Afghan militias’ night raids and U.S. air strikes have caused a large number of civilian deaths

**BAGHLAN**

“The situation here is not good. Actually, this place is never considered as safe”, said Mir Suleiman, a teacher from the northern Afghan province of Baghlan. He grew up in an area called “the factory”, which is named after a sugar plant that has been built in the 1940s near Pol-e Khomri, the provincial capital.

The area, once used to be an economic hub that attracted labourers and merchants from all around the country, is now haunted by violence. Several parts of Baghlan are controlled or contested by the Taliban. “Young men are often easily recruited by the Taliban and thereby leave their families. ‘I think it’s not just the propaganda they are trapped in. We have to consider the fact that everyone in Baghlan grew up with violence. They don’t know anything else,’ said Mr. Sattar.

While the U.S. restarted peace talks with the Taliban in Qatar, people in Baghlan grew up with violence. They don’t know anything else,” said Mr. Sattar.

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Civilian casualties on the rise

Recent reports underline that civilian casualties caused by pro-government forces increased in 2019. For example, a new report by the Human Rights Watch documents the violence caused by CIA-backed Afghan militias who are known for night-rime raids at homes in remote villages, forced disappearances, torture and summary executions.

In case after case, these forces have simply shot people in their custody and consigned entire communities to the terror of abusive night raids and indiscriminate airstrikes,” said Patricia Gossman, Associate Asia Director and the report’s author, after speaking to three dozen witnesses of such operations.

According to the UN, Afghan and international military forces have become very violent too and often target civilians. “Often, they don’t care if you are an insurgent or not. They just attack you and question later.”

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