

COI Focus

AFGHANISTAN

Security situation in Jalalabad, Behsud and Surkhrod districts (Nangarhar province)

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Cedoca

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List of abbreviations/acronyms used

AAN	Afghanistan Analysts Network
ACAA	Afghan Civil Aviation Authority
ACLED	Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project
AGE	Anti-Government Element
AGCHO	Afghanistan Geodesy and Cartography Head Office
AIMS	Afghanistan Information Management Services
ANDSF	Afghan National Defence and Security Forces
AREU	Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit
DW	Deutsche Welle
EASO	European Asylum Support Office
FP	Foreign Policy
GIRoA	Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
HRW	Human Rights Watch
IDLG	Independent Directorate for Local Governance
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
ISKP	Islamic State Khorasan Province
Landinfo	Norwegian Country of Information Centre
LWJ	Long War Journal
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NDS	National Directorate of Security
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
NSIA	National Statistic and Information Authority
NYT	The New York Times
PD	Police District
RFE/RL	Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty
RS	Resolute Support
SIGAR	Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction
UN	United Nations
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSG	United Nations Secretary-General
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USDOD	United States Department of Defence
USIP	United States Institute of Peace
VoA	Voice of America

Introduction

This COI Focus aims to provide information on the security situation in Nangarhar province's Jalalabad, Behsud and Surkhrod districts and is an update of both the *COI Focus Afghanistan. Veiligheidssituatie Jalalabad, Behsud en Surkhrod* and the Nangarhar chapter taken from the *European Asylum Support Office (EASO) Country of Origin Information Report. Afghanistan: Security Situation*, published on 25 June 2021.¹ This report presents information from 1 February 2020 until 31 May 2021. If any developments significantly change the security situation in these districts, Cedoca will update this COI Focus as soon as possible. For a general introduction to the security situation in Afghanistan, reference is made to the EASO report listed above, published in September 2020.

This report follows the structure of the individual provincial chapters in the EASO Country of Origin Information Reports on the security situation in Afghanistan. The general description of Jalalabad city contains information on the geography, population, administrative divisions and demarcation of Jalalabad city. The chapter on the background of the conflict takes a longer-term look at the security situation in Nangarhar province, with a special focus on Jalalabad, Behsud and Surkhrod districts and includes descriptions of the anti-government actors active in Jalalabad city. In the chapter on recent security trends, the nature and frequency of the violence, illustrative incidents as well as civilian casualties and the further impact on civilians in the three districts are described within a timeframe from 1 February 2020 until 31 May 2021. Lastly, a separate chapter is dedicated to population displacements caused by the conflict from and to Jalalabad, Behsud and Surkhrod districts.

For data on violent incidents, Cedoca consulted the publicly available curated dataset from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED). ACLED is an American non-profit organisation that collects, analyses and maps information on conflicts. Trained data experts collect the data using information from a wide range of local, regional and international sources. For Afghanistan, ACLED covers political violence and protests spanning from January 2017 to the present. Each week, ACLED researches and reviews about 60 sources in English and Dari/Farsi on political violence in Afghanistan and collects the information in its database.² These sources include for example: The New York Times (NYT), Xinhua, Agence France Presse (AFP), Pajhwok Afghan News, Voice of Jihad, the Afghan Ministry of Defence, Bakhtar News Agency, Ariana TV, Khaama Press, Noor TV, Afghan Islamic Press News Agency and some specifically selected Twitter accounts. ACLED's dataset is constantly updated when new information is made available. The ACLED data included in this COI Focus were downloaded on 20 June 2021.

ACLED's inventory provides information on the type of violence, the actors involved, a description of the incidents, the location and the number of fatalities.³ ACLED indicates that since most of the data in their inventory are gathered based on publicly available secondary reports, they are in part 'a reflection of the coverage and reporting priorities of media and international organisations', and as such an under-estimation of the violence is possible.⁴ In its Codebook, ACLED provides an extensive explanation of its applied methodology for entering and monitoring the data in its dataset.⁵ Taking into account the methodology and sources, as well as the entering and coding procedure of the data, Cedoca considers that the figures provided by ACLED can only be taken as an estimation and indication of the tendencies related to the violence in the Afghan conflict during a certain period of time. The

¹ EASO, Country of Origin Information Report. Afghanistan: Security Situation, June 2021, [url](#)

² ACLED, Methodology and Coding Decisions around the Conflict in Afghanistan, (Version 3) March 2020, [url](#)

³ ACLED, Codebook, 10 April 2019, [url](#)

⁴ ACLED, Guide for Media Users, 10 April 2019, [url](#)

⁵ ACLED, Codebook, 10 April 2019, [url](#)

ACLED data represented in this COI Focus should therefore be read together with other indicators and information on developing trends.

The list of incidents in this report is not exhaustive and does not pretend to be. Incidents are featured because of their relevance for assessing the security situation.

Additionally, it should be noted that the reporting on the security situation in Afghanistan cannot be considered complete for a variety of reasons. According to Thomas Ruttig from the Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN), 'fact-based information has become scarcer', 'interpretations of what data there is has become politicized' and parties in the conflict have become less transparent - which has made tracking trends in security more difficult.⁶ In August 2020, analyst Kate Clark indicated a change in reporting on the Afghan conflict since the signing of the agreement between the United States (US) and the Taliban in February 2020 - 'with the Taliban and ANDSF now downplaying their attacks, minimising rather than exaggerating their actions'. According to Clark, the insurgent violence has become a little 'murkier', with more attacks remaining unclaimed.⁷ In June 2021, ACLED's website ran the following statement regarding Afghanistan data:

'ACLED is currently reviewing trends in coverage between 2019 and 2020 in Afghanistan. We believe a shift in reporting by the Afghan Ministry of Defense (MOD) and the Taliban's Voice of Jihad (VOJ) may have contributed to a trend depicting a reduction in violence. The team is currently supplementing coverage by drawing on additional sources. While this review is being undertaken, we would advise against drawing comparisons in violence/fatalities in Afghanistan between 2019 and 2020.'⁸

In this COI Focus, Cedoca used data on civilian casualties from the reports on the protection of civilians in armed conflict published by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). Analyst Thomas Ruttig points out the possibility that civilian casualties are 'non- or underreported' by UNAMA,⁹ as its methodology requires that cases be verified through 'at least three different and independent types of sources' before being included in its reports.¹⁰

For data on conflict-induced displacement, Cedoca consulted the database of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA). UNOCHA collects statistics on IDPs by conducting joint assessments throughout the country and logging these assessments into a database. The UNOCHA database is continuously and systematically updated and allows to discern patterns and trends or to enable comparisons. However, Cedoca is aware that these figures possibly do not include all IDPs, such as IDPs living in urban areas and therefore difficult to identify because they are dispersed among economic migrants and the urban poor or IDPs displaced in inaccessible areas.¹¹ The UNOCHA conflict-induced displacement data included in this COI Focus range from 1 February 2020 to 31 May 2021.

