

## UNHCR warns of imminent humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan



KABUL, UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is warning of a looming humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan as the escalating conflict forces millions of people to flee their homes and seek refuge in neighboring countries.

An estimated 270,000 Afghans have been newly displaced inside the country since January 2021, primarily due to insecurity and violence, bringing the total uprooted population to over 2.5 million, the UN body said in a statement.

Families forced to flee their homes in recent weeks cite the worsening security situation as the predominant reason for their flight.

In addition to ongoing fighting, displaced civilians have killed UNHCR staff and destroyed its facilities and property in incidents of extortion by so-called armed groups, high levels of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) on major roads. Many have reported interruptions to social services and a loss of ac-

cess to rising insecurity, according to the statement.

The impact of civilian casualties has risen 29 percent during the current violence, according to UNHCR.

An increasing proportion of women and children were among those targeted, the statement added. The report of those who have had to flee suddenly are acute, UNHCR and partners, as part of a coordinated response, are assisting newly-displaced Afghans with emergency shelter, food, health, water and sanitation support and cash assistance, despite challenges in accessing vulnerable groups, the statement further said.

According to UN, the real threat of the Afghan people has been pushed to the limit by pro-

gressive government, commu-

nitarian support to all host countries in the case of additional arrivals.

"We urge the international community to step up support to the Government and its neighbors of this critical moment, as a part of solidarity and burden sharing."

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## Increasing access to education in Afghanistan

Education is the cornerstone for Afghanistan's plan for development and economic growth. But accessing education is an uphill battle in many parts of the country. In more remote areas of the country, educational opportunities can be limited and difficult to access, or non-existent at all.

Distances between villages can be great and traveling between them is arduous for many children and teachers. Worst for their safety, security concerns often stop parents from sending their children – especially girls – to school.

And in some areas of the country, students study outside in tents, unprotected from harsh weather conditions.

"When our school did not have a building, children were exposed to the rain, sun, snow, wind, dust and noise. The situation interrupted our lessons," says a student at a girls' high school. "It was challenging to study during winter because it was too cold and too hot under the sun's heat in the summer."

To increase access to education, improve the learning environment and decrease the safety risk associated with going to school, UNDP designed and built several schools in Paktia, Kapisa and Paktika provinces, with funding from the Republic of Korea and implemented in partnership with the Afghan Ministry of Education.

Now, more than 24,000 Afghan children – including 14,000 girls – can exercise one of their most important and fundamental human rights: the right to an education.

The children can now study in a very conducive environment, says the principal of a school in Kapisa Province.

The local community, teachers and provincial education departments were consulted on a range of topics, including on the best site for the schools, using local labor to build the schools and security. This helped ensure the schools met the needs of the local context, culture and customs.



Local construction material was also used, with community members helping to build the schools, providing local employment opportunities, helping to maintain the local economy and developing local skills to ensure the schools can be maintained in the years ahead.

Since Afghanistan is prone to earthquakes, a seismic-resistant design was used. All of the schools included a partnership with the Republic of Korea and implemented in partnership with the Afghan Ministry of Education. It provides 24,000 Afghan children – including 14,000 girls – with access to education. In addition, the project also trained 100,000 labor days of temporary employment for local communities, reducing

## Taliban surge in north Afghanistan sends thousands fleeing

Afghanistan: Sakina, who is 11, maybe 12, walked with her family for 10 days after the Taliban seized her village in northwestern Afghanistan, and forced them to flee their homes and seek refuge in neighboring countries. They are now among thousands of Afghans living in a makeshift camp on a rocky patch of land on the edge of the northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif. They resort to plastic tents under scorching heat that reaches 44 degrees Celsius (110 degrees Fahrenheit) at midday. There are no trees, and the only bathroom for the entire camp is a latrine tent pitched over a foul-smelling hole.

As the Taliban surge through northern Afghanistan – a traditional stronghold of U.S.-aligned warlords and at one time dominated by the country's ethnic Pashtuns – thousands of families like Sakina's are fleeing under the insurgent's rule.

In the last 15 days, Taliban advances have driven more than 5,000 families from their homes, most of them in the northern reaches of the country, according to the govern-

ment's Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation. Ministry.

In Camp Ishtaiq, a family of 10, all from the Hazara ethnic minority, said of Taliban commanders' using heavy-handed tactics on their way to their towns and villages – "We were scared, we were scared, but not before the invading Taliban we fled to her camp."

Sakina said it was the middle of the night when her parents packed up their belongings and fled their village of Chah-e-Nar in Balkh province, but not before the invading Taliban we fled to her camp.

Sakina said she doesn't understand why her school was burned. In Camp Ishtaiq, children – both girls and boys – will have the chance to go to a higher education, says Farid Chah-Nar, UNHCR's Representative in Afghanistan.

"And from there, they will enter the Afghan economy and help contribute towards lifting Afghanistan out of poverty, but also out of conflict."

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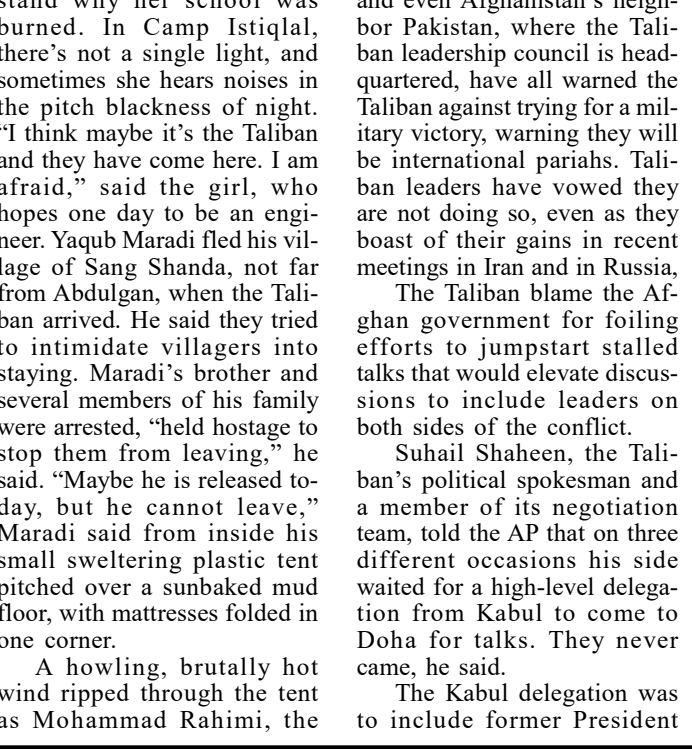
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