

Report

**Afghanistan: The security situation in
Nangarhar province**



**Translation provided by the Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees
and Stateless Persons, Belgium.**

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SUMMARY

Insurgents carry out sporadic attacks in the provincial capital Jalalabad and along the main road from Kabul to the border crossing into Pakistan at Torkham. There is a relatively high presence of Afghan security forces in these areas, and the most common insurgent tactic is the use of IEDs (improvised explosive device), suicide attacks and smaller attacks. Fighting over extended periods of time is rare.

In the southern districts bordering Pakistan, however, the authorities have only symbolic presence. Here there are reports of pressure and attacks on district centres and government institutions, extended battles between parties, and the use of IEDs by insurgent groups. Outside district centres, the situation is complex and in constant change. In the districts north of the main road between Kabul and Torkham, few security incidents are generally reported, including in district centres.

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1. INTRODUCTION AND COMMENTS ON SOURCE MATERIAL

This report describes developments in the security situation in Nangarhar province in Afghanistan and has a particular focus on the situation of the civilian population. The information is not exhaustive, and the focus is on issues that are considered to be of particular relevance to the immigration authorities. The report looks at the period from January to mid-September 2016.

This is the first report in a series of reports and query responses about the security situation in 15 different provinces, prepared by Landinfo during autumn and winter of 2016 on assignment by the Directorate of Immigration (UDI). Nangarhar province is strategically important; it is a border province to Pakistan and serves as the main access route between Kabul and the border crossing into Pakistan at Torkham. At the same time the province has a somewhat special conflict dynamic, with Daesh¹ being actively present. Therefore, this is one of the few provinces where there is a relatively large amount of publicly available information. This is not the case for all other provinces, so the amount of information presented in the various reports or responses in this series may vary considerably.

The security situation is transient and complex in Afghanistan, and can change rapidly. It is challenging to obtain reliable information and comparative statistical material over time from areas where there is ongoing fighting and where access to sources and information is restricted. There are also areas from which in general there is a scarcity of information, most likely because these areas are of lesser interest in a broader political, security or social context.

Landinfo uses information from a wide range of sources; from international and national organisations to governmental agencies and media. At the same time Landinfo's experience is that for in-depth analysis of some provinces and specific topics, it may be difficult to get as wide a collection of sources as could be desired. This is the case for some of the districts mentioned in the report. For safety reasons, some sources have been left anonymous.

According to Reporters Without Borders (RSF 2016) Nangarhar is one of several provinces where journalists are prevented from reporting freely due to hostilities and threats from various actors. The organisation warns of several blackholes when it comes to information and news from conflict zones. This is reflected in media reports from Nangarhar province. In several cases, the media have reported on lack of access to areas where there is ongoing fighting. This can result in that only information from Afghan authorities is communicated, without local or other sources having been consulted. Landinfo have previously pointed out that local authorities may exaggerate the actual situation in order to get attention from the central government in Kabul and subsequently receive greater resource allocation (see Landinfo 2015). This is still the case today.

¹ Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant - Khorasan Province (Isil-KP), Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) and Daesh are all names which different sources used for the movement. In Afghanistan the Arabic acronym Daesh is mainly used. This is also used throughout the reports and query responses in this series.

An international journalist (conversation in Oslo, September 2016) has argued that information especially related to rebel forces is generally unreliable. According to the same source, it is in the Afghan government's interest to under-communicate the level of conflict, so as not to lose face with the population. It is also likely that the hard-pressed coalition government in Kabul has an interest in showing strength against counterinsurgency. This inevitably influences which information the authorities share.

The source collection is also limited in terms of statistical material. In cases in which Landinfo has nevertheless decided to present figures, the figures should be regarded as indicative rather than absolute. They should be interpreted within a framework for developing trends, and not as an actual representation of the situation on the ground.

In some areas with limited access or little publicly available information, Landinfo has consulted individual sources which we consider to have a good understanding of the situation on the basis of profession, reputation and close proximity to the area. In this report this applies to the information provided by a local journalist from Nangarhar. Although Landinfo believes that the information provides a good picture of the situation, it should be noted that individual sources may have subjective opinions.

Furthermore it is a challenge that only few sources specifically focus on the situation of the civilian population. With the exception of the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA), there are no reliable sources that systematically report on the security situation for Afghan civilians. At the same time, most sources concur that civilians are exposed to greater danger if they stay in areas with ongoing fighting and where territorial control is not resolved than in areas without fighting. This is despite the fact that the parties to the armed conflict mainly aim their attacks directly against each other. According to UNAMA crossfire has caused most civilian casualties and injuries in Afghanistan in recent years; in the first six months of 2016, for example, 38 percent of civilian casualties and injuries were due to crossfire. Suicide attacks and complex attacks caused 20 percent, followed by roadside bombs (IED, from the English "improvised explosive device"), which accounted for 17 percent of civilian casualties and injuries (UNAMA & OHCHR 2016, p. 2).

In cases where the sources do not refer to civilians per se information is nevertheless provided about the general conflict, as Landinfo believes that the level of conflict can be seen as a proxy indicator for the security situation of the civilian population. A proxy indicator is understood as information relevant to describing a situation for which precise information (in this case the security situation for civilians) is not available.

To provide an overview of the local conflict dynamics in the province, the report discusses five geographical areas. The areas are sorted according to similarities in conflict dynamics, and in each category examples which Landinfo considers illustrative are presented. These areas are a) the provincial capital Jalalabad, b) the southeast, where there is a high presence of Daesh c) the southwest, where the insurgent movement is strong, d) districts along the main road, and e) other areas. Conflict dynamics are another important indicator for analysing the extent to which government and/or various insurgent groups are present, and to what extent anyone

exercises control in different areas. The presence and extent of control are also proxy indicators for the situation of the civilian population.

1.1 GEOGRAPHY AND POPULATION

Nangarhar province in eastern Afghanistan is a mountainous province bordering the autonomous tribal areas, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in Pakistan. There are close ties between the areas and much movement across borders in both directions.

Nangarhar consists of 22 districts: Jalalabad, with the provincial capital of Jalalabad City, Achin, Bati Kot, Behsud, Chaparhar, Dara-e-Nur, Deh Bala, Durbaba, Gosht, Hesarak, Kama, Khogyani, Kot Kuz Kunar, Lalpur, Muhmand Dara, Nazyan, Pachieragam, Rodat, Shinwa, Surkhrod and Sherzad (OCHA 2014; MRRD n.d.).

Some news articles refer to the districts Haska Mina, Ghanikhel and Spin Ghar. According to a development worker (Skype conversation, September 2016) who has worked in the country for a long period of time, Haska Mina is another name for the district Deh Balah, and Ghanikhel another name for the district Shinwa. The district boundaries are the same, only the names differ. The source knew of several cases where a district is called by various names, one of which is also the name of a village in the district. The source further pointed out that the district of Kuz Kunar was also called Khiva.

