

COI Focus

AFGHANISTAN

Security situation in Kabul city

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Contents

Introduction	3
1. General description of the city	4
2. Background on the conflict and actors in Kabul City	5
3. Recent security trends in Kabul City.....	9
4. Displacement	13
Bibliography	15

Introduction

This COI Focus aims to provide information on the security situation in Kabul city and is an update of both the *COI Focus Afghanistan. Security situation in Kabul city* from 6 June 2017 and the Kabul City chapter taken from the *EASO Country of Origin Information Report. Afghanistan: Security Situation*, published in December 2017 ⁽¹⁾. If any fundamental changes or developments occur that would significantly change the security situation, Cedoca will update this COI Focus as soon as possible. For a general introduction to the security situation in Afghanistan reference is made to the EASO report, published in December 2017.

This report has the same structure as the individual provincial chapters in the December 2017 EASO report. The general description of the city contains information on the geography and population; the chapter on the background of the conflict takes a longer term look at the security situation in Kabul, including the actors active in the city. In the chapter on recent trends in the security situation, the nature of the violence, frequency, targets, locations, and victims are described within a timeframe from 1 June 2017 until 31 March 2018. Finally, a separate part is dedicated to population displacements caused by the conflict.

This report presents information from 1 June 2017 until 31 March 2018, taken from a wide range of sources, including international and national organizations, governmental agencies and local and international media. However, it should be noted that the reporting on the security situation cannot be considered complete, for a variety of reasons, such as parties to the conflict exaggerating the actual situation, or minimizing it, incidents not being reported in mass media, etc. As Thomas Ruttig of the Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN) notes in regard to information on the security situation in Afghanistan in 2017, 'fact-based information has become scarcer' 'interpretations of what data there is has become politicised' and parties in the conflict have become less transparent, which has made tracking trends in security more difficult ⁽²⁾.

Although sources providing statistical data are very limited, in line with EASO and the Norwegian Center for Country of Origin Information Landinfo, Cedoca has chosen to refer to certain statistics or figures when this data can be taken as indicative. However, it should be read together with other indicators and information on developing trends. At the same time Cedoca wants to emphasize that the list of incidents in this COI Focus is not exhaustive and does not try to be. The incidents mentioned are included because they are considered relevant for assessing the security situation.

As Cedoca no longer has access to quantitative data on security incidents, this report will not contain any (contrary to previous reports, including previous EASO reports). Since January 2018 the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), a research project on violent political conflict, releases weekly data on 'political violence and protest' in Afghanistan. ACLED also released those data for 2017 ⁽³⁾. Pajhwok Afghan News publishes monthly reports on 'attacks' and casualties and in January 2018, for the first time, it published annual figures for the year 2017 ⁽⁴⁾. As the use of a different data base (own reporting for Pajhwok and public media reports for ACLED), different definitions, methodologies and reporting periods make it difficult to incorporate them, Cedoca has chosen not to include their quantitative data in this report on Kabul city. Kabul city is generally well covered in analytical reports, better than certain other regions in Afghanistan.

With the exception of the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA), there are no reliable sources that systematically report on the impact of conflict-related violence on civilians in Afghanistan. Afghanistan analyst Thomas Ruttig points out the possibility that civilian casualties are

¹ Cedoca, COI Focus Afghanistan. Security situation in Kabul city, 6 June 2017; EASO, Country of Origin Information Report. Afghanistan: Security Situation, 22 December 2017 ([url](#)).

² Ruttig T., More violent, more widespread: Trends in Afghan security in 2017, 29/01/2018 ([url](#)).

³ ACLED, South and Southeast Asia (Data through 7 April 2018), April 2018 ([url](#)).

⁴ Pajhwok Afghan News, 2017 casualties: nearly 25,000 people killed, wounded in Afghanistan, 14 January 2018, ([url](#)).

non- or 'underreported' by UNAMA ⁽⁵⁾, as its methodology requires that cases in its reports have been verified through "at least three different and independent types of sources" before being included in the UNAMA reports ⁽⁶⁾.

To find sources providing a complete view on the situation regarding displacement is also challenging. In March 2016, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) transferred the overall coordination of the response to conflict-induced displacement to UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) ⁽⁷⁾. AAN explains how UNOCHA collects statistics on Internally Displaced persons (IDPs) by conducting joint assessments throughout the country and logging those assessments into a database ⁽⁸⁾. Although Cedoca is aware that the figures possibly do not include all IDPs - such as IDPs living in urban areas and therefore difficult to identify because they are dispersed among economic migrants and the urban poor or IDPs displaced in inaccessible areas ⁽⁹⁾ - UNOCHA data on conflict-induced displacement have been included, as they are continuously and systematically updated and allow to discern patterns and trends or to enable comparisons.

As this report is an update of the Kabul city chapter from the December 2017 EASO report, it is written according to the EASO COI Report Methodology (2012) and EASO COI Referencing Guide (2016) ⁽¹⁰⁾.

1. General description of the city

Kabul city is the capital of Afghanistan and the province of Kabul as well as a separate district in Kabul province, alongside 14 other districts ⁽¹¹⁾. While analyst Thomas Ruttig notes in a 2017 commentary that "Kabul urban district" is identical to the city of Kabul ⁽¹²⁾, according to a 2011 PhD dissertation on urban planning in Kabul quoted by Fabrizio Foschini in his 2017 AAN report, the city of Kabul expanded from 12 districts or wards to 22 districts, which spread out to include neighbouring districts such as Chaharasyab or Musayi of Kabul province ⁽¹³⁾. A UNOCHA map dated 4 January 2016, shows 22 police districts ⁽¹⁴⁾.

Because of its high concentration of government buildings, international organisations, diplomatic compounds and international and national security forces, the city has a different security outlook than most of Afghanistan's other districts and provinces ⁽¹⁵⁾.

Kabul is by far the biggest city in Afghanistan and certainly the fastest growing. Massive returnee populations, IDPs and economic migrants have spurred rapid growth in Kabul ⁽¹⁶⁾, but the city's infrastructure has not followed at the same pace ⁽¹⁷⁾.

⁵ Ruttig T., More violent, more widespread: Trends in Afghan security in 2017, 29/01/2018 ([url](#)).

⁶ UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)) p. i.

⁷ UNHCR, Afghanistan Fact Sheet, June 2016 ([url](#)).

⁸ Bjelica J., Over Half a Million Afghans Flee Conflict in 2016: A look at the IDP statistics, 28 December 2016 ([url](#)).

⁹ Bjelica J., Over Half a Million Afghans Flee Conflict in 2016: A look at the IDP statistics, 28 December 2016 ([url](#)).

¹⁰ Both can be downloaded from the EASO website: <http://www.easo.europa.eu>

¹¹ UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Kabul Province – District Atlas, 14 April 2014 ([url](#)).

¹² Ruttig T., Kommentar zum Gutachten von Mag. Karl Mahringer (2017), 19/09/2017 ([url](#)).

¹³ Foschini, F., Kabul and the Challenge of Dwindling Foreign Aid, The United States Institute of Peace (USIP), 10 April 2017 ([url](#)), p. 10.

¹⁴ UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Kabul Informal Settlements, 4 January 2016 ([url](#)).