Additional research was done by Cedoca through the Google search engine, in the database of Ecol.net, in the analysis of independent research organisations, in the periodical reporting of the UN mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), other UN institutions and the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan

⁶ Ruttig, T., More Violent, More Widespread: Trends in Afghan Security in 2017, AAN, 29 January 2018, [url](#)

⁷ Clark, K., War in Afghanistan in 2020: Just as Much Violence, but No One Wants to Talk about It, AAN, 16 August 2020, [url](#)

⁸ ACLED, Curated data, Coverage notices, [url](#); See also: Clark, K., War in Afghanistan in 2020: Just as much violence, but no one wants to talk about it, AAN, 16 August 2020, [url](#)

⁹ Ruttig, T., More Violent, More Widespread: Trends in Afghan Security in 2017, AAN, 29 January 2018, [url](#)

¹⁰ UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict - Annual Report 2020, 23 February 2021, [url](#), p. 8

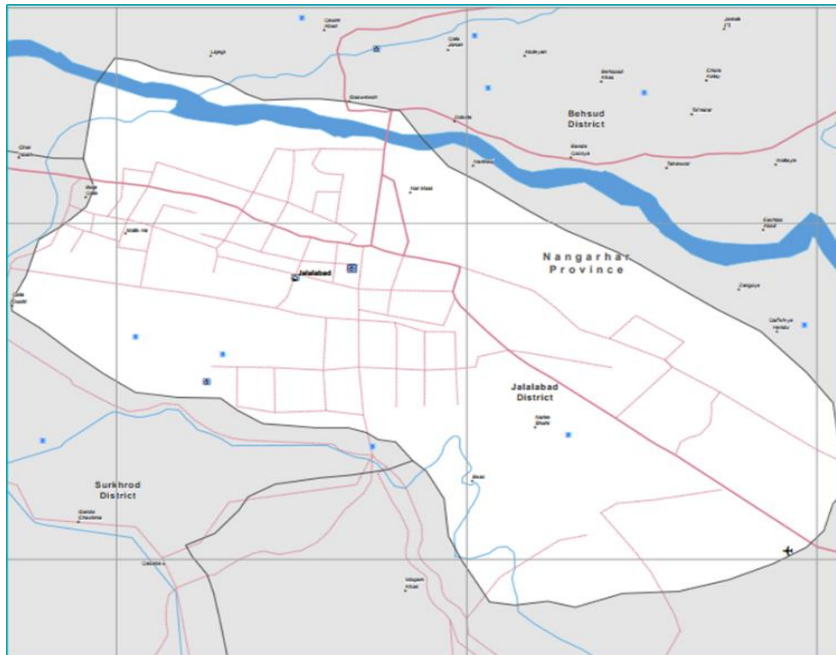
¹¹ Bjelica, J., Over Half a Million Afghans Flee Conflict in 2016: A look at the IDP Statistics, AAN, 28 December 2016, [url](#)

Reconstruction (SIGAR), on the websites of Afghan and international media sources as well as on Twitter.

This report was written according to the EASO COI Report Methodology (June 2019) and the EASO COI Referencing Guide (June 2019).¹²

¹² Both can be downloaded from the EASO website: [url](#)

1. General description of Jalalabad city



Map 1: Provincie Nangarhar, Jalalabad district with Jalalabad city (UNOCHA)

Jalalabad is the provincial center or capital of eastern Nangarhar province. The city is located in Jalalabad district, which is surrounded by Behsud, Surkhrod, Chaparhar, Kama and Rodat districts.¹³ Nangarhar province and Jalalabad city with its outskirts in particular, fulfils the role of regional capital for the whole eastern region.¹⁴ Jalalabad is the center of political, social and economic life in the eastern region.¹⁵ Jalalabad is currently one of the five largest cities in Afghanistan.¹⁶

In 1958, only one police district (PD or precinct or *nahia*) was established in the city.¹⁷ While according to various sources, including the website of Jalalabad city, there are currently six *nahia*,¹⁸ news reports occasionally mention a seventh, eighth and ninth police district in Jalalabad.¹⁹ A map illustrating Jalalabad's urban expansion between 2014 and 2018 and published in a 2021 report on the city's strategic development includes ten districts.²⁰ Findings from various reports indicate that

¹³ UNOCHA, Afghanistan. Nangarhar Province. District Atlas, 14 April 2014, [url](#), p. 12

¹⁴ Action Against Hunger (Habibi A, Rastkar S. R. (Dr.), Quantitative Evaluation of Access and Coverage (SQUEAC) for SAM programme. Final Report. Behsoud, Surkh Rod, Kama, Khewa (Koz Kunar) and Jalalabad Districts of Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan, 25 July 2019, [url](#), p. 16

¹⁵ Jackson A., AREU, Politics and Governance in Afghanistan: the Case of Nangarhar Province, 22 June 2014, [url](#), p. 11; Action Against Hunger (Habibi A, Rastkar S. R. (Dr.), Teshome B.), Quantitative Evaluation of Access and Coverage (SQUEAC) for SAM programme. Final Report. Behsoud, Surkh Rod, Kama, Khewa (Koz Kunar) and Jalalabad Districts of Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan, 25 July 2019, [url](#), p. 16

¹⁶ Pajhwok Afghan News, Background Profile of Nangarhar, 3 June 2013, [url](#); USAID, Afghanistan. Infrastructure, s.d., [url](#); AREU, Urban Governance: An Assessment of the Urban Development Programme in Afghanistan, May 2017, [url](#), p. 1; UN-Habitat, Covid-19 Vulnerability In Informal Settlements: A Case Study Of An Urban Idp Community In Jalalabad, Afghanistan, June 2020, [url](#), pp. 2-3

¹⁷ Mumtaz W., Three Faces of Shafa. Land Ownership on Trial in Nangarhar, June 2013, [url](#)

¹⁸ Jalalabad Municipality (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan), Nangarhar Province. Municipality of Jalalabad City. Nahia 6, s.d., [url](#); Mumtaz W., Three Faces of Shafa. Land Ownership on Trial in Nangarhar, June 2013, [url](#)

¹⁹ Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 civilians, 3 security men wounded in Nangarhar blast, 2 January 2021, [url](#); Pajhwok Afghan News, Magnetic bomb blast killed driver destroy Rakshaw in Jalalabad, 26 February 2021, [url](#); Khaama Press, Explosion in Helmand claims gov't prosecutor, 6 March 2021, [url](#); Tolonews, 2 ANA Soldiers Wounded in Jalalabad Blast, 10 March 2021, [url](#)

²⁰ Sasaki, Jalalabad Strategic Development Framework, 12 February 2021, [url](#), p. II.6-II.7

developments in response to the city's expansion were mostly unplanned and informal.²¹ According to a 2006 case study, 'Jalalabad city is not a defined spatial entity.'²²

Nangarhar is described as one of the most densely populated provinces in Afghanistan.²³ However, there are no accurate population figures available for the province of Nangarhar and the city of Jalalabad, with different organizations using different figures.²⁴ According to estimates for 2020/2021 by the National Statistics and Information Authority (NSIA), Nangarhar province has a population of 1 701 698,²⁵ while another source estimates its population at 2.6 million.²⁶ NSIA estimates the population of capital Jalalabad at 271 867 for 2020/2021,²⁷ while according to other sources the population of Jalalabad region ranges between 350 000 and more than one million.²⁸ Behsud and Surkhrod districts have a population of 128 474 and 136 180 respectively, according to NSIA estimates for 2020/2021²⁹ and are among the more densely populated districts of Nangarhar province.³⁰

Jalalabad city is the commercial center of Afghanistan's eastern region.³¹ It is strategically located on the road connecting Kabul with Peshawar in Pakistan.³² From Laghman province, the road enters Nangarhar from the North, at the Darunta dam, and leaves Nangarhar province via the Torkham border crossing. This road runs through Muhmand Dara district and the Khyber Pass³³ and is one of the main

²¹ Sasaki, Jalalabad Strategic Development Framework, 12 February 2021, [url](#), p. 83; Mahmoudi R., Linking Relief, Rehabilitation And Development Programme (LRRD) In Afghanistan. Jalalabad: A Resort City Of Change. Case study of Jalalabad City (Nangarhar Province), Groupe U.R.D., 2006, [url](#), p. 6

²² Mahmoudi R., Linking Relief, Rehabilitation And Development Programme (LRRD) In Afghanistan. Jalalabad: A Resort City Of Change. Case study of Jalalabad City (Nangarhar Province), Groupe U.R.D., 2006, [url](#), p. 93

²³ Mansfield D., Mules, Pick-ups and Container Traffic: Cross-Border Production and Trade and the Shaping of the Political Economy of Nangarhar, AREU, June 2020, [url](#), p. 12