With regard to Spin Ghar, this is the name of the mountain range that runs south of the province on the border with Pakistan. According to researcher David Mansfield (2016, p. 2), Afghan authorities have divided the district of Achin in two, calling one part Spin Ghar district. He also comments that very few, both amongst politicians or researchers, concern themselves about the division, but rather use Achin consistently for both parts. Analyst Borhan Osman confirms that Spin Ghar district has been divided from Achin, but that this is not recognised by the central government. In his work he refers to the Spin Ghar districts in the plural (see for example Osman 2016a). This includes the southern districts which the Spin Ghar mountains pass through (Osman, e-mail 2016).

The source Landinfo was in contact with (development worker, Skype conversation in September 2016) emphasised that the citizens' relationship with names and district boundaries varies. Many will probably refer to Jalalabad based on the district division that existed before 2005, i.e. areas that are currently located in the district of Behsud in addition to Jalalabad itself.

Nangarhar has a population of more than 1,517,000 people. Ethnic Pashtuns constitute the majority at around 90 percent. The remaining population consists of Pashays, Tajiks, Gujas and Kuchis. The estimated population of Jalalabad is around 226,000 people (OCHA 2015; MRRD u.d.).

2. THE GENERAL SECURITY SITUATION IN NANGARHAR PROVINCE

Nangarhar has for several years been one of the provinces with the largest number of recorded security incidents in the country. According to an international source (e-mail 2016) Nangarhar has consolidated its position as a province with significant insurgent activity. Only in the provinces of Helmand and Kunar were insurgents more active in the first half of the year than in Nangarhar, Laghman, Ghazni and Kandahar. The source, however, pointed out that, compared with 2015, there has been a slight decline in insurgent activity in the province up to and including September 2016.

Landinfo does not have access to information that provides a complete overview of civilian casualties caused by conflict-related violence in Nangarhar province and its districts.

UNAMA's semi-annual reports differentiate between regions only. In the eastern region there was a decline in registered civilian casualties (killed and injured) from the first half of 2015 to the same period in 2016 from 952 to 738 people.² The decline applies to both civilian casualties as a result of crossfire (from 311 in the first half of 2015 to 266 in 2016), and IEDs (from 137 to 94) (UNAMA & OHCHR 2016, p. 12, 37, 50). A diplomat source (e-mail, August 2016) with good knowledge of the region and UNAMA's work, considers that more than half of the civil losses recorded by UNAMA in the East occurred in Nangarhar.

The eastern region has also had the most conflict-related kidnappings of all regions. UNAMA has recorded over 50 kidnappings in the region in the first half of 2016; with 22 kidnappings in Kunar province, followed by 20 in Nangarhar.³ The victims of the kidnappings were in many cases government employees or persons whom the kidnappers assumed to be associated with the authorities. In addition, insurgent groups have kidnapped people to get a ransom (UNAMA & OHCHR 2016, p. 66).

According to a local journalist from the province (conversation in Kabul, April 2016), there are several groups that kidnap and then sell the victims to the Taliban. Some of these groups may also have contacts in key positions of authority. In mid-March the father of the President of the Supreme Court was kidnapped in Jalalabad by unknown assailants (Pajhwok 2016a). According to the journalist this person was sold to the Taliban. To obtain the release of the hostage, the source claimed that several key Taliban leaders were released from prison.

Both kidnapping for ransom and sale to the Taliban, which uses kidnapping victims as a bargaining chip for the release of their own people, demonstrates the sometimes blurred passage from insurgent activity and criminality. Speakers at an Afghanistan seminar in Oslo (September 2016) believed that the grey area between insurgency and crime is increasing. This is supported by analyst Borhan Osman, who claims that insurgents in Nangarhar for several years have been more closely related to crime than is the case among rebel groups in most other provinces (Osman 2016b).

² The eastern region includes the provinces of Nangarhar, Kunar, Nuristan and Laghman.

³ In comparison, 44 incidents were recorded in the west of the country; 16 kidnappings in Farah Province and 13 in Herat.

The conflict dynamic in Nangarhar differs from other parts of the country, mainly due to the presence of *Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant - Khorosan Province* (ISKP - KP)/Daesh. This causes the conflict to be fought on three fronts: Afghan security forces (ANSF) against Daesh, ANSF against other rebel groups – mainly the Taliban, and the Taliban and local militia against Daesh. How these conflicting lines unfold varies both over time and between different areas and districts.

Nangarhar has long been the home of a number of different rebel groups; Taliban, Pakistani and other international groupings and other Afghan insurgent groups. According to Osman (2016b), 13 different Afghan and international insurgent groups have allegedly operated simultaneously in the southern districts in recent years. At the same time the tribal structure is strong in large parts of Nangarhar. This means that local village leaders have great influence over who can stay in the territories, and to some extent over who can gain control. As shown below, this determines both to what extent the Taliban, Daesh and other insurgent groups are allowed access and to what extent the authorities have access.⁴ In most cases, village leaders will negotiate and conclude alliances with various groupings on the basis of what they consider to best benefit their area and population needs. Local resource conflicts or enmity between different tribes can play a crucial role in the village leaders' negotiations (local journalist, conversation in Kabul in April 2016; Osman 2016b). This further complicates the picture, contributing to a transient situation as regards which groups have influence in different areas at any given time.

An article in the New York Times (Mashal 2016) quoted a provincial council representative in September 2016. Without specifying which, he claimed that only six of the 22 districts in the province were safe. He estimated that Daesh presented a threat in five districts. This coincides with information from an international source (e-mail 2016) who claims that 17 districts were contested in July. As Landinfo understands «contested», authorities are present in the district centres, but face resistance at large or in parts of the territory outside the centres. According to the source, the five remaining districts – Durbaba, Kama, Behsud, Jalalabad, Kuz Kunar and Dara-e-Nur – are largely government controlled.⁵

The general picture is that the insurgents are attacking government institutions and personnel. Members of the Afghan security forces (ANSF) are particularly vulnerable to insurgent attacks. They also attack other insurgent forces, or people they assume to be linked to the government or other insurgent groups. Civilians outside these categories can mainly be categorised as random victims in that they are at the «wrong place at the wrong time».

To provide an overview of local conflict dynamic, in what follows the report will discuss five geographical areas of the province on the basis of common features in

⁴ For a comprehensive analysis of the political economy, power struggles and resource conflicts in Nangarhar, see amongst others Jackson (2014) and Mansfield (2016). For illustrations of how Daesh sympathisers gained access with village leaders in the southern districts, see Osman (2016a; 2016b).