¹⁵ Foschini, F., Kabul and the Challenge of Dwindling Foreign Aid, The United States Institute of Peace (USIP), 10 April 2017 ([url](#)), p. 5; Landinfo, Afghanistan: Sikkerhetssituasjonen i Kabul by, 29 September 2017, ([url](#)), p.13; Osman B., A Black Week in Kabul (2): Who are the most likely perpetrators?, 07/06/2017 ([url](#)).

According to AAN analyst Fabrizio Foschini, there is no consensus about the current population living in Kabul due to differing estimates of population and growth rates. Estimates range from 3.5 million to more than 5 million people ⁽¹⁸⁾. According to the UNHCR quoted by EASO, 'informal estimates suggests more than 7 million [are] living in the city [...] with 75 % of informal settlements' ⁽¹⁹⁾. More than three-quarters of Kabul Province's population lives in the city of Kabul ⁽²⁰⁾. The rapid growth of the city, which was not designed to house its actual number of inhabitants ⁽²¹⁾, has complicated security in Kabul, according to U.S. General Nicholson in Afghanistan ⁽²²⁾.

Kabul is an ethnically diverse city with communities of almost all ethnicities. Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras, Uzbeks, Turkmen, Baluch, Sikhs and Hindus all reside there ⁽²³⁾ with no group clearly dominating. As people tend to move to areas where they already have family or into particular districts as part of a larger group with the same ethnicity, different neighborhoods have become associated with different ethnic groups ⁽²⁴⁾, especially in the outer ring of the city where the most recent settlements are to be found and where these new residents rely on their networks to find housing and jobs ⁽²⁵⁾.

2. Background on the conflict and actors in Kabul City

In Afghanistan, since the withdrawal of international ISAF forces in 2014, sources have noted a shift in the conflict pattern going towards more conventional warfare and battle for territories. In Kabul, however, no territorial struggle is taking place ⁽²⁶⁾ and the city is still under government control ⁽²⁷⁾. Nevertheless armed opposition groups have repeatedly shown that they can infiltrate the city and have the capacity to carry out large, complex attacks ⁽²⁸⁾.

Kabul regularly witnesses violence ⁽²⁹⁾. Commenting on the 31 May 2017 suicide attack, which was already discussed in a previous update of this COI Focus and in the December 2017 EASO report ⁽³⁰⁾, UNAMA notes that other large-scale attacks causing hundreds of civilian casualties have been recorded in previous years ⁽³¹⁾. In January 2018 a string of large-scale violent incidents hit three major cities in Afghanistan ⁽³²⁾, including Kabul ⁽³³⁾ (see below). The Taliban themselves have

¹⁶ Metcalfe, V., Haysom, S. and Martin, E., Sanctuary in the city? Urban displacement and vulnerability in Kabul, June 2012 ([url](#)), p. 5; APPRO, Migration and Urban Development in Kabul: Classification or Accommodation?, October 2012 ([url](#)), pp. 6-8.

¹⁷ Ruttig T., Alltag in Kabul. Referat von Thomas Ruttig (Afghanistan Analysts Network) am 12. April 2017, 20 June 2017, ([url](#)).

¹⁸ Foschini, F., Kabul and the Challenge of Dwindling Foreign Aid, The United States Institute of Peace (USIP), 10 April 2017 ([url](#)), p. 9.

¹⁹ EASO, Country of Origin Information Report: Afghanistan - Key socio-economic indicators, state protection, and mobility in Kabul City, Mazar-e Sharif, and Herat City, August 2017 ([url](#)), p. 17; UNHCR, International Protection Needs of Asylum-Seekers from Afghanistan, 12 March 2018, ([url](#)).

²⁰ CSO, Kabul Province Socio-Demographic and Economic Survey Highlights, 13 January 2015 ([url](#)), p. 5.

²¹ New York Times (The), Cutting Into Afghan Patronage: A Struggle to Make Government Younger, 9 January 2018, ([url](#)).

²² Washington Post (The), 'The Taliban is in the city': Secretive raids with U.S. forces launched to stop Kabul attacks, 14 March 2018, ([url](#)).

²³ Pajhwok Afghan News, Kabul Province Background Profile, n.d., ([url](#))

²⁴ APPRO, Migration and Urban Development in Kabul: Classification or Accommodation?, October 2012 ([url](#)), p. 8.

²⁵ Foschini, F., Kabul and the Challenge of Dwindling Foreign Aid, The United States Institute of Peace (USIP), 10 April 2017 ([url](#)), p. 6, p.58.

²⁶ Landinfo, Afghanistan: Sikkerhetssituasjonen i Kabul by, 29 September 2017 ([url](#)), pp.12-13.

²⁷ DOD, Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan, 1 December 2017 ([url](#)), p. 19.

²⁸ Safer Edge, Safer Edge Insights: New Security Measures in Kabul, 20 February 2018 ([url](#)).

²⁹ Safer Edge, Safer Edge Insights: New Security Measures in Kabul, 20 February 2018, ([url](#)).

³⁰ Cedoca, COI Focus Afghanistan. Security situation in Kabul city, 6 June 2017; EASO, Country of Origin Information Report. Afghanistan: Security Situation, 22 December 2017 ([url](#)).

³¹ UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Midyear Report 2017, July 2017 ([url](#)), p. 4.

³² Ruttig T., Five Questions to Make Sense of the New Peak in Urban Attacks and a Violent Week in Kabul, 5 February 2018 ([url](#))

issued a statement after the largest of the January 2018 attacks in Kabul saying that their attack was intended as a message to the U.S. President who last year sent more American troops to Afghanistan and ordered an increase in air strikes and other assistance to Afghan forces⁽³⁴⁾. Analyst Borhan Osman links the increase in attacks to the intensified offensive against the Taliban and the increasing battlefield pressure the Taliban face, pointing out that airstrikes and ground raids carried out in December and January 2018 have impacted the Taliban's battlefield mobility across the country and have inflicted unusual losses on the insurgency for a winter season⁽³⁵⁾. Analysts commenting on this 'spike in large-scale incidents of violence' in January 2018 in urban areas and in Kabul city in particular⁽³⁶⁾, note that 'this is not the first peak of attacks over recent years' and 'does not – yet – constitute a major shift in the conflict or the modus operandi of the Taleban' while pointing out that it 'contributes to the feeling of a worsening security situation and the feeling that the government and its security organs are incapable of stopping terror attacks'⁽³⁷⁾.

As in 2016⁽³⁸⁾, the main tactics in Kabul are either 'high profile attacks'⁽³⁹⁾, 'suicide attacks'⁽⁴⁰⁾ or 'complex attacks'⁽⁴¹⁾, which the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) defines as 'a deliberate and coordinated attack which includes a suicide device, more than one attacker and more than one type of device'⁽⁴²⁾. Afghanistan analyst Borhan Osman notes that the Taliban's urban warfare has long been characterized by suicide attacks⁽⁴³⁾. High-profile locations are targeted with suicide bombs and improvised explosive devices (IEDs)⁽⁴⁴⁾. Also, the AGEs occasionally target the city with rockets or grenades⁽⁴⁵⁾.

