



Refugee Documentation Centre (Ireland)  
LEGAL AID BOARD

**Afghanistan - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on Thursday 29 October 2015**

**Treatment of Afghan employees of US/foreign companies such as USAID (including for the Financial Access for Investing in the Development of Afghanistan/FAIDA project) by the Taliban including: kidnappings of family members, available state/police protection**

An undated document published by the *International NGO safety Organisation* notes that:

“Misperceptions or negative perceptions of NGO programming among local actors: Whilst incidents of NGOs being the direct targets of hostility remain rare, there have been several prominent cases in which NGOs were targeted as a result of their activities being perceived as either non-neutral or in violation of Afghanistan’s cultural or religious customs. With local operating environments becoming increasingly complex and the array of armed actors both broader and more fragmented, this presents a key risk to NGOs” (International NGO safety Organisation (Undated) *Key Risks & Mitigation Measures*).

This document also notes that:

“With the conflict now largely domestic in character, the risk to NGOs of being caught up in fighting between armed opposition groups and Afghan security forces is significant” (ibid).

In March 2015 *Freedom House* reporting on events of 2014 notes:

“The work of hundreds of international and Afghan nongovernmental organizations – numbering 287 and 1,911, respectively – as well as more than 4,000 other associations, is not typically constrained by the authorities in a formal sense, but these groups’ ability to operate freely and effectively is impeded by the security situation. Civil society activists, particularly those who focus on human rights or accountability issues, continue to face threats and harassment” (Freedom House (20 March 2015) *Freedom in the World 2015 – Afghanistan*).

The *United States Department of State* commenting on events of 2014 in a report issued in June 2015 points out that:

“Suspected Taliban members fired on NGO vehicles and attacked NGO offices and guesthouses, restaurants, and hotels frequented by NGO employees. Violence and instability hampered development, relief, and reconstruction efforts. NGOs reported insurgents, powerful local individuals, and militia leaders demanded bribes to allow groups to bring relief supplies into the country and distribute them” (United States Department of State (25 June 2015) *2014 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – Afghanistan*).

This report also states:

“The lack of security and instability in parts of the country continued to affect NGO activities” (ibid).

A publication in 2015 by *Humanitarian Outcomes* commenting on 2014 notes:

“Kidnappings have again surpassed shootings as the most common means of violence affecting aid workers. As in past years, most kidnap victims were national staff of aid projects in Afghanistan, and were released following intervention by community elders” (Humanitarian Outcomes (2015) *Aid Worker Security Report 2015, Figures at a glance*).

A report released in April 2015 by *Reuters* notes that:

“...five aid workers kidnapped by the Taliban were found dead” (Reuters (11 April 2015) *Afghan aid workers found dead; 100 students hospitalised after meal*).

In June 2015 *Amnesty International* notes:

““Being an aid worker in Afghanistan is an extremely risky business which will only become more dangerous if authorities fail to ensure those responsible for these disgraceful attacks face justice,” said Horia Mosadiq, Afghanistan Researcher at Amnesty International” (Amnesty International (2 June 2015) *Afghanistan must bolster protection for aid workers*).

In June 2015 *The Guardian* states:

“With cash-strapped militants looking for funds, kidnappings are also becoming more common. Acbar said 40 aid workers have been abducted so far this year. The bodies of five of them, who worked for Save the Children, were found in April in the mountains of Uruzgan province, 40 days after they had been kidnapped” (The Guardian (4 June 2015) *Attack on aid workers reflects rising danger in Afghanistan; The killing of nine humanitarian staff by unknown gunmen has led to calls for better protection in the country known as deadliest place to deliver aid*).

A report released in July 2015 by the *United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan* notes that:

“Targeted killings...accounted for 14 per cent of all civilian casualties in the first half of 2015. UNAMA documented 699 civilian casualties (440 deaths and 259 injured) from targeted killings...a 57 per cent increase from the same period in 2014...Although ground engagements, IEDs, and complex and suicide attacks caused more overall civilian casualties in the first half of 2015, targeted and deliberate killings caused more civilian deaths than any other tactic – 440 of the 1,592 documented civilian deaths and 28 per cent of all civilian deaths...UNAMA attributed 659 civilian casualties (412 deaths and 247 injured) from targeted killings – 94 per cent – to Anti-Government Elements. These included deliberate killings of aid workers, tribal elders, civilian Government officials, mullahs, and civilian justice officials. For example, in the early morning hours of 2 June, Anti-Government Elements entered the compound of the international non-governmental organization People in Need and killed nine Afghan civilian employees, including one pregnant woman, with small arms fire” (United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (July 2015) *Afghanistan Mid-Year Report on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict: 2015, p.52*).

A document issued in September 2015 by the *United Nations Security Council* notes:

“From 1 January to 31 July, the volume of security incidents involving humanitarian-related personnel, assets and facilities and violations against health-care facilities decreased compared with the same period in 2014, with 140 recorded incidents. These included the killing of nine aid workers in Balkh Province on 2 June and the killing of five national and two international non-governmental organization workers in Kabul on 13 May. In addition, 28 aid workers were wounded and 90 abducted during the first seven months of 2015” (United Nations Security Council (1 September 2015) *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security*, p.13).

A report issued in October 2015 by *IRIN News* points out that:

“The United Nations has evacuated staff from areas of northern Afghanistan where a suspected American airstrike hit a clinic run by Médecins Sans Frontières, forcing it to leave Kunduz Province - the latest in a growing number of humanitarian agencies withdrawing from the north as violence increases” (IRIN News (5 October 2015) *Aid agencies withdraw from Afghanistan's north*).

This document also states:

“Afghanistan is the most dangerous country for aid workers, with 57 killed last year, according to UNAMA. The death toll for this year was high before the bombing of the MSF clinic. ACBAR, a coordinating body for NGOs, said in June that 26 aid workers had already been killed in Afghanistan in 2015” (ibid).

*Reuters* in October 2015 notes that:

“Afghanistan was the most violent country for aid workers last year, according to the Aid Worker Security Database, and international medical NGOs have been targeted before...In 2013, a ICRC staff member in the eastern city of Jalalabad was killed. But changing tactics by Taliban insurgents this year, coinciding with the withdrawal of most foreign troops that made the country less stable, has seen district and provincial centers targeted more frequently and across a broader area” (Reuters (8 October 2015) *Afghan medical NGOs faced growing danger long before MSF hospital tragedy*).

A report issued in October 2015 by *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* states that:

“A female German aid worker who was kidnapped in Afghanistan in August has been released...” (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (18 October 2015) *German Hostage Freed In Afghanistan*).

*IRIN News* in October 2015 states:

“From a more extreme anti-“infidel” position, the Taliban is seen to have eased its stance towards international NGOs in recent years” (IRIN News (27 October 2015) *Afghan conflict and upcoming winter complicate earthquake relief*).

No information applicable to USAID could be found among sources available to the RDC.

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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