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AFGHANISTAN: CIVILIANS TARGETED IN SHELLING ATTACKS

Amnesty International today condemned renewed indiscriminate attacks against civilians in the Afghan capital, Kabul

“Once again, Kabul civilians have become the targets of indiscriminate air raids in a conflict in which they have no active part,” the organization said.

Two aeroplanes believed to have flown missions in support of the anti-Taleban coalition headed by the ousted President Borhanuddin Rabbani and General Abdul Rashid Dostum reportedly bombed the northeast of Kabul on 5 January.

The air raid reportedly killed at least four civilians, and 15 more people received hospital treatment for their injuries. At least two civilian houses were completely destroyed by blast bombs. The planes also dropped cluster bombs which burst open in the air to disperse powerful bomblets.

“These are weapons designed to inflict maximum casualties,” Amnesty International said. “Dropped on a city, they kill and maim innocent men, women and children.”

On the same day, a car bomb exploded in a vegetable market killing at least four people and injuring 37.

“All warring factions in Afghanistan, including the forces of General Dostum and Borhanuddin Rabbani, should abide by the rules of armed conflict and refrain from deliberate or indiscriminate attacks against civilians.”

Amnesty International is further concerned that a senior Taleban official has threatened to begin hanging some prisoners if opposition attacks on Kabul are repeated. Mullah Khairullah Khairkhwa, the Taleban governor of Kabul province is reported to have said: “*We have arrested some people on charges of terrorism in the past, and if yesterday's incident is repeated in the future, we will have to hang those who are already in our custody as an example to others.*”

The human rights organization called on the highest Taleban officials to ensure that executions and other deliberate and arbitrary killings are not carried out.

BACKGROUND

In the past five years, tens of thousands of Kabul civilians have been the main casualties of the fighting between various warring factions over control of territory. In 1994, thousands of civilians were killed in indiscriminate attacks on civilians during the fighting between forces of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, General Dostum and those of President Rabbani's government. Hundreds of unarmed civilians have been the victims of indiscriminate killings by the Taleban in the last two years. /ENDS