The targets of these attacks have been high-profile international institutions, both military and civil – including diplomatic personnel and western NGOs, in addition to Afghan authorities and security forces⁽⁴⁶⁾. Further targets of attacks, mentioned by analyst Thomas Ruttig, are religious and tribal leaders working with the government, mosques and clergymen, tribal leaders, but also journalists and women's and human rights activists⁽⁴⁷⁾.

The objectives of such high-profile attacks include, apart from striking the opponent, grabbing the international media headlines in a show of strength and sending the message to the population and

³³ Pajhwok Afghan News, Over 2,000 killed, wounded in Afghanistan in January, 5 February 2018. ([url](#)); UNGASC, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 27 February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 7; ICG, The Cost of Escalating Violence in Afghanistan, 7 February 2018 ([url](#)).

³⁴ Reuters, Shock gives way to despair in Kabul after ambulance bomb, 27 January 2018 ([url](#)).

³⁵ ICG, The Cost of Escalating Violence in Afghanistan, 7 February 2018 ([url](#)).

³⁶ UNGASC, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 27 February 2018, ([url](#)), p. 5.

³⁷ Ruttig T., Five Questions to Make Sense of the New Peak in Urban Attacks and a Violent Week in Kabul, 5 February 2018 ([url](#)); Guardian (The), New wave of Afghans seek a way out as fear grips Kabul, 3 February 2018 ([url](#)); ICG, The Cost of Escalating Violence in Afghanistan, 7 February 2018 ([url](#)).

³⁸ UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Midyear Report 2017, July 2017 ([url](#)) p. 33.

³⁹ Ruttig T., Five Questions to Make Sense of the New Peak in Urban Attacks and a Violent Week in Kabul, 5 February 2018 ([url](#)); Lead Inspector General, Operation Freedom's Sentinel. Report To The United States Congress. October 1, 2017–December 31, 2017, 7 February 2018, ([url](#)), pp.26-27; Lead Inspector General, Operation Freedom's Sentinel. Report To The United States Congress. July 1, 2017–September 30, 2017, 7 November 2017 ([url](#)), pp.28; 29; 32; SIGAR, Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, 30 January 2018, ([url](#)), p.85; Washington Post (The), How the Islamic State got a foothold in Afghanistan, 21 March 2018. ([url](#)).

⁴⁰ UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Midyear Report 2017, July 2017 ([url](#)), p. 73.

⁴¹ UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Midyear Report 2017, July 2017 ([url](#)), p. 73.

⁴² UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2016, February 2017 ([url](#)), p. 59

⁴³ ICG, The Cost of Escalating Violence in Afghanistan, 7 February 2018 ([url](#)).

⁴⁴ UNGASC, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security; Report of the Secretary-General, 10 June 2015 ([url](#)), p. 4.

⁴⁵ Safer Edge, Safer Edge Insights: New Security Measures in Kabul, 20 February 2018 ([url](#)).

⁴⁶ Landinfo, Temanotat Afghanistan: Generell sikkerhet og veisikkerhet, 20 November 2015 ([url](#)); Institute for the Study of War (ISW), The Taliban Resurgent: Threats to Afghanistan's Security, March 2015 ([url](#)), pp. 17-18; Ruttig T., Alltag in Kabul. Referat von Thomas Ruttig (Afghanistan Analysts Network) am 12. April 2017, 20 June 2017 ([url](#)); Ruttig T., Five Questions to Make Sense of the New Peak in Urban Attacks and a Violent Week in Kabul, 5 February 2018 ([url](#)).

⁴⁷ Ruttig T., Alltag in Kabul. Referat von Thomas Ruttig (Afghanistan Analysts Network) am 12. April 2017, 20 June 2017 ([url](#)).

the Afghan government that 'they are capable of carrying out such attacks, even in the highly secured capital' (⁴⁸). On many occasions these attacks in Kabul could be traced back to the Haqqani network (⁴⁹).

In a June 2017 AAN analysis, Borhan Osman notes that a range of militant groups – including the Afghan Taliban, the now reconciled Hezb-e Islami, Taleban splinter groups such as Fedai Mahaz or Dadullah Mahaz and more recently, Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) (⁵⁰) - have focused their attacks on Kabul city in the last fifteen years. He describes Kabul city as 'an attractive place for insurgent groups to carry out attacks' due to a combination of the presence of a high number of government and foreign institutions and the potential for grabbing media attention. It is also a good place for new militant groups to launch attacks if they are looking for publicity and want to introduce themselves to potential recruits. Commenting on the suicide attacks on 31 May 2017 and 3 June 2017 which were not claimed by any group, Borhan Osman states that '[t]here are two main possible perpetrators, based on other recent attacks in Kabul: the Taliban (all elements, including the Haqqani network, taken as a collective whole), who have been responsible for most of the previous attacks in the city, and the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP), which is a relatively minor but growing actor' (⁵¹). Analysts refer to ISKP and the Taliban as the dominant and apparently competing insurgent groups operating in Kabul (⁵²).

During 2016, ISKP emerged as a new actor in Kabul City. The organisation claimed responsibility for several attacks in the Afghan capital, including large-scale attacks targeting members of the Shia Muslim religious minority (⁵³). Commenting on these incidents, UNAMA notes 'a disturbing increase in attacks against places of worship, religious leaders and worshippers, particularly attacks targeting Shi'a Muslim congregations' since January 2016. These attacks are not only directed against religious leaders and mosques, but in 2016 and 2017 increasingly against 'individuals perceived as military targets whilst worshipping inside mosques and at other religious sites' (⁵⁴). According to analysts, ISKP 'have significantly stepped-up the number of attacks they have conducted in the city since 2016' (⁵⁵) and 'the one place where its [ISKP's] significance has grown is Kabul' (⁵⁶).

UNAMA documented 14 suicide and complex attacks in Kabul city in 2017 that were claimed by ISKP.⁵⁷ Thomas Ruttig notes fear of ISKP among the Afghan population stemming from the perception of ISKP as a great danger when they carry out a bomb attack in Kabul (⁵⁸), even if there

⁴⁸ New York Times (The), Taliban Step Up Urban Assaults, Testing the Mettle of Afghan Forces, 9 January 2016 ([url](#)); New Yorker (The), Not Even Kabul is Safe from the Taliban, 19 April 2016 ([url](#)); Van Bijlert, M., A Shaken City: On the Taleban's truck-bomb attack in Kabul, 21 April 2016 ([url](#)); Ruttig T., Five Questions to Make Sense of the New Peak in Urban Attacks and a Violent Week in Kabul, 5 February 2018 ([url](#)).

⁴⁹ Al Jazeera, Deadly blast rocks Kabul, Taliban claims responsibility, 28 January 2018 ([url](#)); New York Times (The), The C.I.A. Seeks Further Powers In Afghanistan, 16 September 2017 ([url](#)); Washington Post (The), A much-feared Taliban offshoot returns from the dead, 18 July 2017, ([url](#)).

⁵⁰ ISKP is Islamic State's local 'franchise' in Afghanistan and Pakistan, also known as Daesh in Afghanistan - see: AAN, Thematic Dossier XV: Daesh in Afghanistan, 1 August 2017 ([url](#)).

⁵¹ Osman B., A Black Week in Kabul (2): Who are the most likely perpetrators?, 7 June 2017 ([url](#)).