⁵ As Landinfo understands «government control» in this context, it means that security forces are present and mainly have «military»/security control of the area. The extent to which other government functions are performed will vary. In addition to support from the locals, it will partly depend on the authority's capacity, resources and levels of corruption.

the conflict dynamic: Jalalabad, southeast, southwest, districts along the main road and districts in the north.

3. JALALABAD

Landinfo's contacts agreed in April 2016 that Jalalabad City, like other provincial capitals, is under government control. Landinfo is not aware of information that changes this assessment. An international source (e-mail 2016) pointed out that the security forces are actively present in the city through measures such as checkpoints, arrests of suspected insurgents and destruction of identified IEDs. This still does not prevent the insurgents from conducting both smaller or larger and more complex attacks in the city. With the exception of Kabul, Nangarhar province was where most civilians were injured because of suicide bombers and complex attacks in the first half of 2016. 30 people were killed and 65 wounded, mainly in Jalalabad city (UNAMA & OHCHR 2016, p. 55).

Jalalabad city is the regional capital. In addition to institutions and persons representing the government, the city's diplomatic missions are of interest to the insurgents. In 2016 (up to September) two diplomatic missions were attacked. The first attack took place on 13 January, when insurgents attacked the Pakistani consulate. According to UNAMA, Daesh claimed responsibility for the attack, in which six civilians were killed and ten injured (UNAMA & OHCHR 2016, p. 65, 74). The attack was followed by a firefight lasting several hours in a nearby guesthouse (Fahim 2016c). This was the first time that Daesh carried out an attack in the provincial capital (Sherzad 2016a). In March 2016, the Indian consulate was attacked. According to information available to Landinfo, the person responsible for the attack has not been identified. The car bomb killed three persons, including two civilians, and 19 were injured (Khaama Press 2016b).

Two other suicide attacks in the city were aimed at individuals who have had a political position or affiliation to the authorities. Less than a week after the attack on the Pakistani consulate, a suicide bomber blew himself up at a meeting at the home of a village leader who also participated in the provincial council. At least 13 people were killed and as many were injured. The Taliban publicly distanced themselves from the attack (Al Jazeera 2016a). In early June a suicide bomber attacked the car of a village leader from Kot district of Jalalabad city. The leader was well known for organising a popular revolt against Daesh in Kot. Two civilians were killed and 17 injured (Sultan 2016). Landinfo is not aware that anyone has claimed responsibility for the attack but, given the targets of the attack, it cannot be excluded that Daesh was responsible (see Osman 2016a).

Although the frequency of suicide attacks has increased compared with the previous year, an international source (e-mail 2016) claims that the overall security situation in the city remains unchanged. The insurgents are able to undertake major complex attacks, but they are primarily aimed at government officials and institutions, as well as the diplomatic presence. At the same time civilian lives are being lost, primarily as random victims because they were simply at the wrong place at the wrong time.

Civilians with close relations to vulnerable persons – family members, co-workers or similar – can be particularly vulnerable in this case, because they are often in close proximity to those who are attacked.

IEDs are still being used. According to an international source (e-mail 2016) a handful of IEDs detonate each month in Jalalabad city. The majority of these have so far been aimed at the Afghan security forces; such as police posts, patrols or vehicles. IEDs and small arms are also used in direct attacks against individuals. Most often, the victims have been connected to the authorities, and in most cases it is believed that the insurgents were behind the attacks. In some cases, the perpetrators have remained unknown.

An international source (conversation in Kabul, April 2016) expressed uncertainty about whether Daesh was present in Jalalabad city or not. Rumours indicated that they did have a presence, and that they had also claimed responsibility for some attacks. The source nevertheless assessed that they had little capacity to carry out attacks. At the same time the source believed that the population had become more uneasy because of the continuing security incidents in the provinces in general. A local journalist (conversation in Kabul, April 2016) claimed that the security situation during the spring months had become worse in Jalalabad city, and also in the neighbouring districts of Behsud and Surkhrod.

4. SOUTHEAST – AREAS WITH DAESH'S PRESENCE

4.1 BACKGROUND

After Daesh first gained foothold in Afghanistan around the turn of 2014/2015, Nangarhar province, with few exceptions, has been both the home and the area of operation for the movement. The core areas have been the southeastern districts, with headquarters in Achin district. Daesh announced an expansion to Khorasan⁶ in January 2015. Long-standing and newly arrived Pakistani militias and certain Taliban groups and fighters who switched sides have constituted the core and foot soldiers for Daesh (Osman 2016a). Several sources indicate that it is uncertain to what extent Daesh has direct contact with or is directly subject to ISIL. The sources discuss the phenomenon in terms of Daesh sympathisers or Daesh-loyal groups (UNAMA & OHCHR 2016, p. 73; international journalist, conversation in September 2016; international development worker, conversation in September 2016).

According to analyst Borhan Osman from Afghanistan Analysts Network, Daesh expanded relatively quickly in the first months of 2015, before the Taliban took up resistance. Daesh grew mainly in areas under Taliban control, where the authorities only had a symbolic presence in the district centres. During the second half of 2015 Osman claims that there was positional warfare between Daesh and Taliban in parts of the districts of Pachieragam, Chaparhar, Bati Kot and Deh Balah. Throughout the

⁶ Old names for the geographic area that includes parts of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

period, Daesh and Taliban repeatedly exchanged control of different geographical areas. In the struggle for territorial control brutal methods have been used against civilians by both sides. In January 2016 the Taliban declared jihad against Daesh. After sending in its «elite forces» – reportedly over 3,000 cadres from other provinces – to Nangarhar, the Taliban was able to drive out Daesh cadres from the districts of Chaparhar and Bati Kot. Thus early in 2016 Daesh was mainly concentrated in the districts of Achin, Kot Deh Balah and Nazyan (Osman 2016a).

The changing situation in terms of territorial control and presence has also been observable in areas where the ANSF have gone into battle against Daesh. In some areas, government operations led to sustained control in the area, often by establishing new groups of the ALP (Afghan Local Police), in practice under the leadership of the NDS (National Security Service).⁷ Other areas have been taken back by Daesh when ANSF has withdrawn (Osman 2016a). According to an international source (e-mail 2016), this is also the case in 2016. The source claims that ANSF withdrew prematurely after major operations in the districts of Achin, Deh Balah and Kot from June to August. This resulted in the swift return of Daesh sympathisers to some of the «liberated» areas.

The entry of Daesh in Nangarhar also illustrates the pragmatism of village leaders. Osman points out how village leaders have associated themselves with various militant groups to obtain benefits, and also refers to several other cases where villages loyal to the government have joined the Taliban to fight against Daesh. In some areas even the security forces and the Taliban have cooperated (Osman 2016a; 2016b). Nevertheless, when Daesh is driven out of an area, it is the former partners – the Taliban – who return to being the enemy of the security forces.