²⁴ Tufts University – Feinstein International Center, Homeland, but no land for Home: A Case Study of Refugees in Towns (Jalalabad, Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan), 15 October 2018, [url](#), p. 16; Soroush R., Kazemi S.R., One Land, Two Rules (4): Delivering public service, AAN, 25 March 2019, [url](#)

²⁵ Afghanistan, NSIA (National Statistic and Information Authority), Estimated Population of Afghanistan 2020-2021, June 2020, [url](#), pp. 4, 14

²⁶ Mansfield D., Mules, Pick-ups and Container Traffic: Cross-Border Production and Trade and the Shaping of the Political Economy of Nangarhar, AREU, June 2020, [url](#), p. 12

²⁷ Afghanistan, NSIA (National Statistic and Information Authority), Estimated Population of Afghanistan 2020-2021, June 2020, [url](#), p. 14

²⁸ Giovacchini T., Governance and Representation in the Afghan Urban Transition, AREU, August 2011, [url](#), p. 5; Pajhwok Afghan News, Jalalabad Municipality Meeting, 5 July 2017, [url](#); AREU, Urban Governance: An Assessment of the Urban Development Programme in Afghanistan, May 2017, [url](#), p. 1; Tufts University – Feinstein International Center, Homeland, but no land for Home: A Case Study of Refugees in Towns (Jalalabad, Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan), 15 October 2018, [url](#), p. 7; Mumtaz W., Three Faces of Shafa. Land Ownership on Trial in Nangarhar, June 2013, [url](#); UN-Habitat, Covid-19 Vulnerability In Informal Settlements: A Case Study Of An Urban IDP Community In Jalalabad, Afghanistan, June 2020, [url](#), pp. 2-3; Afghanistan. Civil Aviation Authority, Terms Of Reference Consultancy Services For Feasibility Study Nangarhar International Airport, 9 October 2018, [url](#); Sasaki, Jalalabad Strategic Development Framework, 12 February 2021, [url](#), p. 83; Mahmoudi R., Linking Relief, Rehabilitation And Development Programme (LRRD) In Afghanistan. Jalalabad: A Resort City Of Change. Case study of Jalalabad City (Nangarhar Province), Groupe U.R.D., 2006, [url](#), p. 29

²⁹ Afghanistan, NSIA (National Statistic and Information Authority), Estimated Population of Afghanistan 2020-2021, June 2020, [url](#), p. 14

³⁰ Soroush R., Kazemi S R., One Land, Two Rules (4): Delivering public services in embattled Achin district in Nangarhar province, AAN, 25 March 2019, [url](#)

³¹ Wikileaks, Cable/PRT Jalalabad: 6 Month Report On Security, Political, Economic, And Social Conditions, 14 February 2007, [url](#)

³² Sasaki, Jalalabad Strategic Development Framework, 12 February 2021, [url](#), p. II.2; Afghanistan. Civil Aviation Authority, Terms Of Reference Consultancy Services For Feasibility Study Nangarhar International Airport, 9 October 2018, [url](#), p. 3

³³ Sabawoon, Ali M., The Gates of Friendship: How Afghans cross the Afghan-Pakistani border, AAN, 28 January 2020, [url](#)

supply and trade routes of the Afghan capital.³⁴ Located close to Pakistan, Jalalabad is an important trading center for many goods and food.³⁵ The city is strongly oriented to the south and Peshawar.³⁶ Jalalabad's position as a wholesale market seems to have evolved from a small-size transition center for commodities originating from Kabul on their way to Torkham, to a significant hub in the trade between Afghanistan and Pakistan.³⁷ The fact that Pakistani Rupees (qaldar) - rather than the afghani - were the major currency in the market, illustrates the importance of dense trade relations with Pakistan for the local economy.³⁸ However, following a campaign by some shopkeepers,³⁹ the government issued a ban on the circulation of Pakistani rupees in Nangarhar's markets by the end of 2019 to promote the use of the afghani in daily transactions. This has been welcomed by parts of the local population as well as activists.⁴⁰ The city of Jalalabad is home to many industrial and business activities. About 249 small businesses operate in the industrial parks on the outskirts of the city. These businesses produce marble and motorbike parts, among other things. There is also a factory producing olive oil.⁴¹

Nangarhar province sees frequent demographic movements every year.⁴² There is wide seasonal fluctuation in population numbers. People exchange Kabul or other areas for Jalalabad in winter months and try to escape the Jalalabad heat in the summer. Whole neighbourhoods can be deserted during the summer season, and fill up again during winter. In addition, many people regularly cross the border in search of a job in Pakistan and many Jalalabad residents also regularly travel to Pakistan in search for basic health care, as better health services are available there. Well-maintained tribal and family relationships have created a dense and stable transnational network between the Pashtuns on both sides of the border.⁴³ Sources describe how for many Jalalabad residents going to Peshawar felt like visiting a friend in the neighbourhood and did not feel like travelling to another country.⁴⁴ According to Hervé Nicolle, analyst at Kabul-based consultancy Samuel Hall, the cities of Peshawar, Jalalabad and Kabul are very closely linked socially, culturally and economically.⁴⁵ A March 2020 article by the Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN) called the freedom to travel between Afghanistan and Pakistan 'a social and economic necessity'. Formerly, people could cross the border to Pakistan and

³⁴ USAID, Land reform in Afghanistan (LARA) Jalalabad City profile, March 2013, [url](#), p. 16; Sasaki, Jalalabad Strategic Development Framework, 12 February 2021, [url](#), p. II.2

³⁵ Schütte S., Gaining some ground: Urban Livelihoods in Jalalabad, AREU, May 2006, p. 3, [url](#); Mahmoudi R., Linking Relief, Rehabilitation And Development Programme (LRRD) In Afghanistan. Jalalabad: A Resort City Of Change. Case study of Jalalabad City (Nangarhar Province), Groupe U.R.D., 2006, [url](#), pp. 5, 25

³⁶ Minoia G., Mumtaz W., Pain A., The social life of the onion: the informal regulation of the onion market in Nangarhar, Afghanistan, AREU, November 2014, [url](#), p. 6

³⁷ USAID, Land reform in Afghanistan (LARA) Jalalabad City profile, March 2013, [url](#), p. 16

³⁸ Schütte S., Gaining some ground: Urban Livelihoods in Jalalabad, AREU, May 2006, [url](#), p. 3; Mahmoudi R., Linking Relief, Rehabilitation And Development Programme (LRRD) In Afghanistan. Jalalabad: A Resort City Of Change. Case study of Jalalabad City (Nangarhar Province), Groupe U.R.D., 2006, [url](#), p. 25

³⁹ BBC Monitoring, Programme summary of Afghan Sharq TV news in Pashto 1530 gmt 2 Jul 19, 8 July 2019, [url](#)

⁴⁰ BBC Monitoring, Programme summary of Afghan Helmand Radio news in Pashto 1015 gmt 16 Dec 19, 21 December 2019, [url](#); BBC Monitoring, Programme summary of Afghan Sharq TV news in Pashto 1530 gmt 24 Dec 19, 9 January 2020, [url](#); BBC Monitoring, Programme summary of Afghan Kandahar TV news in Pashto 1615 gmt 22 Dec 19, 1 January 2020, [url](#)

⁴¹ Western security officer, senior analyst, e-mail, 19 December 2017

⁴² Action Against Hunger (Habibi A, Rastkar S. R. (Dr.), Quantitative Evaluation of Access and Coverage (SQUEAC) for SAM programme. Final Report. Behsoud, Surkh Rod, Kama, Khewa (Koz Kunar) and Jalalabad Districts of Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan, 25 July 2019, [url](#), pp. 16; 29

⁴³ Schütte S., Gaining some ground: Urban Livelihoods in Jalalabad, AREU, May 2006, [url](#), p. 3