⁵² Osman B., A Black Week in Kabul (2): Who are the most likely perpetrators?, 07/06/2017 ([url](#)); Ruttig T., Five Questions to Make Sense of the New Peak in Urban Attacks and a Violent Week in Kabul, 5 February 2018 ([url](#)).

⁵³ UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2016, February 2017 ([url](#)), pp. 34-35; Guardian (The), Isis claims responsibility for Kabul mosque suicide bomb blast, 21 November 2016 ([url](#)); BBC, Kabul explosion: IS 'claims attack on Hazara protest', 23 July 2016 ([url](#)); Al Jazeera, Deaths as suicide bomber attacks Shia mosque in Kabul, 22 November 2016 ([url](#)).

⁵⁴ UNAMA, Protection of civilians in armed conflict: Attacks against places of worship, religious leaders and worshippers, 7 November 2017 ([url](#)).

⁵⁵ Safer Edge, Safer Edge Insights: New Security Measures in Kabul, 20 February 2018 ([url](#)).

⁵⁶ Osman B., Clark K., van Bijlert M., 'Mother of All Bombs' Dropped on ISKP: Assessing the aftermath, 15 April 2017 ([url](#)).

⁵⁷ UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 2; p. 39.

⁵⁸ Ruttig T., Alltag in Kabul. Referat von Thomas Ruttig (Afghanistan Analysts Network) am 12. April 2017, 20 June 2017 ([url](#)).

is a broad consensus that ISKP is not as powerful as the Taliban ⁽⁵⁹⁾. While AFP cited an Afghan security source saying "20 or more" ISKP cells were operating in Kabul, analyst Borhan Osman points out that it is difficult to estimate the number of ISKP fighters in the capital, adding that the group does not lack recruits ⁽⁶⁰⁾. He notes that there is little understanding of the cell that carries out urban attacks. According to Borhan Osman the leaders are veterans, formerly of the Haqqani Network, the Taliban, or Al Qaeda, who have brought their expertise and network to ISKP ⁽⁶¹⁾.

Analysts highlight the challenge in assessing the credibility of claims or denials of involvement in certain attacks and in attributing responsibility ⁽⁶²⁾, referring to 'indications that the diverse pro-IS groups are claiming attacks that have not been carried out by them' while 'there are also indications that the Taleban are denying their involvement in attacks when there are particularly high numbers of civilian casualties' ⁽⁶³⁾. Additionally, analysts note that 'criminal networks and groups loosely connected with other insurgency actors are able to provide ISKP with one-off help in exchange for financial incentives' ⁽⁶⁴⁾ and 'there also might be an infrastructure, logistics and possible personnel ('terrorists to hire') that can be utilised by the Haqqani network or other Taleban groups, splinter groups now sailing under an IS banner, and violent Pakistani sectarian (anti-Shia) groups' ⁽⁶⁵⁾.

Several sources report that security measures were upgraded in Kabul city in the wake of the 31 May attack ⁽⁶⁶⁾. A new security plan for Kabul, called the 'Zarghun Belt' (Green Belt) and announced in mid-August 2017, provides for a gradual expansion of Kabul's diplomatic area also known as 'green zone' ⁽⁶⁷⁾. After looking into the new security plan in September 2017, which at that time seemed not to have been finalised or approved, it appeared to the AAN that the plan would not benefit everyone in Kabul city, despite statements by officials to the contrary. Sources indicate that, while Kabul is divided by security walls and road barriers, AGEs, including ISKP, are still able move through the city ⁽⁶⁸⁾. In the wake of several attacks in Kabul city carried out in January 2018, sources announced the approval of a new security plan. While most of the measures remain classified ⁽⁶⁹⁾, some were uncovered by sources. They include: replacing permanent checkpoints with temporary, mobile controls; surveillance of accesses from the different neighbourhoods that were traditionally not monitored; reinforcement of control at the main entrances to Kabul through its four gates; additional road blockades; additional checkpoints on many of the side roads connecting suburbs of Kabul to the centre of the city; increase in reconnaissance and intelligence activities by

⁵⁹ Washington Post (The), How the Islamic State got a foothold in Afghanistan, 21 March 2018 ([url](#)); Ruttig T., Alltag in Kabul. Referat von Thomas Ruttig (Afghanistan Analysts Network) am 12. April 2017, 20 June 2017 ([url](#)).

⁶⁰ RTBF, Afghanistan: des cellules de l'EI actives en plein Kaboul, 10 January 2018 ([url](#)).

⁶¹ New York Times (The), Islamic State Claims Deadly Blast at Afghan Shiite Center, 28 December 2017 ([url](#)).

⁶² Osman B., A Black Week in Kabul (2): Who are the most likely perpetrators?, 07/06/2017 ([url](#)).

⁶³ Ruttig T., Five Questions to Make Sense of the New Peak in Urban Attacks and a Violent Week in Kabul, 5 February 2018 ([url](#)).

⁶⁴ Osman B., A Black Week in Kabul (2): Who are the most likely perpetrators?, 07/06/2017 ([url](#)).

⁶⁵ Ruttig T., Five Questions to Make Sense of the New Peak in Urban Attacks and a Violent Week in Kabul, 5 February 2018 ([url](#)).

⁶⁶ DOD, Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan, 1 December 2017 ([url](#)), p. 13; UNGASC, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 September 2017 ([url](#)), p. 6.

⁶⁷ New York Times (The), U.S. Digging in for Long Haul in Afghanistan, 17 September 2017 ([url](#)); Bjelica, J., and Clark, K., The New Kabul 'Green Belt' Security Plan: More Security for Whom?, 25 September 2017 ([url](#)).

⁶⁸ Tolonews, Increasing Security Walls Irks Kabul Residents, 26 March 2016 ([url](#)); Osman, B., With an Active Cell in Kabul, ISKP Tries to Bring Sectarianism to the Afghan War, 19 October 2016 ([url](#)); Bjelica, J., and Clark, K., The New Kabul 'Green Belt' Security Plan: More Security for Whom?, Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN), 25 September 2017 ([url](#)); Foschini, F., Kabul and the Challenge of Dwindling Foreign Aid, The United States Institute of Peace (USIP), 10 April 2017 ([url](#)), pp. 55-57.

⁶⁹ RFE/RL, New Security Plan In Kabul After Deadly Attacks, 7 February 2018 ([url](#)); Tolonews, New Security Plan For Kabul Finalized, 4 February 2018 ([url](#)); Safer Edge, Safer Edge Insights: New Security Measures in Kabul, 20 February 2018 ([url](#)).

security forces ⁽⁷⁰⁾. Many Kabul residents, especially those living in the central parts of the city, complain that the new security measures have exacerbated the city's traffic problems ⁽⁷¹⁾.

In their September 2017 assessment of the new Kabul security plan, AAN analysts also stress the importance of recognizing that security is not about insurgent attacks alone and includes criminality ⁽⁷²⁾. Apart from conflict-related violence, Kabul City has seen a rising crime rate ⁽⁷³⁾: between 2013 and 2016, criminal activity increased by 38 %. Transport gangs operate at the gates of the city and target people coming out of the city, robbing and sometimes killing outbound travellers; while others gangs, linked to former jihadi chiefs or politicians, are active in central and peripheral areas of Kabul City that are more 'ethnically homogenous' ⁽⁷⁴⁾.