In conversations with Landinfo (UN organisation; international source; national think tank, Kabul, April 2016), the sources concurred that Daesh had emerged as weakened so far in 2016 compared with 2015. They had met with strong opposition from both Taliban and Afghan security forces, and had lost territorial control and many men. According to a UN organisation (conversation in Kabul, April 2016), their forces had been reduced from 2,500 to about 1,000 cadres. The UN Secretary General reported in both June and September that ongoing ANSF operations, in cooperation with the international military, had reduced Daesh presence in Nangarhar. A significant number of Daesh cadres had been killed, including the leader Hafiz Saeed Khan who was killed on 26 July (UN Secretary-General 2016a; 2016b). A diplomat source (e-mail, July 2016) reported that the ongoing security operations meant that in late July 2016 Daesh was largely driven out of populated areas and that they had sought refuge in the mountains.

Since the US authorities listed Daesh in Afghanistan as an international terrorist organisation in January 2016, the US military forces have also participated more actively in the fight against Daesh. Primarily this means air support in backup functions, but also attack tactics with regular combat aircraft and drones. As Landinfo understands the information, international special forces are also supporting the ANSF in ground operations (Jones 2016; SIGAR 2016). US authorities reckon

⁷ The ALP (Afghan Local Police) is organisationally subordinate to the Ministry of Interior. However, it is widely known that local commanders have considerable freedom.

that they conducted over 100 air strikes in the first half of 2016 (Lubold & Donati 2016).

4.2 THE SITUATION FOR CIVILIANS

In June 2016 UNAMA reported that Daesh had continued to fight the government and Taliban in the first half of 2016. In the struggle UNAMA recorded a total of 122 civilian injuries and deaths for which Daesh was held responsible.⁸ Of these, 25 had been killed and 97 injured. Landinfo understands this to mean that the civilian casualties have mainly been in Nangarhar. Targeted attacks, IEDs and complex attacks are tactics that have affected civilians. Amongst the targeted attacks UNAMA refers to a teacher who was killed in Nazyan district after talking negatively about Daesh and showing support for the ANSF. In Chaparhar two civilians were killed, allegedly because Daesh accused them of having provided intelligence to the Taliban (UNAMA & OHCHR 2016, p. 60, 74).

Ongoing hostilities increase the possibility of collateral damage in crossfire, and often produce IDPs. As mentioned above, Landinfo has no access to information that provides a complete overview of civilian casualties at district level. The information below can appear as anecdotal representation, but is nevertheless included in the report because Landinfo thinks that it contributes to illustrating the situation. With regard to internally displaced persons (IDPs) due to the conflict, the general picture is that most IDPs come from the southeastern areas of the province. More detailed information about IDPs is presented at the end of the report.

According to Landinfo's sources, Daesh has very little popular support, with the exception of some radical youths. The movement's vision of its own caliphate and global jihad has little appeal in Afghanistan. The Taliban vision is for its part confined to Afghanistan, its ideas are in line with Pashtun tradition and it resonates with large parts of the population. An international source (conversation in Kabul, April 2016) stressed that there are major differences between how Daesh and the Taliban relate to the population. Taliban adapts to the local population's culture and norms to a greater degree than Daesh, who acts with brutality and violence for the purpose of creating fear in the population, and thus discipline and control. According to a national think tank (conversation in Kabul, April 2016) Daesh operates contrary to Afghan culture, partly because they do not show respect for women and the elderly. They have crossed some absolute limits (*red lines*) for what is acceptable in Afghanistan and therefore have minimal popular support.

A local journalist (conversation in Kabul, April 2016) believed that it is primarily the brutality directed against the civilian population which has contributed to the popular hostility to Daesh; he pointed to cases of public beheadings and the liquidation of opponents, the killing of tribal leaders, the closure of schools and clinics and the fact that the population is not allowed to use mobile phones or smoke cigarettes.

Other sources also put focus on how Daesh attempts to influence the population. In June, the media reported that in some areas Daesh had established their own schools. In Achin district there are apparently up to five schools, while two secondary schools

⁸ The attack in Kabul in July is not included in its report to UNAMA.

and a «seminary» had been established in Kot. According to local sources, the curriculum was characterised by radicalised Islam, and Daesh fined parents who refused to send their children to these schools. Afghan officials were aware that Daesh ran schools in the area (Kajjo, Zahid & Hissein 2016). According to UNAMA, Daesh has also imposed restrictions on other schools. For example, they have forced the district governor in Bati Kot to shut all girls' schools in the district, except for three. The schools were also closed for two weeks in January. The three girl schools that were open were in Taliban-controlled areas. After the district Daesh leader was killed, the Taliban regained its strong position in the district. This apparently led to reallowance for girls to attend school up to 12th grade (UNAMA & OHCHR 2016, p. 72).

According to UNAMA, Daesh has also conducted threat campaigns against civilians perceived as supporting the government or other insurgent groups (UNAMA & OHCHR 2016, p 74). In May, Daesh again began sending radio broadcasts in the districts of Achin, Deh Balah and Ghanikel (Shinwa) after the radio station *Khilafat GhagRadio* was destroyed by a bomb in February (Hasrat & Zahid 2016). UNAMA has expressed special concern about the propaganda from the radio station being used to recruit young people to armed activity and to broadcast threats against selected groups and individuals (UNAMA & OHCHR 2016, p. 74). On 14 July news media reported that the radio station had again been taken off air after an airstrike (Stars and Stripes 2016; TOLONews 2016b).

4.3 CONFLICT ACTIVITY IN 2016

According to an international source (e-mail 2016), the number of security incidents in which Daesh or presumed Daesh sympathisers have participated were highest in the districts of Achin, Kot and Deh Balah. This count is up to and including August 2016. The frequency of security incidents has varied between the different districts and over time. At the same time, there was a relatively clear rise in June and July in all districts. Throughout this period Achin has had the largest number of incidents.

The increase in the number of security incidents must be seen in conjunction with the Afghan government's operations to combat Daesh, and the ongoing popular revolt spearheaded by the Taliban. In several districts, the authorities have taken measures to secure their presence. This has taken the form of both more extensive military operations with international support and the establishment of regular police and ALP stations to ensure a greater presence of ANSF forces on the ground.

4.3.1 Achin

Achin district has long been headquarters of Daesh in Nangarhar. ANSF operations to expel Daesh from the area have made little progress, partly due to the inaccessible terrain. According to an international journalist the district is more easily accessible from Pakistan than from other parts of Nangarhar. This complicates the security forces' operations, but also means that Daesh has been able to establish good supply routes into the district from Pakistan (international journalist, conversation in Oslo in September 2016; Osman 2016a).

In May the district governor in Achin stated (as cited in Pajhwok 2016c) that the situation had somewhat improved. More police posts had been set up and the ANSF, with international support, had conducted military operations against Daesh. At the same time he claimed that over 60 civilians had been killed and around 50 injured due to the fighting. In the same article a local resident claimed that the level of conflict up until May 2016 had been lower than in 2015 (Pajhwok 2016c).