⁴⁴ Schütte S., Gaining some ground: Urban Livelihoods in Jalalabad, AREU, May 2006, [url](#), p. 3; Sabawoon, Ali M., The Gates of Friendship: How Afghans cross the Afghan-Pakistani border, AAN, 28 January 2020, [url](#); Economist (The), Pakistan has fenced itself off from Afghanistan, 2 January 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁵ Nicolle H., unpublished speech noted by Cedoca, 2-3 December 2015

back to Afghanistan without identification documents.⁴⁶ The situation started to change in 2016. Since June 2016 people wanting to cross the border in both directions need a visa.⁴⁷ These requirements have led to weeks-long travel delays at the Torkham border crossing. At the same time, neither of the two neighbouring countries want the border to be permanently closed or the border crossing to be made practically impossible. However, a permanent solution has not been found yet, but temporary, often verbal, agreements on an *ad hoc* basis are used instead.⁴⁸ People in Nangarhar who wanted to apply for a visa to Pakistan complain about problems in obtaining visas and corruption.⁴⁹ Cross-border travel restrictions, including a fence Pakistan has been building, have an effect on the social fabric of cross-border families.⁵⁰ According to the local government, quoted by Pajhwok in February 2020, the Pakistani consulate received 3 000 visa applications per day and issued 600 per day.⁵¹ In 2020, Pakistan stopped issuing visas during eight months due to COVID-19 related restrictions. When it resumed issuing visas by mid-October 2020, thousands of people had been waiting for months to cross the border, which is already very busy in normal times. On 21 October 2020, after local officials instructed visa applicants to obtain tokens to avoid crowding at the consulate, thousands of people gathered at a soccer stadium in Jalalabad, resulting in a stampede during which at least 11 women died and several others were injured.⁵²

The authors of a 2012 AREU report point out the importance of the urban-rural divide in Afghanistan's history.⁵³ Until late 1978, Jalalabad's urban development followed Sadar Mohammad Daoud's master plan from 1970. Regime changes and three decades of violence have prevented the Jalalabad master plan from being executed as initially planned. During the last decades, the combination of violence, civil war, interpersonal conflicts and actions of informal power holders derailed the master plan, with a negative impact on the legal urban development of Jalalabad.⁵⁴

Rapid urbanisation, driven by economic migration, migration from rural districts, flows of returnees and displaced people, has absorbed surrounding villages into a larger area far beyond the city centre.⁵⁵

A 2013 rapport but the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) mentions the "Metropolitan Region" or the "Greater Jalalabad Region", a zone that 'has engulfed the surrounding villages and leapfrogged to settlements once far apart.' The map below (Map 2)⁵⁶ shows the Jalalabad "Metropolitan Region" according to the USAID report.⁵⁷

⁴⁶ Sabawoon, Ali M., The Gates of Friendship: How Afghans cross the Afghan-Pakistani border, AAN, 28 January 2020, [url](#)

⁴⁷ Economist (The), Pakistan has fenced itself off from Afghanistan, 2 January 2021, [url](#); Sabawoon, Ali M., The Gates of Friendship: How Afghans cross the Afghan-Pakistani border, AAN, 28 January 2020, [url](#)

⁴⁸ Sabawoon, Ali M., The Gates of Friendship: How Afghans cross the Afghan-Pakistani border, AAN, 28 January 2020, [url](#)

⁴⁹ Pajhwok Afghan News, 'Pakistani visa seekers face multiple problems', 2 February 2020, [url](#)

⁵⁰ NYT, Pakistan Builds Border Fence, Limiting Militants and Families Alike, 15 March 2020, [url](#)

⁵¹ Pajhwok Afghan News, 'Pakistani visa seekers face multiple problems', 2 February 2020, [url](#)

⁵² Washington Post (The), In Afghanistan, a deadly stampede, 22 October 2020, [url](#); Tolonews, Jalalabad: 12 Women Killed in Stampede for Pakistani Visas, 21 October 2020, [url](#)

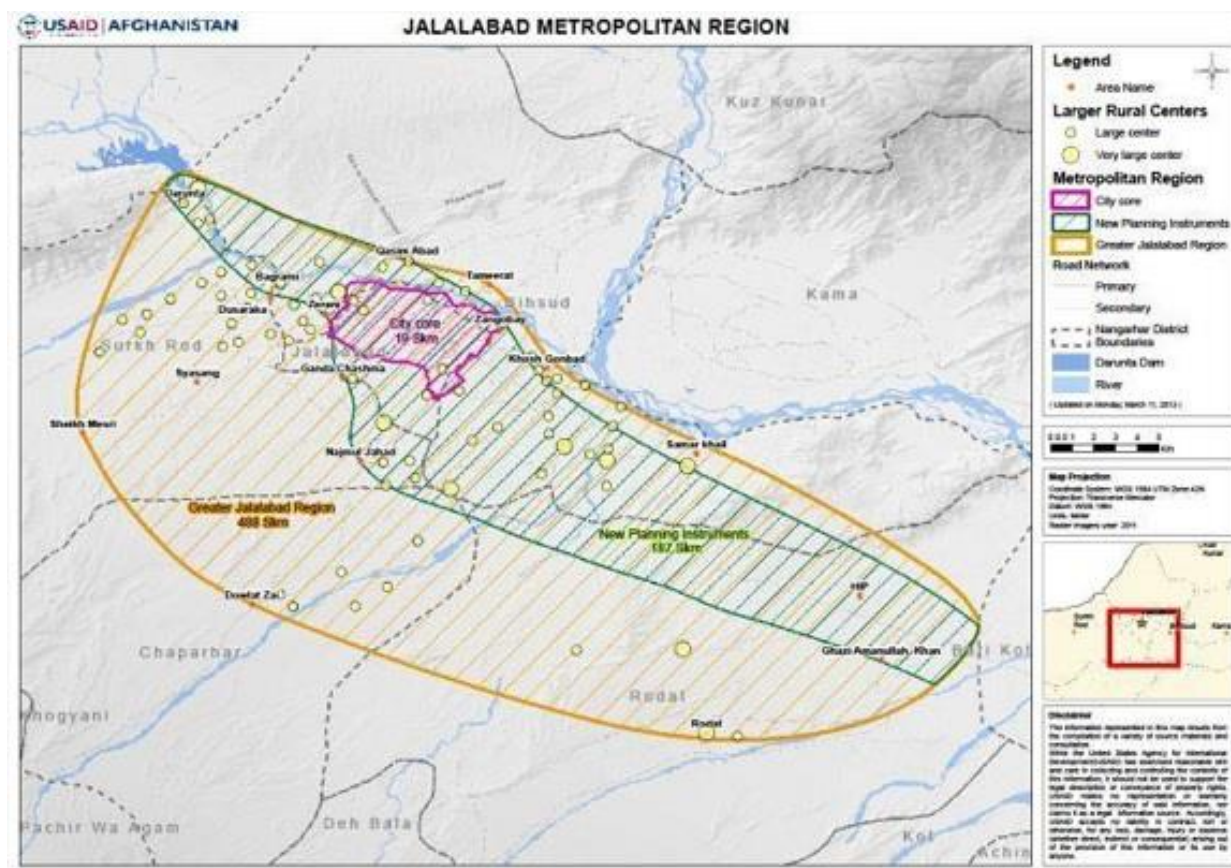
⁵³ Giustozzi A., Ibrahim N., Thirty Years Of Conflict: Drivers Of Anti-Government Mobilisation In Afghanistan, 1978- 2011, AREU, 17 January 2012, [url](#), p. 7

⁵⁴ Mumtaz Mumtaz W., Three Faces of Shafa. Land Ownership on Trial in Ningarhar, June 2013, [url](#)

⁵⁵ USAID, Land reform in Afghanistan (LARA) Jalalabad City profile, March 2013, [url](#), pp. 12-20; Sasaki, Jalalabad Strategic Development Framework, 12 February 2021, [url](#), p. II.16

