

# *More than 20 Killed in Gun Battle at Afghan Wedding Ceremony*

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Kabul, July 28 (RHC)-- At least 21 people have been killed in Afghanistan in a gunfight during a wedding ceremony in the northern province of Baghlan.

Baghlan Governor Jaweed Basharat said on Monday that 10 more people were wounded at the wedding ceremony Sunday night, when a gun battle broke out between two groups attending the ceremony in the Andarab district of the province.

According to the Afghan official, most of those killed and wounded in the shooting incident were wedding guests aged from 14 to 60.

Local Police Chief Brig. Gen. Abdul Jabbar Purdali also confirmed the incident, adding that security forces had been deployed to the scene to halt the gunfight, which some local reports said is still continuing.

No motives or group affiliations have yet been cited for those involved in the violence. Provincial security and public health authorities have been cited in local press reports as saying that the number of the casualties may climb and that the figures already mentioned by provincial officials were based on

preliminary estimates.

The reports also indicated that local officials have long expressed concerns over the possession of illegal weapons by what is described as “irresponsible individuals” in the Andarab, Nahrin and central Baghlan districts of the province, without elaborating on their affiliations.

The development comes as Baghlan and other provinces in northern Afghanistan have been plagued by the persisting Taliban militancy, which developed back in 2001, when US-led foreign military forces invaded the war-torn country.

After nearly 14 years, however, terrorism, corruption, illicit drug trade as well as instability and the mass displacement of residents caught in battles continue in the country.

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