The fighting continued throughout the summer. In particular, it was during the month-long operation in the district in July, with Afghan special forces and Americans, that Daesh leader Hafiz Sayed Khan was killed on 26 July (Martinez 2016). In August the media reported that Daesh had been displaced to rural areas in the district (Gul 2016). An international source (e-mail 2016) nevertheless assumed that the operations would continue, which could result in a higher level of conflict. The source also pointed out that a high rate of airstrikes and ground fighting with heavy artillery significantly affects the civilian population. Without quantifying it, the source pointed out that civilians are harmed and that many families have left the district to settle on the outskirts of Jalalabad. On 29 September, UNAMA demanded an independent investigation after a drone attack allegedly caused 15 civilians to be killed and 13 injured in a village leader's home on 28 September (UNAMA 2016).

News media have reported regularly on operations by Afghan and international forces in Achin. At the same time Achin is one of the districts that the media occasionally have had little access to, and the telephone connection has also sometimes been down (Pajhwok 2016i). This makes it challenging to get a good picture of the situation of the civilian population.

Up to August 2016, Achin was the district of Nangarhar where Daesh had initiated most attacks in all months of the year, according to an international source (e-mail 2016). After declining from March to June, there were almost daily attacks in July and August.

4.3.2 Kot

Kot is another district where Daesh has been strong in 2016. According to an international source, there have been about a dozen skirmishes between Daesh and ANSF or other insurgents per month until June (e-mail 2016). In June the authorities established new ALP forces in several villages. They were immediately attacked by Daesh. The fighting that took place were the most intense since Daesh gained foothold in the district, and up until then, represented the largest attack against ANSF. The fighting probably resulted in heavy casualties on both sides, although the numbers are uncertain. Osman claims that around 50 Daesh cadres were killed. He stressed, however, that the authorities claim that Daesh's loss was five times higher than that (Osman 2016a). Others are suggesting around 30 cadres (Yad 2016).

There is no doubt that civilians were harmed in the fighting. But here too, the extent is uncertain. It appears from media reports that the government's estimate of civilian casualties is from three to eight civilians killed and seven to 12 injured (Khaama Press 2016e; RFE/RL in 2016, Yad 2016). Locals described a situation in which civilians were shot, children killed with a knife, women abducted and houses set ablaze by Daesh (Yad 2016). The authorities also reported atrocities against civilians. The governor of Nangarhar claimed Daesh had put more than 90 homes on fire, and

that more than 500 families had fled their homes because of the conflict (Fahim 2016p). The displaced families are mainly thought to have sought refuge in Jalalabad, Samarkhel, Kabul Ada and Surkhrod district (Fahim 2016o).

On 1 July, Afghan authorities reported that 45 villages had been liberated from Daesh. They also claimed that Daesh was responsible for over 20 deaths of Afghan security forces and civilians (Kakar 2016a). They later claimed that over 600 families from the district were internally displaced (Pajhwok 2016d). In late July, the government reported that Afghan special forces had regained villages by the district boundary with Deh Balah. One, Sarai Bazar, had reportedly been the main base for Daesh in the district. According to the newspaper article the civilian population had mostly fled. Although Daesh had been driven out, people were concerned that they could come back as soon as the Afghan forces left the district (Pajhwok 2016e).

According to Khaama Press, over 30 civilians, including women and children, had been kidnapped by Daesh during the fighting in June (Khaama Press 2016e). A diplomat source has information about the kidnapping of women and children in Kot, without specifying details of the time frame or extent (e-mail, July 2016). TOLONews also describes abductions, but does not disclose the number (Yad 2016).

As with Achin district, the Daesh-sympathisers in Kot were driven up in the mountains in August. This illustrates that the authorities have at least a minimum presence in the district centre. Direct clashes between the parties have fallen from being daily events in June and July, to around 10 in August (international source, e-mail 2016). At the same time the source warns that few incidents does not translate into few casualties.

4.3.3 Deh Balah (Haska Mina)

According to a local journalist (conversation in Kabul, April 2016) with family in the district, only the district centre was under government control. On the road from Jalalabad to the district centre, police checkpoints were relatively frequent, primarily to safeguard the ANSF's own safety. The reporter further argued that parts of the district were safe, while other parts of the district were more or less under Daesh control. They had for example beheaded several people in a local bazaar, according to the source. At the same time, the Taliban have a large presence in the district. In February the Taliban's shadow governor was reportedly killed, and in April the national security authorities claimed to have arrested Taliban's second in command in the district (international source, e-mail 2016; Pajhwok 2016b).

In June and July there were reports that Daesh was advancing towards the district centre, and that the authorities were having difficulties in controlling areas outside their own buildings. In particular, Daesh was rumoured to have attacked the district police headquarters, where several people had been killed (Forrest 2016; Khaama Press 2016d). In August the government stepped up military operations in the district. According to the spokesperson of the governor of Nangarhar, the plan was to drive out the insurgents from Deh Balah in addition to Kot. Amongst other actions, ANSF had taken control of a Daesh training centre in early August. Officials claimed to have cleared several villages in the district of Daesh, and that they had seized large quantities of ammunition. The authorities also reported that they had plans to send humanitarian assistance to the affected civilian population (Pajhwok 2016g).

According to an international source, the number of insurgent-initiated incidents in the district was about a dozen per month in 2016. The exception is July with almost twice that number (e-mail 2016).

5. SOUTHWEST

The southwestern districts of Hesarak, Sherzad and Khogyani have long been the heartland of Taliban in Nangarhar. According to a local journalist (conversation in Kabul, April 2016), the Taliban have allied with local village leaders who enjoy great trust and influence in the districts. At the same time, Taliban largely reflects the tradition and culture of the areas. According to the journalist local alliances and respect for the culture are two of the reasons why the locals show very limited opposition to the Taliban. In many areas the population pay taxes to Taliban and several people use their courts. The source claims that there is no climate for opposing the Taliban, and if it happens, the risk of severe sanctions is great.

In general, the authorities have little presence in these districts (for details of the various districts, see below). According to an international source (e-mail in 2016) there were relatively few security incidents reported in the first months of the year. Reported incidents were mostly about insurgent groups conducting attacks against ANSF. From June the conflict level increased; both Hesarak and Khogyani saw some of the highest reporting on security incidents of all the districts of the province from June to August. As Landinfo understands the information, this coincides with the Afghan authorities having initiated new security and military operations. A UN source (conversation in Kabul, April 2016) claimed that the Taliban had deployed extra forces to the districts at the beginning of 2016 to prevent Daesh gaining foothold.