⁵⁶ USAID, Land reform in Afghanistan (LARA) Jalalabad City profile, March 2013, [url](#), p. 14

⁵⁷ USAID, Land reform in Afghanistan (LARA) Jalalabad City profile, March 2013, [url](#), p. 12-15



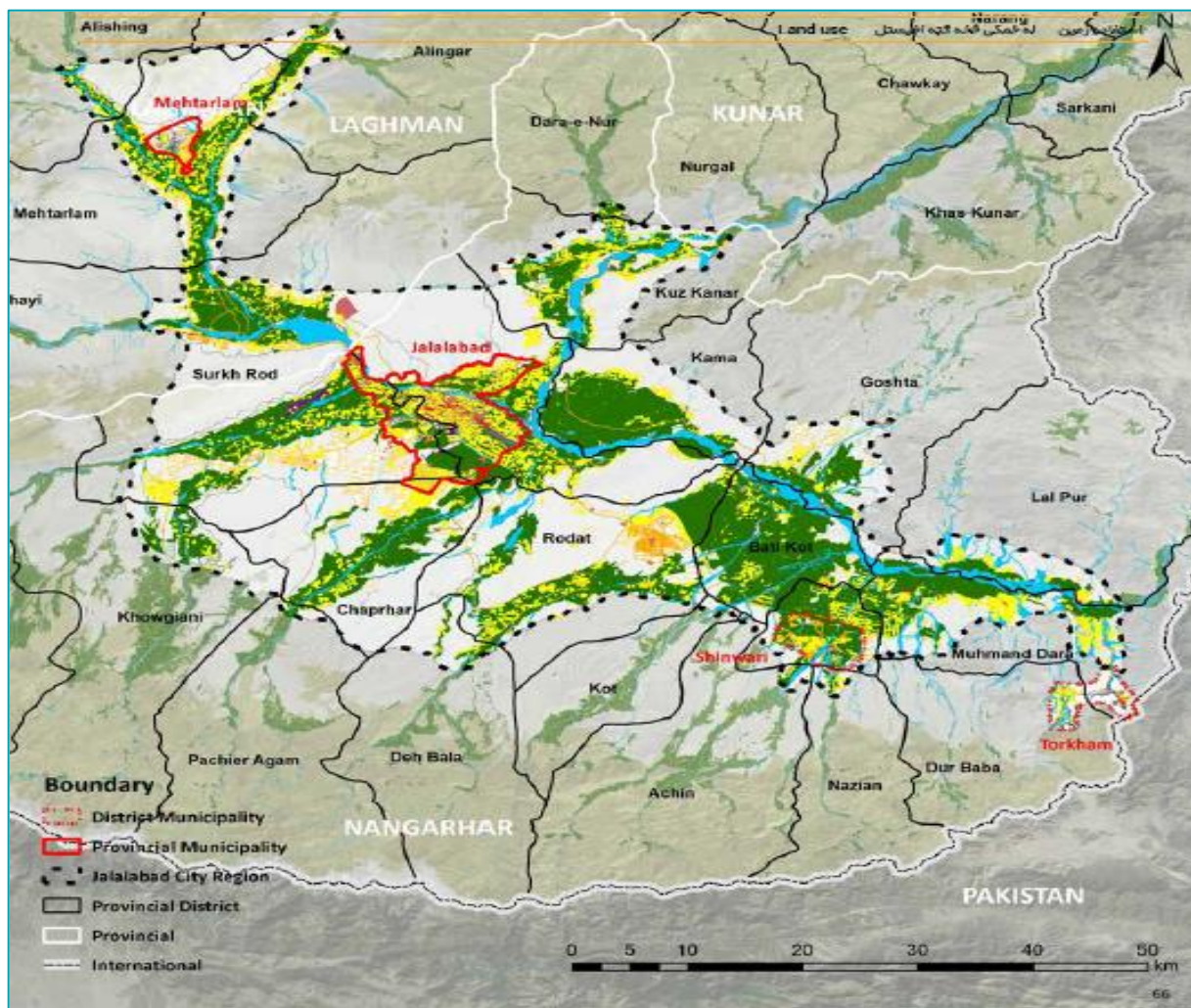
Map 2: Jalalabad "Metropolitan Region"

Various sources have pointed out how urbanization around Jalalabad has resulted in loss of agricultural land on the outskirts of Jalalabad city, absorbed for residential, commercial and industrial use.⁵⁸ A Jalalabad resident told Afghan news agency Pajhwok that many areas in Behsud, Kama and Jalalabad, known for their agricultural products, have disappeared due to the construction of houses.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Tufts University – Feinstein International Center, Homeland, but no land for Home: A Case Study of Refugees in Towns (Jalalabad, Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan), 15 October 2018, [url](#), p. 6; USAID, Land reform in Afghanistan (LARA) Jalalabad City profile, March 2013, [url](#), p. 14; Mahmoudi R., Linking Relief, Rehabilitation And Development Programme (LRRD) In Afghanistan. Jalalabad: A Resort City Of Change. Case study of Jalalabad City (Nangarhar Province), Groupe U.R.D., 2006, [url](#), p. 8

⁵⁹ Pajhwok Afghan News, Afghanistan- Nangarhar losing agriculture land to Urbanization, 12 March 2019, [url](#)

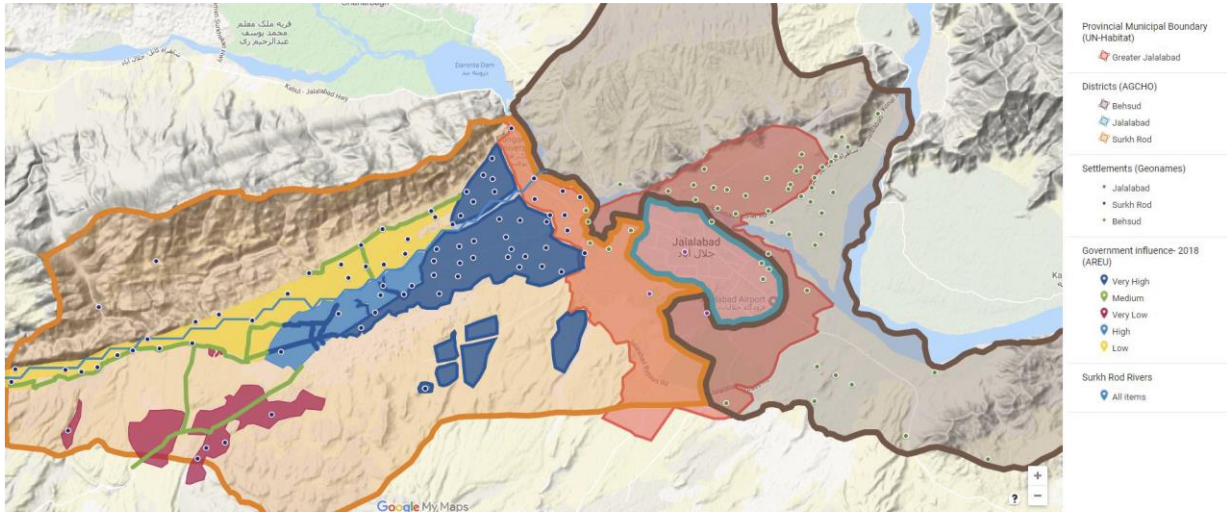
A 2016 study by the Afghan government in cooperation with UN-Habitat delineated a "Jalalabad City Region" and "Provincial Municipality" on a map (map 3). The demarcation of the "Provincial Municipality" includes the city of Jalalabad and extends to some central districts around the city, such as parts of Behsud in the north and parts of Surkhrod in the west.⁶⁰



Map 3: Jalalabad "City Region, Regional Context"