Crime, kidnapping and robberies are reportedly on the rise ⁽⁷⁵⁾, specifically in all major cities, including Kabul ⁽⁷⁶⁾. On the rise of kidnappings and extortion in Kabul, AAN commented that this phenomenon is 'underreported' and 'underrated' because it 'undermines the security of Kabulis probably as much as terrorism' ⁽⁷⁷⁾.

3. Recent security trends in Kabul City

In UNOCHA's conflict severity map for 2017, which is based on combining data on security incidents, civilian casualties, and conflict induced displacement, Kabul city is ranked among the districts of the second highest category ⁽⁷⁸⁾.

UNAMA casualty figures show an increase in civilian ⁽⁷⁹⁾ casualties in Kabul since 2015 and indicate that, as in 2016 ⁽⁸⁰⁾, 'Kabul province continued to record the highest number of civilian casualties, mainly in Kabul city' in 2017 ⁽⁸¹⁾. UNAMA states that the impact of suicide and complex attacks, as they typically occur in urban and civilian-populated areas, disproportionately affect the civilian population. Both Afghanistan and Kabul city saw a 17 % increase in civilian casualties from suicide and complex attacks compared to 2016. As it was the case in 2016 ⁽⁸²⁾, UNAMA notes that '70 % of all civilian casualties arising from suicide and complex attacks occurred in Kabul city' in 2017 ⁽⁸³⁾. Such attacks caused 1,612 civilian casualties (440 deaths and 1,172 injured) in Kabul City in 2017,

⁷⁰ EFE, Kabul implements new security plan following repeated assaults on city, 18 February 2018 ([url](#)); Safer Edge, Safer Edge Insights: New Security Measures in Kabul, 20 February 2018 ([url](#)).

⁷¹ Frontier Post (The), Kabul's new security plan irks residents, 23 February 2018 ([url](#)); Tolonews, WAK Residents Bear The Brunt Of Tightened Security, 5 March 2018 ([url](#)).

⁷² Bjelica, J., and Clark, K., The New Kabul 'Green Belt' Security Plan: More Security for Whom?, 25 September 2017 ([url](#)).

⁷³ Khaama press, 146 arrested on various criminal charges in Kabul in past 2 weeks, 5 February 2018 ([url](#)).

⁷⁴ Foschini, F., Kabul and the Challenge of Dwindling Foreign Aid, The United States Institute of Peace (USIP), 10 April 2017 ([url](#)), p. 58.

⁷⁵ France24, Video: Afghans live in fear as kidnappings soar, 21 July 2017 ([url](#)); Bjelica, J., and Clark, K., The New Kabul 'Green Belt' Security Plan: More Security for Whom?, 25 September 2017 ([url](#)).

⁷⁶ Foschini, F., Kabul and the Challenge of Dwindling Foreign Aid, The United States Institute of Peace (USIP), 10 April 2017 ([url](#)), p. 56; Tolonews, Residents Protest Against 'Rise' In Crime In Kabul City, 17 May 2017 ([url](#)); AFP, Kidnappings blight war-scarred Kabul city, 10 March 2017, available at: ([url](#)); SEM (Ruttig T.), Alltag in Kabul. Referat von Thomas Ruttig (Afghanistan Analysts Network) am 12. April 2017, 20 June 2017 ([url](#)).

⁷⁷ AAN, Afghan capital plagued by kidnapping and extortion of locals, 10 March 2017 ([url](#)).

⁷⁸ UNOCHA, Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018, December 2017 ([url](#)), p. 9.

⁷⁹ For UNAMA's definition of civilian see: UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2016, February 2017 ([url](#)), p.56.

⁸⁰ UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2016, February 2017 ([url](#)), p.4.

⁸¹ UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Midyear Report 2017, July 2017 ([url](#)), p. 5.

⁸² UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2016, February 2017 ([url](#)), p. 60.

⁸³ UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 1 + p. 4 + pp.29-30; Clark K., Nine Per Cent Reduction in Civilian Casualties in 2017: Better news (but still bad), 15/02/2018 ([url](#)).

which represents 88 % of all 1,831 civilian casualties (479 deaths and 1,352 injured) documented in Kabul province and 16 % of all civilian casualties in Afghanistan in 2017 ⁽⁸⁴⁾.

UNAMA notes that in the first three months of 2018, most civilian casualties countrywide were caused by suicide improvised explosive devices (IED) and complex attacks, which represents a new trend in 2018. Without providing data on civilian casualties for the individual provinces or districts in its report on the first months of 2018, UNAMA still counts Kabul province among the five provinces where the inhabitants are most impacted by the conflict ⁽⁸⁵⁾.

When asked in April 2017 about the everyday life strategies of the people in Kabul to minimize the risks of attacks, analyst Thomas Ruttig mentions a combination of rising fear and habituation or numbness ⁽⁸⁶⁾. In the wake of the January 2018 attacks, national and international press have paid attention to the psychological effects or mental impact they have on residents, mentioning feelings of anxiety ⁽⁸⁷⁾, a 'shift in normalcy for the people who now live in fear of the next attack' ⁽⁸⁸⁾ or a 'state of shock' and 'fear and hopelessness are spreading throughout the city' ⁽⁸⁹⁾.

UNAMA continued to document sectarian-motivated suicide and complex attacks carried out in 2017 against civilian targets, including places of worship, mainly in Kabul ⁽⁹⁰⁾. Shia Muslims were deliberately targeted in the following ISKP-claimed suicide and complex attacks in Kabul: an attack on the al-Zahra mosque in western Kabul in June 2017 that killed 5 civilians and injured 7 others ⁽⁹¹⁾; an attack on the Shia Imam Zaman Mosque in Khair Khana area in Kabul city on 25 August 2017 that caused 100 civilian casualties (35 deaths and 65 injured), including women and girls ⁽⁹²⁾; a suicide attack on a gathering to commemorate the Shia holiday of Ashura on 29 September 2017 that killed six civilians ⁽⁹³⁾, despite extra protection measures announced in the weeks before the commemorations ⁽⁹⁴⁾; a suicide attack targeting the Imam-e Zaman Shi'a Mosque in Kabul city on 20 October 2017 where 57 civilians were killed and 55 were injured, also including women ⁽⁹⁵⁾; the detonation of a body-borne IED inside a Shi'a Muslim cultural center during a political gathering in a predominately ethnic Hazara neighborhood on 28 December 2017 that caused 119 civilian casualties (42 deaths and 77 injured) ⁽⁹⁶⁾; an attack by a suicide bomber in a crowd of Shiite Muslims near a

⁸⁴ UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 1, p. 4, p. 29, p. 67.

⁸⁵ UNAMA, Quarterly Report On The Protection Of Civilians In Armed Conflict: 1 January To 31 March 2018, 12 April 2018 ([url](#)), p. 1.

⁸⁶ Ruttig T., Alltag in Kabul. Referat von Thomas Ruttig (Afghanistan Analysts Network) am 12. April 2017, 20 June 2017 ([url](#)).

⁸⁷ Economist (The), Afghanistan's fragile government picks a dangerous fight, 1 March 2018 ([url](#)); Washington Post (The), Afghans, fearing more insurgent violence, feel abandoned by struggling government, 11 February 2018 ([url](#)).