As regards freedom of movement for women, it is very limited, in line with tradition. According to a local journalist (conversation in Kabul, April 2016) women cannot move around in public without a male companion (*mahram*). At the same time the source indicated that the population of Hesarak are more liberal than in Sherzad, for example as regards girls' education. According to the journalist, girls' schools have been common in Hesarak, which is still the case at present. In consultation with tribal leaders and the Taliban, women can even teach here. In Sherzad, this is less common. According to the source, this is above all a matter of tradition in the areas, not the insurgent groups' ideology per se.

5.1 HESARAK

The district borders Logar province in the south and Kabul to the north. Hesarak has long been a stronghold for the Taliban. This has also been the case in 2016. According to an international source (conversation in Kabul, April 2016), the authorities only have a symbolic presence in the district centre. Outside the district administration headquarters it is mainly Taliban who are present and in control. Other sources (local journalist, conversation in Kabul, April 2016) and media reports concur with this description. The BBC reported in February that the district governor

saw no opportunities himself to travel to the district, and that several government-loyal village leaders had moved to Jalalabad (Anwar 2016). There is no information that indicates that IS has presence in the district.

In the first months of the year the Taliban conducted regular attacks against ANSF checkpoints in the district centre; upwards of a dozen per month (international source, e-mail 2016). Civilians were also affected by these attacks. For example, a woman was injured in crossfire when she was on the way to the district centre health clinic (Fahim 2016g).

In June the Afghan security forces stepped up activity in Hesarak, and the level of conflict increased. The activity involved the use of Afghan and international aircraft. In June the government reported that insurgents in Hesarak had been killed in nightly drone attacks (Fahim 2016i). Air strikes can cause civilian damages. According to UNAMA an attack with rockets and machine guns from Afghan helicopters resulted in a girl being killed and three other children injured by the water pumps in the villages of Kari and Dubai. The incidents apparently occurred due to incorrect grid coordinates (UNAMA & OHCHR 2016, p. 77).

It was only in July that media reported that Hesarak was about to fall under Taliban control (TOLONews 2016a). In August the government reported on ongoing military operations in Hesarak, in which insurgent leaders and foreign fighters had allegedly been killed. According to media Hesarak was at times inaccessible to journalists, and in several areas there was no telephone connection (Pajhwok 2016h; 2016i). During the month both the government and the Taliban claimed that they controlled the district centre (The Frontier Post 2016).

In early September, the situation in Hesarak appeared uncertain. In an interview with the news provider Pajhwok, the district governor (as quoted in Pajhwok 2016i) claimed that the district centre could not be secured unless the main routes/roads into the city were safe. The 16 km long road to Surobi (Kabul district) had reportedly been closed and needed more police posts. The governor claimed that both the police and soldiers had left the district, and that only commando forces were left. The Taliban was exerting very strong pressure from the district centre. Government employees were not able to do their work, and the governor himself could not travel to the district. According to a local source (as quoted in Pajhwok 2016i) the closed roads had led to a food shortage in the district. Sources warned about a coming humanitarian crisis unless the roads opened soon. Authorities in Jalalabad claimed in turn that vehicles with food and other necessities had reached the centre of the district in late August, and thus food supply was secured (Pajhwok 2016i).

A few days later Pajhwok reported that the Afghan authorities had launched *Operation Saiq Hesarak*. The authorities claimed to have killed several Taliban fighters, which Taliban denied. Taliban claimed that they controlled the district centre and that the ANSF presence was restricted to their bases (Pajhwok 2016k). Less than a week later the police chief of Nangarhar travelled to Hesarak to assess the situation and the government's response to the growing insurgent activity. The visit ended with the police chief being killed by an IED. Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack (Mashal 2016).

Despite the unstable situation, media reported in mid-September that the security situation in the district had somewhat improved. The road from Surobi (Kabul Province) had received security reinforcements, the bazaar in the district centre had reopened for trading, and additional police forces had been stationed. The authorities confirmed that the district clinic had been destroyed because of the fighting earlier that month. At the same time, authorities were continuing search operations for insurgents in the district (Zarifi 2016).

5.2 SHERZAD

In conversation with Landinfo (April 2016), a local journalist considered that the authorities had very little presence in Sherzad. Here the rebels had almost full freedom of movement, and the government's presence was limited to their own buildings in the district centre. He further claimed that the population largely supported the Taliban.

According to an international source (e-mail 2016) relatively few security incidents have been recorded in the district. Throughout the year the figure is less than five per month. With little presence of the authorities, it is mainly insurgents that are responsible for the incidents.

5.3 KHOGYANI

According to a local journalist (conversation in Kabul, April 2016), the authorities had greater control in Khogyani district than in Sherzad and Hesarak. According to the source, this means that there are many people who support the government. At the same time, he stressed that the conflict dynamic is complicated. In addition to the Taliban there are several other illegal armed groups. The journalist claimed that there is a well-established criminal network in Khogyani, responsible (amongst other events) for kidnappings in the province. In addition, tribal conflicts and family rivalries were often contributing factors to security incidents.

Insurgent activity has mainly been targeting ANSF, and police posts are particularly vulnerable. For example, five persons were killed and four injured in the attack against an ALP post in April. In addition, five police officers were abducted and later executed (Fahim 2016e). At the same time, there have been targeted attacks on civilians, both in terms of murders and kidnappings (international source, e-mail 2016). IEDs can also cause injury to civilians. In February, one civilian was killed and five injured when an IED detonated along the roadside (Khaama Press 2016a).

In April, the authorities initiated operations to secure the back road from Kabul to Jalalabad, which also passes through Khogyani. According to the authorities, the operation resulted in a dozen insurgents being killed, and furthermore to improved security for the local population and road workers. 40 families had reportedly moved back to their home dwellings in Mumli in the district, after previously having been displaced from their homes (Fahim 2016f). In June there were further reports of skirmishes between security forces and insurgents in Mumli. Both claim to have inflicted heavy casualties on their opponents (Fahim 2016n).

In June, the media reported on operations initiated by the authorities in Khogyani, with both ground and air forces. In July a well-known Taliban leader, Sabir Kuchi,

was reportedly killed by a drone in the district (Fahim 2016q). According to an international source (e-mail in 2016), government operations have led to higher insurgent activity, mainly in the form of attacks against police forces. The source pointed out that the district had one of the highest number of security incidents from June to August. In August, skirmishes were reduced to close to one a day, with the insurgents reportedly initiating more than half.

In addition to crossfire, locals also be mistreated by the government's own forces. In June, two former ALP soldiers were sentenced to 18 years in prison for unlawfully killing a person (Fahim 2016l).

6. DISTRICTS ALONG THE MAIN ROAD KABUL-TORKHAM

6.1 GENERAL ROAD SAFETY

The road from Kabul passes through Nangarhar and leads to the Torkham border station on the border with Pakistan. As the main thoroughfare to Pakistan, the road is strategically very important. The bulk of supplies to Afghanistan come via this route, and there is a relatively large passage of travellers. The Afghan government is increasing its efforts to control this stretch of road with police posts and patrolling ANSF columns.