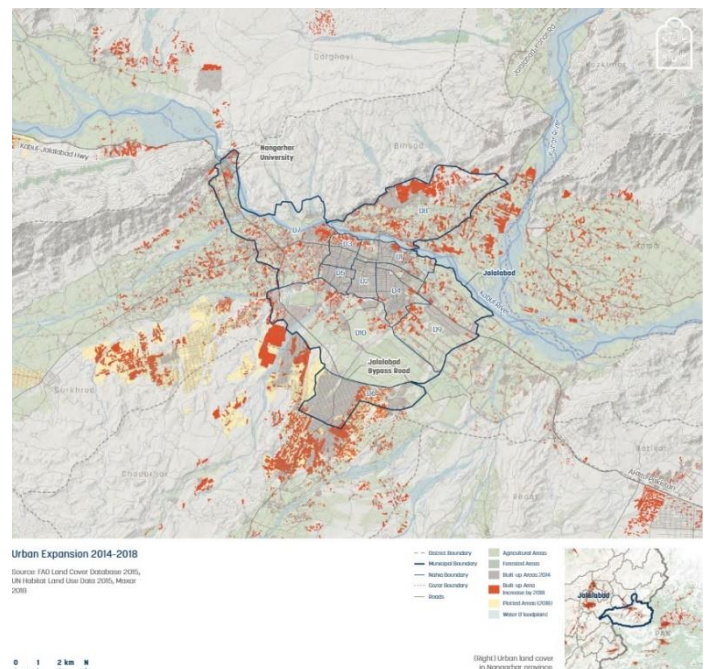
⁶⁰ GIRoA, Atlas of Afghan City Regions 2016, August 2016, [url](#), p. 65

Although the USAID report and the Afghan government study do not define the same area, both indicate that the urban fabric of Jalalabad city is larger than the district boundaries indicate.



Map 4: Simplified display of an interactive map: Jalalabad City Region

In November 2019, the New Media Unit of the Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGRS) produced a map (Map 4) that combines data from various organisations and institutions such as AREU, the Afghan Government (Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan via UN Habitat), Afghanistan Geodesy and Cartography Head Office (AGCHO) and Afghanistan Information Management Services (AIMS). This map can be accessed via this [link](#)⁶¹ and is in line with a map (Map 5) illustrating Jalalabad’s urban expansion between 2014 and 2018, published in a 2021 report on the city’s strategic development.⁶²



Map 5. Jalalabad's Urban Expansion 2014-2018. (Sources: FAO 2015; UN-Habitat 2015; Maxar 2018)

⁶¹ CGVS / CGRA - Cedoca (New Media Unit), NMU 2019-264. Kaart Jalalabad City Region, 27 November 2019

⁶² Sasaki, Jalalabad Strategic Development Framework, 12 February 2021, [url](#), p. II.6-II.7

In an e-mail to Cedoca dated 7 January 2018, a UN-Habitat staff member stated the following about the Jalalabad 'City Region':

“We define the Jalalabad City Region as those areas that have a functional relationship with the metropolitan area, which – as you note – extends further than the municipal boundary of Jalalabad city. In this case the ‘City Region’ was determined through an analysis of satellite photography, and included all of those areas with continuous linkages to Jalalabad city. Please note that this method is necessarily an approximation, but is sufficiently accurate for land use planning.”⁶³

Sources are often unclear about the exact district in which certain villages are situated. For example, according to a map by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), Farm Hada is located in Surkhrod district,⁶⁴ while according to the Election Commission it is located in Behsud district,⁶⁵ and media reports describe it as a suburb of Jalalabad.⁶⁶ Some articles or reports refer to certain areas or villages, such as Daman or Samar Khel in Behsud or even parts of Rodat district as part of Jalalabad.⁶⁷ Sources are also unclear about the demarcation of the sixth *nahia* of Jalalabad city. According to a 2011 development plan by the Independent Directorate for Local Governance (IDLG), Jalalabad municipality consists of six *nahias*.⁶⁸ *Nahia* 6 is situated outside Jalalabad’s city core according to USAID.⁶⁹ The website of the city of Jalalabad states that the sixth *nahia* is one of the administrative units of the city and is delineated by ‘Directorate of Canal ditch north side, Dawlat Zai and Trelay township south side, Hada township in East side, and Nahia 6 grave yard in west side’.⁷⁰

According to UN-Habitat the enormous economic, social, environmental and security-related inter-linkages between cities and their peri-urban and surrounding rural area should be taken into account.⁷¹ Therefore, this report extends its focus on the security situation in Jalalabad district further to the adjacent Behsud and Surkhrod districts. ANDSF checkpoints on the access roads to Jalalabad and Jalalabad military airport – which are regularly targeted in attacks – are often situated outside Jalalabad district’s boundaries.⁷² Nevertheless, incidents at these posts are also included in the security analysis of Jalalabad city as a whole.

⁶³ UN-Habitat, e-mail, 7 January 2018

⁶⁴ UNOCHA, Afghanistan. Nangarhar Province. District Atlas, 14 April 2014, [url](#), p. 5

⁶⁵ Independent Electoral Commission, Poling Centres Nangarhar, s.d., [url](#)

⁶⁶ Pajhwok Afghan News, Japan to help renovate Hada Museum in Nangarhar, 10 February 2016, [url](#)

⁶⁷ BBC Monitoring, Programme summary of Afghan Sharq TV news in Pashto 1530 gmt 5 Nov 19, 16 November 2019, [url](#); UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Humanitarian Update (25 – 31 January 2021), 3 February 2021, [url](#)

⁶⁸ IDLG, Jalalabad Municipality. Capacity Development Plan, August 2011, [url](#), p. 5

⁶⁹ USAID, Land reform in Afghanistan (LARA) Jalalabad City profile, March 2013, [url](#), p. 16

⁷⁰ Jalalabad Municipality (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan), Nahia 6, s.d., [url](#)

⁷¹ UN-Habitat, Breeding the Urban - Rural Divide, January 2016, [url](#)

⁷² Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 dead, 3 injured in Jalalabad explosion, 16 July 2013, [url](#)

2. Background of the conflict and actors

2.1. Background of the conflict in Nangarhar province and Jalalabad city in particular

Until 2018, sources indicated that the security situation in Nangarhar province was deteriorating.⁷³ In 2019, UNAMA registered a 41 % decrease in civilian casualties in Nangarhar. Despite this decrease, Nangarhar remained the province with the second highest number of civilian casualties in 2019 after Kabul.⁷⁴

An international source interviewed by the Norwegian COI unit Landinfo in October 2019 indicated that the number of security incidents in Nangarhar decreased significantly in 2019 compared to 2018, including in Jalalabad city.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, by the end of 2019, Nangarhar still remained among the three provinces most affected by the conflict in Afghanistan, according to UN data.⁷⁶ According to Afghan news agency Pajhwok, the highest number of attacks registered in Afghanistan in 2019 took place in Nangarhar province.⁷⁷

From the second half of 2018 and throughout 2019 Afghanistan was less affected by suicide and 'high profile' attacks.⁷⁸ UNAMA attributed the 26 % drop in suicide and complex attacks in Afghanistan primarily to the reduced activity of Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP).⁷⁹ According to the UN Secretary-general, this decrease was the result of 'ongoing interdiction efforts and increased security measures by Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, particularly in the cities of Kabul and Jalalabad.'⁸⁰

Although Nangarhar's provincial capital Jalalabad was under government control,⁸¹ armed opposition groups continued to carry out attacks in the city as will be illustrated under sub-chapter [3.3. Incident data and type of violence](#). In August 2020, International Crisis Group's analyst Andrew Watkins highlighted the vulnerability of Jalalabad, its proximity to the Pakistani border making attacks on the city easier 'in terms of logistics and local support'.⁸²

