

## AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

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### **Afghanistan: summary execution of civilians in Yakaolang**

Amnesty International today condemned the summary execution of scores of Afgan civilians by Taleban forces after their capture of the district of Yakaolang in December 2000. The victims, all male and as young as 13 years of age, are thought to number between 100 and 300. Most of the killings reportedly took place in villages around Nayak, and were accompanied by mass arrests.

"This brutal treatment of civilians simply has to end," the human rights organization said. "These deeply disturbing reports once again underline the need for action by the international community to ensure protection of the civilian population in Afghanistan."

The executions followed the recapture of Yakaolang from the anti-Taleban Hezb-e Wahdat party in fierce fighting in December 2000. It is thought that the latest reported executions are in retaliation for Taleban losses in the course of their conquest of the district. A Taleban commander is alleged to have ordered his forces to kill all men between the ages of 13 and 70 whom they consider to be anti-Taleban.

Hezb-e Wahdat claims support from the Hazara ethnic group in Afganistan. On a number of occasions the Taleban are reported to have carried out massacres of the Hazara population - as well as burning their homes, arresting men and boys and confiscating their land and other belongings. Control of the region has passed back and forth between the two factions in the course of the fighting.

*Whilst in control of the district Hezb-e Wahdat fighters are reported to have treated with brutality those they considered to have collaborated with the Taleban.*

*Scores of Hazara civilians are reported to have been the targets of systematic killings by Taleban guards arriving in Yakaoland following a previous conquest in May 1999. In addition, hundreds of men, and in a few instances women and children, were reportedly separated from their families by the Taleban forces and to date there has been no news of their whereabouts.*

*Amnesty International condemns human rights abuses by all warring factions in Afghanistan and is reiterating its call to the international community to set up an international body with a clearly demonstrated independent, impartial and competent structure to investigate all reports of massacres with a view to establishing the facts, identifying the perpetrators and recommending means of bringing them to justice.*

*With regard to these latest human rights abuses, Amnesty International:*

*Urges the Taleban to abide by the principles of international humanitarian law which forbid the killing of, and other human rights abuses against, the civilian population.*

*Urges the Taleban to remove from active service any of their members who are implicated in human rights abuses, and facilitate an investigation of their conduct by an independent, impartial and competent body.*

*\ENDS*

*public document*

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