

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Public Statement

AI Index: ASA 11/008/2009
7 May 2009

Afghanistan: Urgent investigation into civilian deaths needed

Amnesty International demanded the United States immediately conduct independent, credible, and transparent investigations into air strikes in western Afghanistan that reportedly lead to the death of more than 100 civilians, including women and children.

The civilians reportedly died as a result of aerial bombardment in support of Afghan National Army units engaged in heavy combat with Taleban in the western province of Farah overnight on Monday into Tuesday. According to the governor of Farah Province, Rohul Amin, the Taleban were taking shelter in civilian homes during the fighting.

If the figures are verified, this attack was one of the deadliest for civilians since the US ousted the Taleban in 2001.

Amnesty International pointed out the Taleban and other insurgent groups are documented to have frequently launched attacks from civilian areas knowing that they will attract military response from the Afghan government and allied international military forces.

Robert Wood, a US State Department spokesperson has announced a joint investigation with the Afghan government into the incident. In several previous incidents of civilian deaths allegedly caused by the US military, the official investigation has been criticized as incomplete or inaccurate by the Afghan government as well as local and international human rights groups.

According to UN figures, last year alone saw 2,200 civilians killed, over half in insurgent attacks and nearly 40 percent by foreign and Afghan forces. There are currently around 70,000 foreign troops operating in Afghanistan, more than half of them from the United States.

Public Document

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5452 or email: carina.trimingham@amnesty.org

International Secretariat, Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW, UK

www.amnesty.org