⁷³ Mansfield, D., The Devil is in the Details: Nangarhar's continued decline into insurgency, violence and widespread drug production, AREU, 29 February 2016, [url](#), pp. 1, 2, 3, 4, 6; NYT, Election rally bombing in Afghanistan heightens security fears, 2 October 2018, [url](#)

⁷⁴ UNAMA, Afghanistan. Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict 2019, 22 February 2020, [url](#), p. 94

⁷⁵ Landinfo, Sikkerhetssituasjon og konfliktmønster i 2019 [Afghanistan: Security situation and conflict pattern in 2019], 22 January 2020, [url](#), p. 26

⁷⁶ UNSG, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 10 December 2019, [url](#), para 24

⁷⁷ Pajhwok Afghan News, 22,300 people killed, injured in Afghanistan last year, 7 January 2020, [url](#)

⁷⁸ USDOD, Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan, December 2019, [url](#), p. 16

⁷⁹ UNAMA, Afghanistan. Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict 2019, 22 February 2020, [url](#), pp. 6-7, 11, 38

⁸⁰ UNSG, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 7 December 2018, [url](#), para 18; UNSG, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security 14 June 2019, [url](#), para 17

⁸¹ USDOD, Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan - June 2020, 1 July 2020, [url](#), pp. 2, 18; USIP, Afghanistan Study Group Final Report, February 2021, [url](#), p. 37; Pajhwok Afghan News, Govt, Taliban Make Exaggerated Claims of Territory They Control, 12 February 2021, [url](#); USDOD, Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan - December 2020, 23 April 2021, [url](#), p. 33; CNN, 'No One Can Dare Ask Why' What It's Like to Live in a Town Where Everything Is Controlled by the Taliban, 14 April 2021, [url](#); RFE/RL (Gandhara), Taliban Making 'Strategic' Military Gains in Afghanistan as Foreign Forces Pull Out, 1 June 2021, [url](#)

⁸² VoA, Islamic State Attack on Afghan Prison Lasts 20 Hours, Kills 29, 3 August 2020, [url](#)

According to analysts Ashley Jackson and Antonio Sampaio, Afghanistan's cities have become 'a critically important and overlooked dimension of the country's armed conflict'. During the past decades, violence was often concentrated in rural areas and despite sporadic large-scale attacks the country's larger cities were long considered 'relatively secure'. As stated by Jackson and Sampaio, this has changed and Afghanistan's urban areas have become stages for a competition among different actors - such as the Afghan government, the Taliban, other militant groups, strongmen and their militias and criminal networks. According to Jackson and Sampaio, this is driven by several factors. Firstly, the Taliban's influence has rapidly expanded, with the group's presence reported at the doorstep of large cities and the militants increasingly 'waging war inside urban areas'. Secondly, the ongoing Afghan peace talks have led the actors involved in the political settlement underpinning the post-2001 government to re-evaluate their allegiance to the central Afghan government, resulting in a disintegration of this settlement and the future of the Kabul administration being put into question. Thirdly, Afghanistan's rapid urbanization and the government's inability to maintain order and to keep up with the needs of a growing urban population have given rise to an increase in urban crime.⁸³

In 2020, the government's civilian administrations of some of Nangarhar's districts, including Sherzad and Hesarak, were operating from the provincial capital Jalalabad for security reasons.⁸⁴

2.2. Criminality

In December 2017, a Western security analyst in Kabul stated that the security situation in Jalalabad had deteriorated since June 2016, mainly due to an increase in criminal activities.⁸⁵ A security analyst working for an international organisation in Afghanistan and closely following its security situation pointed out at a conference organised by EASO in November 2017 that, particularly since August 2017, the city of Jalalabad had seen a marked deterioration in security. This was due to an increase in major crimes, including the targeting of businessmen and doctors, an influx of insurgents escaping operations by the ANDSF and international military forces and an ongoing power struggle.⁸⁶

Various residents complained to the press about growing insecurity in Nangarhar and Jalalabad city in recent years, mentioning a rise in armed robberies, kidnappings, explosions, suicide attacks and targeted murders.⁸⁷ During a Skype call with Cedoca on 11 January 2018, an independent consultant from Kabul stated that a 'significant increase' in criminal activities (e.g. kidnappings, extortion, extortion-linked murders) was observed in 2017. These criminal incidents were mainly occurring in the heart of Jalalabad city. In addition, this source indicated that the number of kidnappings had also increased, noting that besides the more affluent class (such as doctors), the middle class (such as traders) were increasingly targeted in kidnappings.⁸⁸ A February 2018 video report by Deutsche Welle showed how residents of Nangarhar province considered criminal activities in Jalalabad city a greater

⁸³ Jackson, A. & Sampaio, A., Afghan Cities Become Key Battlegrounds, War on the Rocks, 9 April 2021, [url](#)

⁸⁴ BBC Monitoring, Programme summary of Afghan Tolo news TV in Dari 1330 gmt 25 Jan 20, 26 January 2020, [url](#); Ali O., Hit from Many Sides 1: Unpicking the recent victory against the ISKP in Nangarhar, AAN, 1 March 2020, [url](#)

⁸⁵ Western security officer, senior analyst, e-mail, 19 December 2017

⁸⁶ Security analyst, EASO meeting in Malta, 23 November 2017, cited in: EASO, Afghanistan. Security situation – Update, 4 May 2018, [url](#)

⁸⁷ Pajhwok Afghan News, Nangarhar govt fails on security front: activists, 16 July 2017, [url](#); Pajhwok Afghan News, Doctors, druggists go on strike in Jalalabad, 18 September 2017, [url](#); Tolo News, Nangarhar Investors Concerned Over Their Safety, 15 September 2017, [url](#); Tolo News, Threats Against Forex Dealers On Rise In Nangarhar, 29 December 2017, [url](#); BBC Monitoring, Programme summary of Afghan Bost radio news in Pashto 1630 gmt 6 May 19, 18 May 2019, [url](#); Afghan Islamic Press via BBC Monitoring, Heavy fighting between Islamic State, Taliban in Afghan east, 24 April 2019, [url](#)

⁸⁸ Independent consultant, Skype call, 11 January 2018

threat than terrorist activity. Local traders regularly faced theft, extortion and kidnappings.⁸⁹ Along with Kabul, Herat, Mazar-e Sharif and Kunduz, Jalalabad is among the larger cities experiencing spikes in criminal activity.⁹⁰

2.3. Main anti-government actors in Jalalabad city

A wide range of armed groups are active in the province of Nangarhar.⁹¹ The main actors in the conflict on the side of the insurgents in Nangarhar province and Jalalabad city in particular are the Taliban and ISKP.⁹² In his analysis of attacks on major urban areas in 2018, AAN's Thomas Ruttig noted that it was becoming more difficult to assess claims of responsibility or to attribute responsibility to particular groups.⁹³ Analysis of ACLED data indicated that, for the period under review, the majority of anti-government attacks in Jalalabad were attributed to unidentified armed groups, the remaining almost evenly split between the Taliban and ISKP, while in Surkhrod most were attributed to the Taliban.⁹⁴

2.3.1. ISKP (Islamic State in Khorasan Province)

Despite an overt military and political presence in southern Nangarhar since the summer of 2015, ISKP has failed to capture any of the province's district centres.⁹⁵ During 2016 and until March 2017, ISKP seemed to have a firm hold on Achin, Kot en Nazyan districts in the southeast of the province and Deh Bala district in the southwest.⁹⁶ A spring campaign by Afghan and U.S. special forces targeting ISKP reduced the group's influence to three districts in May 2017: Achin, Deh Bala and Nazyan.⁹⁷ In 2018, the US army and the Afghan special forces continued their offensive against ISKP positions in southern Nangarhar.⁹⁸ UNAMA noted how ISKP, as its territorial expansion was in jeopardy, increasingly relied on asymmetric tactics, such as suicide and complex attacks in Kabul, Herat and Jalalabad cities in 2018.⁹⁹ In 2019, ISKP continued operating in Nangarhar province, where the group still had control over limited areas.¹⁰⁰ But while in 2018 ISKP showed its ability to carry out high-

