

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

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## **Afghanistan: Accountability for civilian death toll**

The US investigation into the latest incident in Uruzgan must be carried out urgently and the findings must be made public, Amnesty International said today, adding; "The US military should be taking urgent measures to avoid repetition of similar tragedies."

"The bombing of the village wedding ceremony which killed and injured scores of civilians adds to the mounting civilian death toll caused by the US-led coalition bombing since it began nine months ago," Amnesty International said. "The rules of war need to be respected."

US-led forces should take sufficient precautions to protect civilians in selecting military objectives and means of attack. They should also desist from an attack if it becomes apparent that the objective is not a military one, or the attack risks being disproportionate to the military objective.

The rules of international humanitarian law require those who plan or decide upon an attack to do everything feasible to verify that the objectives targeted are not civilian. When it is unclear whether a target is used for military purposes, it shall be presumed to be a civilian object.

Amnesty International is concerned about the recent increase in civilian casualties caused by targeting errors. In several incidents during late 2001 and early 2002, Afghan villagers accused the USA of acting on misinformation or malicious information and taking military action leading to the deaths of civilians.

Amnesty International reiterates its call for the US authorities to investigate military attacks which have resulted in civilian deaths and to make those findings public.

### **Background**

According to reports from Afghanistan, 30 fatalities so far have been reported by government officials in Kabul, while eye witnesses of the incident have reported more than 120 either dead or injured. Hospital reports claim many were women and children. The circumstances remain unclear but reports state that civilian casualties were caused by B-52 bombing and AC-130 gunship fire at around 1:00am 1st July 2002, on what US officials have described as anti-aircraft fire on a coalition reconnaissance patrol flight. Local reports from Kabul state that these may have been mistaken for traditional gunfire salutes at a local wedding.

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