

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## Public Statement

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### **Afghanistan: Amnesty International condemns the recent killing of civilians in southern Afghanistan**

Amnesty International condemns the recent wave of killings of civilians in southern Afghanistan, notably the 16 January suicide bomb attack on spectators at a sporting event in Spin Boldak, Kandahar province. According to reports, at least 22 people were killed and 20 injured by a suicide bomber on a motorcycle who blew himself up in a crowd attending a wrestling match.

On the same day, three civilians were reportedly killed in the city of Kandahar by a roadside bomb apparently aimed at members of the Afghan National Army (ANA). Ten civilians were reportedly injured in this attack. On 15 January, an attack on a Canadian military convoy resulted in the killing of a Canadian diplomatic envoy and at least three other civilians.

Up to 20 suicide bomb attacks have reportedly taken place in the past four months, in which scores of civilians have been killed.

Amnesty International believes that these attacks show utter disdain for basic principles of humanity and constitute a failure to abide by even the most basic standards of humanitarian law. There is no valid justification for the deliberate killing of civilians.

Amnesty International recognises that many Afghans oppose the continuing presence of US and Coalition Forces in the country, and that these forces have committed grave human rights violations, including the killing of civilians and torture of prisoners. However, such abuses can never justify abuses by armed groups such as the Taliban.

The groups and individuals carrying out indiscriminate attacks such as that in Spin Boldak are criminals. Their actions undermine any claim they may have to be pursuing a legitimate cause. The organization calls on the Afghan government to take concrete measures to investigate these crimes and to bring to justice those responsible, including those involved in the planning and organizing of such attacks, in proceedings which meet international standards of fairness.

Amnesty International urges armed groups to immediately cease all attacks against civilians and indiscriminate attacks, and calls on community leaders who remain in contact with the leadership of armed groups to speak out against such attacks, and make clear that there can be no circumstances that allow or justify war crimes and crimes against humanity.