Road safety is generally challenging in Afghanistan. Organisations working in the country often do research before they send employees along the highway. As with such organisations, transport workers and ordinary travellers also prefer traveling in daylight, when ANSF has the greatest presence (Amini 2016; local journalist, conversation in Kabul in April 2016). The stretch of road has for a longer period of time been subject to sporadic attacks by insurgents, particularly directed against the ANSF. It has also been reported that sporadic checkpoints have been set up, where insurgents mostly search for people linked to the government. This has largely been the case on the stretch from Jalalabad to Torkham. In August the media reported an increased number of attacks against the ANSF, in addition to the sporadic checkpoints that were set up by insurgents on the route from Kabul to Jalalabad (Amini 2016). This view is supported by other sources conferred by Landinfo. They also claim that road safety from Kabul to Jalalabad has deteriorated during 2016 (international development worker, conversation in September 2016, international journalist, conversation in September 2016).

An international source (e-mail 2016), however, had seen no rise in insurgent attacks on this road in the period up until September, compared with previous months of 2016. On the other hand, the source mentioned over 30 insurgent-initiated events along the road from Jalalabad to Torkham in August. The rate of attacks had more than tripled from the previous two months. This mainly involved attacks on the ANSF; direct attacks using small arms and missiles, and some IEDs, but also roadblocks to control civilian traffic.

6.2 SURKHROD AND BEHSUD

According to an international source (e-mail 2016), both Surkhrod and Behsud have mainly been under government control throughout 2016. Security incidents in the districts suggest that the security forces have a relatively large presence. Landinfo considers the main road to be the reason for the high ANSF presence. In Surkhrod the source noted an increase in insurgent-initiated attacks from June to August, with an average of one attack every other day. In Behsud insurgent-initiated incidents remained at around five per month since May.

The most common target of insurgent activity in both districts is the security forces. This has largely involved minor attacks against police posts and ANS vehicles. In April, however, a suicide bomber detonated himself in front of a bus belonging to the ANSF in Surkhrod. 12 recruits were killed and 38 people injured. The Ministry of Defence stated that the attack occurred in an area with a large number of people. They claim that of the 38 injured 26 were their recruits (Sherzad 2016b). This implies that civilians were injured in the attack. In July, a child and a police officer were killed by a roadside bomb in Behsud, and another two were injured (Fahim 2016m). In August, a NATO column on the main road was attacked by a suicide bomber on the outskirts of the district centre of Behsud. Two US soldiers were wounded (Kakar 2016c). Although the government's presence means that it is sometimes possible to identify and destroy security threats, the international source (e-mail in 2016) claims that there have been monthly detonations of IEDs along the roads in Behsud which in some cases have harmed civilians.

In both districts, some assumed targeted attacks have also been recorded. In January, a reporter for the state news channel RTA was killed on his way to his hometown in Surkhrod (Saboori 2016). Furthermore, a magnetic IED attached to one of the vehicles to the customs authorities of Surkhrod detonated in January, leaving two employees injured (UNAMA & OHCHR 2016, p. 63). In Behsud, insurgents entered the home of one of the President's bodyguards when he was home on holiday. The person was killed, and his mother was injured (Fahim 2016d). In July, a village leader came under attack when he was travelling in Surkhrod. He was killed and the authorities assumed that the Taliban was responsible (Fahim 2016).

6.3 RODAT

Rodat is different from the previously mentioned districts along the main road in that Daesh has carried out attacks here, in addition to the activity of other insurgent groups. Geography makes another difference. Large part of the district are relatively far from the main road, and the district borders the districts of Kot and Deh Balah where both the Taliban and Daesh have a substantial presence.

In March an international source reported (e-mail 2016) that Daesh supporters had fired on civilians. Allegedly three persons were killed and one injured. The source also reported instances where insurgents have implemented sanctions against members of the population that would not pay taxes. In April, several private cars were set on fire for that reason. It is assumed that the presence of various insurgent groups also have caused collateral damage in crossfire. In May, three civilians were injured in a firefight between insurgents and the following month a civilian was killed in fighting between Daesh and Taliban.

On 10 June, a remote-controlled IED detonated in the Hisarak Jami Mosque in Rodat district during Friday prayers. The attack was allegedly aimed at the imam of the mosque, who was killed along with two civilians. In addition, 78 civilians were injured. As Landinfo understands the information, UNAMA believes that Daesh was behind the attack (UNAMA & OHCHR 2016, p. 63, 72). The Taliban has officially condemned the attack. So has the religious leadership, which described the attack as hostile to Islam (Fahim 2016j).

In July the authorities reported that they were seeking to improve security in the district by recruiting a hundred new ALPs (Kakar 2016a). As regards conflict activity, the international source claimed (e-mail 2016) that insurgents had carried out about five attacks per month since May. The authorities are reportedly responsible for the same number of events.

6.4 BATI KOT

Both in January and March, media reported that Daesh was able to carry out minor attacks, mainly targeting ANSF, but also against other insurgents in the district (Fahim 2016a; Khaama Press 2016c). According to the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) (as cited in Pajhwok 2016d), several families have been displaced from the district because of the ongoing fighting. Landinfo is not aware that Daesh has carried out attacks in the district since May 2016.

According to an international source (e-mail 2016), there has been regular insurgent activity along the ring road in the district. This mainly involves the use of IEDs and direct attacks with small arms and rockets aimed at police posts. In April, the chief of police in Achin was allegedly killed by an IED in the district. There are also reported cases of illegal roadblocks where insurgents were looking for officials or persons with a presumed association with the authorities. According to the source, insurgent activity and conflict level increased significantly during August, to over 20 recorded incidents. With few exceptions, insurgents were responsible, the source claims.

6.5 SHINWA AND MUHMAND DARA

Village leaders from Shinwa (Ghanikhel) visited Prime Minister Abdullah Abdullah in July 2016. They expressed their concerns about the security and human rights situation; civilians were suffering from abuse and oppression by the Taliban and other insurgent groups (Office of the Chief Executive 2016). An international source (e-mail 2016) argues that the district has remained relatively calm in terms of security during the year. The exception was in April and August, when the level of conflict doubled compared with the previous months, to near daily events.

On the stretch of road through Muhmand Dara there are regular insurgent-initiated attacks. These are mainly aimed at the ANSF, but civilians may also be harmed. According to the international source (e-mail 2016) a child was killed and two civilians injured in an attack in March. Civilians have also been specifically attacked. In July, a religious leader was killed when a magnetic IED detonated under the car he was driving (Kakar 2016b).

