

# *Mortar Attack Kills Seven Civilians in Northern Afghanistan*

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Kabul, October 31 (RHC)-- A mortar attack by suspected militants has claimed the lives of at least seven civilians in northern Afghanistan. Mahmood Haqmal, the spokesman for the provincial governor in Baghlan province, said on Sunday that mortar shells hit a home in a residential area of the region.

Haqmal added that all the victims were from a single family -- a mother and six of her children. The official said that a seventh child from the family was wounded.

No group or individual has claimed responsibility for the deadly attack, but such incidents are mostly blamed on Taliban militants. The United Nations recently expressed deep concern over the rise in the number of children killed or wounded in Afghanistan.

In a new report recently released, the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) said child casualties saw a marked increase between January and September 2016. The UN report said the mission had documented a total of 639 deaths and 1,822 injuries among children, noting that child casualties had risen every year since 2013.

Afghan forces have been engaged in fierce clashes with Taliban to contain the ongoing insurgency across various parts of the violence-wracked country. Taliban militants were removed from power following the 2001 U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan, but they have stepped up activities in recent months, attempting to overrun several provinces.

The rising violence in Afghanistan comes despite the presence of thousands of foreign troops in the country.

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