

United Nations Says Civilian Casualties on Rise in Afghanistan



United Nations, April 13 (RHC)-- Fierce clashes between Afghan government forces and *Taliban* militants have taken a heavy toll on civilians in the war-torn country, according to the United Nations.

The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) said on Sunday that the growing number of civilian casualties stemmed from intensified ground engagement between Afghan forces and anti-government elements. The report documented over 136 civilian deaths and more than 521 injuries in the first quarter of the year. The fatalities are eight percent higher year-on-year.

The UN and senior Afghan officials have expressed concerns over deteriorating security conditions as the so-called fighting season with *Taliban* militants looms. UN Special Representative Nicholas Haysom has said the civilian death toll is likely to rise further in the summer.

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