⁸⁸ Tolonews, Psychologists Claim Attacks Creating Fear Among The Public, 29 January 2018 ([url](#)).

⁸⁹ DW, Kabul residents in shock after wave of violence, 31 January 2018 ([url](#)).

⁹⁰ UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 9, p. 29.

⁹¹ Guardian (The), Suicide bomber strikes at Shia mosque in western Kabul, 15 June 2017 ([url](#)); UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Midyear Report 2017, July 2017 ([url](#)), p. 46; AAN, Bracing for Attacks on Ashura: Extra security measures for Shia mourners, 30 September 2017 ([url](#)).

⁹² UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Midyear Report 2017, July 2017 ([url](#)), p. 46; AAN, Bracing for Attacks on Ashura: Extra security measures for Shia mourners, 30 September 2017 ([url](#)); New York Times (The), Graves Fill an Afghan Mosque's Garden After a Terrorist Attack, 26 August 2017 ([url](#)).

⁹³ UNGASC, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 December 2017 ([url](#)), p. 8.

⁹⁴ AAN, Bracing for Attacks on Ashura: Extra security measures for Shia mourners 30 September 2017, ([url](#)); Washington Post (The), Kabul uneasily celebrates Shiite holiday of Ashura, 1 October 2017 ([url](#)).

⁹⁵ UNAMA, Protection of civilians in armed conflict: Attacks against places of worship, religious leaders and worshippers, 7 November 2017 ([url](#)); Ruttig T., The 'Humvee Bomb' Series: The October wave of Taliban attacks in 2017 context, 7 November 2017 ([url](#)).

⁹⁶ UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 9, p. 28, p. 41; BBC, Afghanistan suicide bomb attack: Dozens killed in Kabul, 28 December 2017 ([url](#)); Ruttig T., Five Questions to Make Sense of the New Peak in Urban Attacks and a Violent Week in Kabul, 5 February 2018 ([url](#)).

mosque complex in March 2018 ⁽⁹⁷⁾; another suicide attack outside Shi'ite Kart-e Sakhi mosque ⁽⁹⁸⁾ in March 2018 as people were celebrating the Persian new year, Nowruz, that left killing at least 33 people dead and 65 wounded ⁽⁹⁹⁾.

Other suicide and complex attacks carried out in Kabul city during the reporting period - with most of them causing civilian casualties - included a triple suicide attack in June 2017, at the funeral of the son of a leading Jamiat-e Islami politician, attended by several political leaders (mainly from Jamiat-e Islami) that killed six civilians and injured 87, according to UNAMA records ⁽¹⁰⁰⁾; the Iraqi Embassy attack at the end of July 2017, claimed by ISKP ⁽¹⁰¹⁾; a suicide car detonation against a coaster bus carrying employees from the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum in July 2017, causing 92 civilian casualties (35 killed and 57 injured) and claimed by the Taliban ⁽¹⁰²⁾; a suicide attack on the New Kabul Bank in August 2017, at a time when many officials reportedly were collecting their salaries ahead of a holiday later that week, also claimed by the Taliban ⁽¹⁰³⁾; an attack on a cricket match in September 2017 claimed by ISKP ⁽¹⁰⁴⁾; a suicide car bomber attack on a Danish military convoy from the NATO-led international mission, also in September 2017 and claimed by the Taliban ⁽¹⁰⁵⁾; a suicide attack near the entrance of the Marshal Fahim military academy on 21 October 2017, claimed by the Taliban and leaving at least 15 military cadets killed ⁽¹⁰⁶⁾; a suicide attack on the boundary of Kabul's 'Green Zone' at the end of October 2017, claimed by ISKP ⁽¹⁰⁷⁾; an attack against Afghanistan's major Pashto-language station, Shamshad TV, in November 2017, claimed by ISKP ⁽¹⁰⁸⁾; a suicide attack against a gathering of supporters of Balkh Governor Atta Noor in November 2017, claimed by ISKP ⁽¹⁰⁹⁾; a suicide attack on an NDS compound at the end of December 2017, just a week after an NDS training center was stormed, both attacks claimed by ISKP ⁽¹¹⁰⁾; the detonation of a BBIED on 4 January 2018 as anti-riot police arrived to help restore order during a violent incident, claimed by ISKP ⁽¹¹¹⁾; another attack against the Marshal Fahim

⁹⁷ New York Times (The), Hazaras Protest After an ISIS Attack Kills 10 in Kabul, 9 March 2018 ([url](#)); Washington Post (The), 'We suffer more': Rising violence on Shiite targets takes toll on Afghanistan's Hazaras, 21 March 2018 ([url](#)).

⁹⁸ RFE/RL, At Least 29 Dead In IS Suicide Attack In Kabul 21 March 2018 ([url](#)); New York Times (The), 'May God Kill Your Own Son': Bomb Rips Families Apart in Kabul, 21 March 2018 ([url](#)); Washington Post (The), 'We suffer more': Rising violence on Shiite targets takes toll on Afghanistan's Hazaras, 21 March 2018, ([url](#)).

⁹⁹ UNAMA, Security Council Press Statement On Terrorist Attack In Kabul, 21 March 2018 ([url](#)).

¹⁰⁰ UNGASC, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 June 2017 ([url](#)), p. 5; Van Bijlert M., A Black Week in Kabul: Terror and protests, 4 June 2018 ([url](#)).

¹⁰¹ BBC, Kabul attack: Gun battle and suicide bombing in Afghan capital, 31 July 2017 ([url](#)).

¹⁰² UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 37; Al Jazeera, Taliban claim deadly Kabul suicide attack, 24/07/2017 ([url](#)).

¹⁰³ Al Jazeera, Suicide bomber targets Kabul Bank branch, 29/08/2017 ([url](#)).

¹⁰⁴ UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 39.

¹⁰⁵ Reuters, Car bomber hits NATO convoy in Afghanistan, civilians wounded, 24 September 2017 ([url](#)); RFE/RL, Three Civilians Wounded By Kabul Suicide Attack On Danish Military Convoy, 24 September 2017 ([url](#)).

¹⁰⁶ BBC, Military cadets killed in Kabul minibus suicide bombing, 21 October 2017 ([url](#)); Ruttig T., The 'Humvee Bomb' Series: The October wave of Taleban attacks in 2017 context, 7 November 2017 ([url](#)).

¹⁰⁷ UNGASC, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 December 2017 ([url](#)), p. 5; BBC, Kabul Green Zone attacked by suicide bomber, 31 October 2017 ([url](#)).

¹⁰⁸ Lead Inspector General, Operation Freedom's Sentinel. Report To The United States Congress, 7 February 2018 ([url](#)), pp.2-3; UNGASC, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 December 2017 ([url](#)), p. 9; New York Times (The), A Leading Afghan TV Station Is Attacked in Kabul, 7 November 2017 ([url](#)); BBC, Afghan television channel Shamshad TV back on air after attack, 7 November 2017 ([url](#)).

¹⁰⁹ RFE/RL, Suicide Bomber Kills At Least 11 At Kabul Rally For Northern Governor, 16 November 2017 ([url](#)); Washington Post (The), Suicide bomber strikes Kabul political gathering, killing at least 12, 16 November 2017 ([url](#)).

