the Government to take immediate actions to end impunity of violations of international law, also to take active account of the Security Council Resolution 2286.

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