Along the main road, the insurgents set up checkpoints in which they are primarily looking for people associated with the government. There have also been cases of

kidnappings along the road in addition to highway robbery. According to the international source (e-mail 2016), the insurgents carried out more than 20 attacks in August. This was more than a fourfold increase compared with July.

7. OTHER AREAS/NORTH

The districts of Dara-e-Nur, Kuz Kunar and Kama in the northwest of the province, in addition to Behsud, according to an international source (e-mail 2016), are largely under government control. Until September 2016, there have been a small number of security incidents in each of the districts. The insurgent-initiated attacks primarily involve the detonation of IEDs or direct attacks against the Afghan security forces. Three civilians were killed when an IED apparently targeting security forces exploded on January 10 in Kama (Fahim 2016b).

The news media Landinfo has studied reflect this picture. There is very little security-related news from the three districts. According to Pajhwok, the national security service NDS claims to have arrested a bomb maker in Kama district, allegedly affiliated to Daesh, in late July (Pajhwok 2016f). Landinfo is not aware of other information indicating that Daesh is present in the district. In May, it was reported from the same district that the head of an educational centre had been attacked on his way home from work. He emerged unscathed from the incident, but claimed he received threats to close the girl's section at the centre (Fahim 2016h).

8. RETURNEES AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS

Relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan have long been difficult. There are reports from Pakistan that Afghans feel increasingly marginalized. Human Rights Watch (HRW 2016) argues that arbitrary detention, extortion and harassment of Afghans in Pakistan is increasing. Unregistered persons illegally residing in the country are particularly vulnerable. On 1 July, Pakistan introduced passport control for Afghans on the Pakistani side of the Torkham border station. Travellers must now present a valid passport and Pakistani visa to enter the country. These, in addition to an ever cooler political climate, are thought to be reasons why the numbers returning from Pakistan to Afghanistan have soared since the summer of 2016. By the end of August, over 190,000 Afghans had crossed the border and returned to their homeland. If that rate is maintained throughout the year, UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and International Organisation for Migration (IOM) estimate that nearly 700,000 Afghans will return from Pakistan during 2016 (diplomat source, e-mail August 2016).

According to IOM and Afghan authorities, returnees primarily intend to travel to Nangarhar and Kabul, to settle in urban or semi-urban areas around Jalalabad and Kabul (IOM 2016b). United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian

Affairs (OCHA) fears that the regions will not be able to absorb the new arrivals, not least in view of the pressure due to the high number of internally displaced persons (IDPs). Combined, this could lead to increased secondary displacement and acute humanitarian challenges (OCHA 2016b). Other sources have referred to the challenges that returnees face, such as lack of access to land and work, with a consequent large proportion who live in semi-urban and urban areas. This leads to great pressure on the existing infrastructure and can create conflicts with local residents (USIP 2016).

In September OCHA organised a survey of conditions in six districts hosting large numbers of returnees in Nangarhar. The survey indicates that there is a great shortage of housing, and that there is uncertainty related to health, hygiene and food availability. The high proportion of returnees since summer 2016 has led to a severe depletion within basic social services like health and education. OCHA reports that this is particularly the case in Jalalabad. Here many people live under the open sky, exposed to disease, and OCHA questions whether their humanitarian needs are being met (OCHA 2016b, p. 4; Al Jazeera 2016b). According to IOM, 70 percent of those who have returned,⁹ have wished to settle in Nangarhar (IOM 2016b). They also estimate that nearly 90 percent of those who will return in future will want to settle in the lowlands near Jalalabad to benefit from the mild winter climate (IOM 2016a).

According to OCHA, a total of 5,298 people who had fled their homes (internally displaced persons) in Nangarhar (Province of Origin), were registered during 2016 up to September 4. 5,388 recent IDPs had stayed in the province (Province of Displacement). Although four months remained of the year, this suggested a marked decline from the over 57,000 persons in 2015 who were registered as displaced because of the conflict. So far as Landinfo understands, the registration was carried out by organisations working with IDPs. Registration of IDPs is conducted in places where the families are fleeing to (OCHA 2016a). This may mean that people who have fled to areas where such organisations do not operate are not recorded. This is also probably the case for those who stay with family or acquaintances, and for that reason do not approach the organisations for humanitarian aid. The figures should therefore be seen as indicative. It is in general a challenge to get good figures on IDPs. At the same time, the available figures offer a picture of areas people are fleeing to and of movement patterns.

OCHA's list of IDPs for 2016 demonstrates that districts with high conflict intensity also produce the most IDPs (OCHA 2016c¹⁰). As in previous years, the bulk of the displaced originate from the border districts towards Pakistan, in southern Nangarhar province. Over 4,000 persons from Kot, around 3,500 people from Chaparhar, nearly 900 from Achin and 700 from Deh Bala, and around 200 in each of the districts of Pachieragam and Khogyani, have been registered as displaced. The districts that have received the most IDPs are Kot with nearly 3,000 people and Behsud with in excess of 1,000, while Surkhrod and Rodat have about 400 people registered, and in Jalalabad there are just under 300 newly registered.

⁹ IOM figures are for unregistered Afghans in Pakistan who have returned to Afghanistan.

¹⁰ The figures are taken from a survey of the whole of Afghanistan, not just the eastern region.

According to UNHCR (as quoted in Amnesty International 2016, p. 15) between 73,000 and 153,000 IDPs were living in Nangarhar province by the end of 2015. Cumulative figures taken from OCHA's database (February 2014 to September 2016) indicate two trends in where people are fleeing to. The first is that many flee to neighbouring areas. Considering that the fighting has been most intense in the southeastern district, the districts of Shinwa (over 22,000 people), Rodat (over 6,000), Nazyan (around 5,000 people) and Muhmand Dara (just under 5,000) have received relatively large groups from 2014 to September 2016. The second trend is for IDPs to settle in urban and semi-urban areas. Since 2014, over 15,000 have settled in Behsud, just under 9,000 in Surkhrod and more than 3,000 in Jalalabad city. A significant number have also moved to other provinces, mainly Kabul (OCHA 2016c).

The Afghan Human Rights Commission, AIHRC, has expressed concerns about rights violations against the fleeing population. In addition to civil and financial losses, thousands of children lose an opportunity for schooling. In Shinwar district the schools have been closed since 2015, and halfway through 2016 there were still over 30 schools out of service. AIHRC considers that most IDPs come from the districts of Achin, Kot Bati Kot and Deh Balah (Haska Mina) (AIHRC representative, as quoted in Fahim 2016r). Other sources (local journalist, conversation in Kabul in April 2016) also point out that many people are displaced from their homes due particularly to Daesh's presence. Many travel to quieter parts of the province, whereas families with financial resources travel to Jalalabad or Kabul. Some have probably also left the country.¹¹

¹¹ For a geographical representation of IDPs and movement patterns, see OCHAs interactive page <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/afghanistan/idps> [downloaded on 19 September 2016].

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