¹¹⁰ Reuters, Islamic State claims blast at Afghan intelligence agency in Kabul, 25 December 2017 ([url](#)); Guardian (The), Kabul suicide attack kills six near Afghan intelligence agency, 25 December 2017 ([url](#)); France24, Militants attack Kabul intelligence training centre, 18 December 2017, ([url](#)); Tolonews, Gunmen Attack NDS Training Center in Kabul, 18 December 2017 ([url](#)).

¹¹¹ UNAMA, UNAMA preliminary findings on latest Kabul attack, 7 January 2018 ([url](#)); Ruttig T., Five Questions to Make Sense of the New Peak in Urban Attacks and a Violent Week in Kabul, 5 February 2018 ([url](#)).

Defence Academy at the end of January 2018, claimed by ISKP (¹¹²); an attack at a checkpoint in Kabul on the edge of the 'Green Zone' in February 2018, claimed by ISKP (¹¹³); an apparent attack on a foreign contractor company, also in March 2018, claimed by the Taliban (¹¹⁴).

In the evening of 20 January 2018, the highly guarded Intercontinental Hotel was under an hour-long siege, resulting in at least 22 people being killed. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack (¹¹⁵). Among the victims were foreign citizens, including Americans, and nine were pilots and flight crew members from Ukraine and Venezuela who worked for a private Afghan airline, Kam Air (¹¹⁶). Both HRW and the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan commented that the intentional killing of civilians may amount to a war crime (¹¹⁷).

In an e-mail exchange with Landinfo in the course of 2017, an anonymous international source stated that on average there were two attacks with magnetic IEDs per month in Kabul city in 2017. That same source informed Landinfo that in the course of two weeks in August 2017 five such attacks occurred in Kabul city, all aimed at security personnel. Some of the injured in these incidents were civilians, including children (¹¹⁸). While not all such incidents are covered by the media, some are. Between June 2017 and March 2018, the use of magnetic IEDs was reported in several attacks against police or security forces vehicles (¹¹⁹) and near a sit-in camp of members of the Afghan civil society in support of Pakistani Pashtuns in March 2018 (¹²⁰). A car bomb was used against a NATO or an Australian embassy staff convoy, depending on the source, in March 2018 (¹²¹). Some of these attacks caused civilian victims (¹²²).

Reporting on a suicide VBIED attack in Kabul on 27 January 2018, during which an ambulance packed with explosives set off an enormous blast that killed at least 95 people and injured 158 others (¹²³), certain media and analysts made reference to the May 2017 attack in the central Kabul area of Wazir Akbar Khan (¹²⁴), that had caused more than one third of all civilian casualties in Kabul city in 2017 (¹²⁵). The January 2018 attack took place close to Sidarat square in a typically crowded area, close to the old Ministry of Interior, the Indian Embassy and the police headquarters (¹²⁶). In

¹¹² Ruttig T., Five Questions to Make Sense of the New Peak in Urban Attacks and a Violent Week in Kabul, 5 February 2018 ([url](#)); RFE/RL, Eleven Afghan Soldiers Killed In Predawn Attack On Army Post, 29 January 2018 ([url](#)); ICG, The Cost of Escalating Violence in Afghanistan, 7 February 2018 ([url](#)).

¹¹³ Washington Post (The), Insurgents kill more than 20 in Afghanistan, 24 February 2018 ([url](#)); New York Times (The), Wave of Taliban Attacks Kills at Least 20 Afghan Soldiers, 24 February 2018 ([url](#)).

¹¹⁴ Telegraph (The), Three dead in Kabul suicide bomb intended to strike security firm G4S, 17 March 2018 ([url](#)); RFE/RL, Suicide Car-Bomb Attack Kills At Least Three In Kabul, 17 March 2018 ([url](#)).

¹¹⁵ Ruttig T., Five Questions to Make Sense of the New Peak in Urban Attacks and a Violent Week in Kabul, 5 February 2018 ([url](#)); HRW, Kabul Hotel Attack a War Crime, 22 January 2018 ([url](#)).

¹¹⁶ New York Times (The), 'It's a Massacre': Blast in Kabul Deepens Toll of a Long War, 27 January 2018 ([url](#)).

¹¹⁷ HRW, Kabul Hotel Attack a War Crime, 22 January 2018 ([url](#)); UNAMA, UNAMA condemns Taliban attack on civilians at Intercontinental Hotel, 21 January 2018 ([url](#)).

¹¹⁸ Landinfo, Afghanistan: Sikkerhetssituasjonen i Kabul by, 29 September 2017 ([url](#)), pp.12-13.

¹¹⁹ UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 33; AAN, Bracing for Attacks on Ashura: Extra security measures for Shia mourners, 30 September 2017 ([url](#)); Killid Group (The), Police Vehicle Destroyed in Magnetic IED Explosion in Kabul, 7 August 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Kabul blast leaves 2 policemen injured, 14 October 2017 ([url](#)); Khaama press, Senior police officer killed in Kabul explosion, 4 July 2017 ([url](#)); Pajhwok Afghan News, Five people hurt in Kabul magnetic bomb blast, 25 August 2017 ([url](#)); Khaama press, Explosion in Kabul city leaves four wounded, 2 December 2017 ([url](#)).

¹²⁰ Star (The), Sticky bomb blast in Kabul kills 1, injures 13, Afghanistan officials say, 24 March 2018 ([url](#)); RFE/RL, Bomb Kills One, Injures 13 At Protest Camp In Kabul, 24 March 2018 ([url](#)).

¹²¹ Dawn, Bomb explodes near Australian convoy in Kabul; one killed, 3 March 2018 ([url](#)); Washington Post (The), Violence in Afghan capital continues as Taliban remain silent on peace talks offer, 2 March 2018 ([url](#)).

¹²² Pajhwok Afghan News, Five people hurt in Kabul magnetic bomb blast, 25 August 2017 ([url](#)); Dawn, Bomb explodes near Australian convoy in Kabul; one killed, 3 March 2018 ([url](#)); Washington Post (The), Violence in Afghan capital continues as Taliban remain silent on peace talks offer 2 March 2018, ([url](#)).

¹²³ New York Times (The), 'It's a Massacre': Blast in Kabul Deepens Toll of a Long War, 27 January 2018 ([url](#));

UNAMA, Security Council Press Statement on Terrorist attack in Kabul, Afghanistan, 28 January 2018 ([url](#)).

¹²⁴ Al Jazeera, Shock in Kabul as Taliban blast kills more than 100, 28 January 2018 ([url](#)).

¹²⁵ UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 29; Clark K., Nine Per Cent Reduction in Civilian Casualties in 2017: Better news (but still bad), 15/02/2018 ([url](#)).

¹²⁶ IntelligenceFusion, Post Incident Report: SVBIED Attack, Kabul - 27th January 2018, 28 January 2018 ([url](#)).

contrast to the VBIED attack in May 2017, that had no clearly identified target and for which no group claimed responsibility (¹²⁷), the January 2018 attack was claimed by the Taliban (¹²⁸).

