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AFGHANISTAN: INDISCRIMINATE ATTACKS ON CIVILIANS MUST STOP

Amnesty International is calling on the Taleban and all other warring factions in Afghanistan to immediately stop targeting civilian centres following yesterday's barrage of rockets fired at Kabul's residential areas which killed at least 22 civilians and injured 26 others.

"These attacks yet again show a complete disregard for the lives of Kabul's civilians by those intent on taking over the city," Amnesty International said today.

"How many more have to die before the Taleban and all the other factions stop these indiscriminate attacks on civilians?"

On 23 June a barrage of eight rockets was fired at Kabul's residential areas from positions outside the city reportedly controlled by the Taleban. One rocket hit a crowded bus stop killing six people waiting for a bus and two local shopkeepers. Witnesses told journalists that another rocket instantly killed seven students -- aged between 15 and 18 -- when it hit a school. The rocket reportedly exploded during lessons. Hospital sources said seven people died later as a result of injuries, bringing the total number of those killed to 22. Some 26 people are continuing to receive medical treatment for their injuries, including 10 children.

Amnesty International is not in a position to confirm that the Taleban was responsible for these rocket attacks, but reports that they have come from the Taleban-controlled areas outside Kabul appear to be credible. The victims are apparently all civilians. The residents have described the attack as the deadliest killings since November 1995 when rockets and artillery barrages fired from Taleban positions south of Kabul killed at least 57 unarmed civilians and injured over 150 in two days. Since then, intermittent rocket and artillery attacks have killed at least 200 unarmed civilians.

Amnesty International is once again urging the Taleban, and all other warring factions, to abide by the rules of war and refrain from deliberate or indiscriminate attacks against the civilian population of Kabul.

Amnesty International also renews its call to the international community to play a role in bringing to an end the catastrophic human rights abuses caused by 16 years of conflict.

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