



media release

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AFGHANISTAN MOST DANGEROUS PLACE IN ASIA SITUATION FOR CIVILIANS TO GET WORSE IN NEXT 6 MONTHS

Afghanistan is the most dangerous place for civilians in Asia and the situation is due to get worse in the coming six months, according to the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID), the peak council for Australian not-for-profit aid and development organisations. The situation for civilians in Afghanistan is rapidly deteriorating as the conflict escalates. There is widespread insecurity, political instability and social and economic problems. People will continue to flee violence. The Australian Government must continue to assess individual cases of persecution on their merits.

ACFID Executive Director Marc Purcell said:

“Afghanistan is the most dangerous place for civilians in Asia, and one of the top three most dangerous places in the world, and we expect the situation for civilians is going to get worse in the coming six months. Afghanistan has the world’s longest running major armed conflict, which is expanding across the country.

There are over 1,817,913 refugees from Afghanistan according to UNHCR, and an estimated 274,000 Internally Displaced People across the country. Violence is growing and it is inevitable that refugee flows will increase this year as the war escalates.

The Government’s decision to suspend processing of asylum seekers from Afghanistan flies in the face of overwhelming evidence that the situation is deteriorating rapidly and people’s lives are at grave risk.

The Government must continue to assess individual cases of persecution on their merits. The Government needs to show resolve against fear mongering and retain the 2008 reforms it made to protect the rights of people fleeing persecution.

Afghanistan is the only complex humanitarian emergency in the world where all major aid donors, including Australia, are also belligerents. Afghans in the southern provinces, including Uruzgan where Australian forces are based and where fighting is fiercest, are severely affected. The spread of fighting and the relative lack of aid to the north and east of the country is fuelling instability.

Last year, at least 5,978 civilians were killed or injured in Afghanistan according to the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. There were a total of 2,412 civilian deaths between 1 January and 31 December 2009, an increase of 14 per cent on the 2,118 civilian deaths recorded in 2008.

Afghanistan has some of the world’s worst social indicators: the highest infant mortality rate; the second highest maternal mortality rate; and is the only country in the world where women have lower life expectancy than men. The UN’s Children’s agency warned late last year: ‘Afghanistan today is without doubt the most dangerous place to be born.’”

For further information: Marc Purcell 0450 961 561

The Australian Council for International Development is an independent national association of Australian non-government organisations (NGOs) working in the field of international aid and development.

ph: 02 6285 1816
fax: 02 6285 1720
email: main@acfid.asn.au
website: www.acfid.asn.au

Mail: Private Bag 3
DEAKIN ACT 2600
Address: 14 Napier Close
DEAKIN ACT 2600