In a Skype interview with EASO in September 2017, journalist and author Anand Gopal states that 'although not easy to execute, targeted assassinations do take place in Kabul city' (¹²⁹). According to Antonio Giustozzi's 2017 report on the Taliban for Landinfo, targeted killings, including magnetic IED attacks against vehicles, 'take place away from the city centre', in contrast to the complex attacks which 'tend to take place mostly in the city centre' (¹³⁰). In October 2017, a police officer of the Anti-Corruption Justice Center (ACJC) was shot dead near his residence by unknown gunmen in the vicinity of the 8th police district of Kabul city (¹³¹). Rafiqul Afghan, a senior adviser to Afghanistan's Chief Executive and a key member of Jamiat-e-Islami Afghanistan was shot dead in the vicinity of Kabul 17th Police district in February 2018. While some sources say no group claimed responsibility for the targeted killing (¹³²), others say the Taliban did, referring to an online statement by the movement (¹³³).

Pajhwok Afghan News reported that two civilians were killed and one injured after rockets hit an area of Kabul in July 2017 (¹³⁴). There was no immediate claim by any group.¹³⁵ According to UNAMA, several rockets hit civilian structures, including a home, killing one woman and injuring two women, two men and two children, when AGEs fired rockets towards Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul city on 27 September 2017. The AGEs later publicly stated that the rockets targeted the United States Secretary of Defense visiting Kabul and claimed to have hit the "military section" of the airport (¹³⁶). A US strike in response caused civilian casualties after a missile malfunctioned, NATO officials stated in September 2017 (¹³⁷). Rockets targeted Kabul's so-called 'Green Zone' in October 2017 (¹³⁸) and hit the Indian embassy in Kabul in January 2018 (¹³⁹) without causing casualties.

4. Displacement

No conflict-induced displacement was reported from Kabul district between 1 June 2017 and 31 March 2018, while Kabul district received 4,442 conflict-induced IDPs during that same period, according to UNOCHA assessments. Almost half of them originated from Parwan (in particular a large group from Ghorband district in October 2017) and Nangarhar (¹⁴⁰), which is in line with initial

¹²⁷ UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 2; p. 28.; Osman B., A Black Week in Kabul (2): Who are the most likely perpetrators?, 07/06/2017 ([url](#)); UNHCHR, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan and technical assistance achievements in the field of human rights (Advance Edited Version), 21 February 2018 ([url](#)).

¹²⁸ RFE/RL, At Least 95 Killed As Ambulance Bomb Rocks Kabul, 27 January 2018 ([url](#)).

¹²⁹ EASO, Afghanistan. Individuals targeted by armed actors in the conflict, December 2017 ([url](#)), p. 27.

¹³⁰ Giustozzi, A., Afghanistan: Taliban's Intelligence and intimidation campaign, 23 August 2017 ([url](#)), p. 10.

¹³¹ Khaama press, ACJC police officer shot dead by gunmen in Kabul city, 16 October 2017 ([url](#)).

¹³² Khaama press, Probe underway into murder of ex-Senator in Kabul city, 25 February 2018 ([url](#)); RFE/RL, Ex-Afghan Lawmaker, Bodyguard Gunned Down In Kabul, 25 February 2018 ([url](#)).

¹³³ Ariana News, Gunmen Kill Chief Executive's Senior Adviser in Kabul, 25 February 2018 ([url](#)); 1TV, Abdullah's senior adviser shot dead in Kabul, Taliban claims attack, 25 February 2018 ([url](#)).

¹³⁴ Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 civilians killed, 1 injured as rockets hit Kabul, 5 July 2017 ([url](#)).

¹³⁵ Tolonews, Two Children Killed in Kabul Rocket Attack, 05 July 2017 ([url](#)).

¹³⁶ UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)), p. 22-23.

¹³⁷ BBC, Kabul air strike: US attack causes civilian casualties, 27 September 2017 ([url](#)).

¹³⁸ Washington Post (The), Early morning rocket attacks hit near NATO compound in Kabul's 'Green Zone', 21 October 2017 ([url](#)).

¹³⁹ Pajhwok Afghan News, Staff safe as rocket hits Indian Embassy rear side, 15 January 2018 ([url](#)).

¹⁴⁰ UNOCHA, Conflict Induced Displacements in 2017, February 2018 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Conflict Induced Displacements in 2018, April 2018 ([url](#)).

reports of large groups displaced to Kabul city from those two provinces in UNOCHA's weekly field reports (¹⁴¹).

The total number of IDPs in Kabul is not known. There are different categories of IDPs: those fleeing armed conflict and security problems, returnees who could not return to their place of origin and live in secondary displacement, people fleeing natural disaster and nomads such as Kuchi and Jogi. IDPs in Kabul do not necessarily live separated from the other urban dwellers and often mingle with other vulnerable groups such as the urban poor, returnees and economic migrants. Most IDPs settle in informal and illegal settlements around the city. They are often referred to as 'Kabul Informal Settlements' or KIS (¹⁴²), which include some of the poorest and most vulnerable households in the city (¹⁴³). As of June 2017, approximately 70,000 displaced people lived in such settlements in Kabul, according to UNOCHA (¹⁴⁴).

Apart from internal displacement due to the conflict in Afghanistan, Kabul City saw large flows of Afghan refugees returning from neighbouring countries, putting further strain on the city's services and its capacity to absorb and reintegrate refugees and IDPs (¹⁴⁵). According to Oxfam's field research findings from 2017, the same general situation applies to both forced and voluntary returnees in Kabul: 'few tensions but increased pressure on local resources, jobs, services, and facilities that feeds fears among both returnees and host communities' (¹⁴⁶).

¹⁴¹ UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field report, Week of 2 – 8 October 2017, 9 October 2017 ([url](#)); UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Field report, Week of 1 January – 7 January 2018, 8 January 2018 ([url](#)).

¹⁴² UNHCR, International Protection Needs of Asylum-Seekers from Afghanistan, 12 March 2018 ([url](#)).

¹⁴³ Metcalfe, V., Haysom, S. and Martin, E., Sanctuary in the city? Urban displacement and vulnerability in Kabul, June 2012 ([url](#)), p. 6; Bjelica, J., Afghanistan's Returning Refugees: Why Are So Many Still landless?, Afghanistan Analyst Network (AAN), 29 March 2016 ([url](#)).

¹⁴⁴ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Bulletin Afghanistan. Issue 65. 1 – 30 June 2017, 14 July 2017 ([url](#)).

¹⁴⁵ ACAPS, Anticipatory Briefing Note – Afghanistan: Forced returnees: Nangarhar, Kandahar, Kabul, 17 January 2018 ([url](#)), p. 1; UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) and Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Afghanistan: Central Region Protection Cluster Factsheet - MAY 2017, 17 June 2017 ([url](#)).

¹⁴⁶ Oxfam, Returning to fragility. Exploring the link between conflict and returnees in Afghanistan, January 2018 ([url](#)), p.24.

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Al Jazeera, Deaths as suicide bomber attacks Shia mosque in Kabul, 22 November 2016 (<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/11/kabul-suicide-blast-shia-mosque-casualties-feared-161121083359269.html>), accessed 15 November 2017.

Al Jazeera, Shock in Kabul as Taliban blast kills more than 100, 28 January 2018 (<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/01/shock-kabul-taliban-blast-kills-100-180128080023652.html>), accessed 6 April 2018.

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