⁸⁹ DW, Broad-daylight murder in the Afghan city of Jalalabad, 15 February 2018, [url](#)

⁹⁰ The New Arab, Surviving Kunduz: Crime and violence swamp neglected Afghan city once hailed as model of governance, 2 August 2019, [url](#); UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Humanitarian Update (10 – 16 August 2020), 18 August 2020, [url](#)

⁹¹ Weigand, F., Afghanistan's Taliban – Legitimate Jihadists or Coercive Extremists?, Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding, 2017, [url](#), p. 369; Osman, B., Descent into chaos: Why did Nangarhar turn into an IS hub?, AAN, 27 September 2016, [url](#)

⁹² EASO, EASO Country of Origin Information Report: Afghanistan - Security Situation, December 2017, [url](#), pp. 196-198; RFE/RL, Death Toll In Suicide Attack In Eastern Afghanistan Soars To 68, 12 September 2018, [url](#)

⁹³ Ruttig T., Five Questions to Make Sense of the New Peak in Urban Attacks and a Violent Week in Kabul, AAN, 5 February 2018, [url](#)

⁹⁴ Cedoca analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Export tool, Afghanistan – Nangarhar province, update 20 June 2021, [url](#)

⁹⁵ Osman B., The Battle for Mamand: ISKP under strain, but not yet defeated, AAN, 23 May 2017, [url](#)

⁹⁶ Osman B., The Battle for Mamand: ISKP under strain, but not yet defeated, AAN, 23 May 2017, [url](#)

⁹⁷ Osman B., The Battle for Mamand: ISKP under strain, but not yet defeated, AAN, 23 May 2017, [url](#)

⁹⁸ NYT, Taliban surge routs ISIS in Afghanistan, 1 August 2018, [url](#); UNSG, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 10 September 2018, [url](#), p. 6

⁹⁹ UNAMA, Afghanistan. Protection of civilians in armed conflict. Annual Report 2018, 24 February 2019, [url](#), p. 60

¹⁰⁰ UNAMA, Afghanistan. Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict 2019, 22 February 2020, [url](#), p. 36

profile attacks and attacks on so-called soft targets in the cities of Kabul and Jalalabad,¹⁰¹ its capacity to carry out such attacks declined in 2019.¹⁰²

After years of joint military offensives by American and Afghan forces and of increased fighting with the Taliban in 2019, ISKP in Afghanistan has taken heavy blows.¹⁰³ Since the autumn of 2019, military operations simultaneously led by ANDSF, coalition forces and the Taliban have pressured the group into leaving the areas under its control in southern Nangarhar and Kunar.¹⁰⁴ According to Afghanistan analyst Obaid Ali, several actors and factors contributed to ISKP's defeat in Nangarhar: the government and the Taliban, the armed resistance of the local population, the American army and the winter weather. A major obstacle for ISKP in Nangarhar was the local population's resentment against the group.¹⁰⁵

Sources have warned however that ISKP could continue to pose a threat,¹⁰⁶ including through remaining urban or sleeper cells.¹⁰⁷ While UNAMA acknowledged that ISKP in southern Nangarhar experienced a notable setback in 2019 and presented less of a threat there, the mission noted that ISKP had not been completely wiped out¹⁰⁸ and had shown resilience in the past.¹⁰⁹ In March 2020, analyst Obaid Ali wrote that surviving members of ISKP had split up, with one group fleeing to ISKP-controlled areas in Kunar or to Pakistan, another group surrendering to the Afghan government and a few small groups hiding in the high zones of the Spinghar mountains. According to Obaid Ali, ISKP could regroup once the pressure on the group eased but it could take a long time for it to revive its networks, if at all possible.¹¹⁰

ISKP remained active in Nangarhar in 2020.¹¹¹ In early and mid-2020, sources reported on the presence of ISKP in Achin, Deh Bala, Khogyani and Pachieragam districts, notably due to the withdrawal of US troops from several outposts.¹¹² Despite operations by the Afghan Forces targeting

¹⁰¹ Asia Foundation, A Survey of the Afghan People. Afghanistan in 2018, 2018, [url](#), p. 44; Washington Post, Afghan east plagued by ever-growing number of terror attacks, 6 August 2018, [url](#); NYT, Afghan army takes over after ISIS attacks a refugee office, 31 July 2018, [url](#); NYT, U.S. Military Calls ISIS in Afghanistan a Threat to the West. Intelligence Officials Disagree, 2 August 2019, [url](#)

¹⁰² UNAMA, Afghanistan. Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict 2019, 22 February 2020, [url](#), p. 36

¹⁰³ Gandhara (RFE/RL), 31 October 2019, [url](#); UNSG, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 28 February 2019, [url](#), p. 7; UNSG, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 14 June 2019, [url](#), p. 6; UN Security Council, Letter dated 19 May 2020 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council, 27 May 2020, [url](#), para 60

¹⁰⁴ USDOD, Enhancing Security & Stability in Afghanistan, June 2020, [url](#), pp. 2; 28; USDOD, Enhancing Security & Stability in Afghanistan, 23 April 2021, [url](#), p. 8

¹⁰⁵ Ali, O., Hit from Many Sides 1: Unpicking the recent victory against the ISKP in Nangarhar, AAN, 1 March 2020, [url](#)

¹⁰⁶ Landinfo, Sikkerhetssituasjon og konfliktmønster i 2019 [Afghanistan: Security situation and conflict pattern in 2019], 22 January 2020, [url](#), p. 21

¹⁰⁷ NYT, ISIS Is Losing Afghan Territory. That Means Little for Its Victims, 2 December 2019, [url](#); USDOD, Enhancing Security & Stability in Afghanistan, June 2020, [url](#), pp. 2; 28

¹⁰⁸ UNAMA, Afghanistan. Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict 2019, 22 February 2020, [url](#), p. 37

¹⁰⁹ UNAMA, Afghanistan. Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict 2019, 22 February 2020, [url](#), p. 37 ; UN Security Council, Letter dated 19 May 2020 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council, 27 May 2020, [url](#), para 65

¹¹⁰ Ali O., Hit from Many Sides 1: Unpicking the recent victory against the ISKP in Nangarhar, AAN, 1 March 2020, [url](#)

¹¹¹ UNSG, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 18 August 2020, [url](#), para 21

¹¹² Ali, O., Hit from Many Sides 1: Unpicking the recent victory against the ISKP in Nangarhar, AAN, 1 March 2020, [url](#); AAN, Voices from the Districts, the Violence Mapped (1): What has happened since the reduction in violence ended?, 21 March 2020, [url](#); AFP, Afghanistan: à Achin, le retour de la peur après le retrait des troupes

them,¹¹³ ISKP was said to retain sleeper cells mainly in the cities, including Jalalabad,¹¹⁴ thus avoiding easy detection and maintaining a capacity to strike anytime.¹¹⁵ Following the National Directorate of Security's (NDS) announcement of the killing of ISKP's intelligence director near Jalalabad in early August 2020,¹¹⁶ ISKP was able to carry out what was called by the Washington Post, its 'most ambitious operation [...] in Afghanistan since it officially established a branch in the country in 2015', reminiscent of a similar prison attack in Ghazni by the Taliban in 2015.¹¹⁷ According to UNOCHA, this August 2020 prison attack in Jalalabad 'revealed a potential new approach and increase' in the capacities of the insurgents.¹¹⁸ UNOCHA also reported how for several days after the August prison attack, the situation in Jalalabad remained tense and volatile.¹¹⁹ In June 2020, the group's former planner for high-profile attacks in Kabul and other urban areas, Shahab al-Muhajir (alias Sanaullah) was appointed as leader of ISKP.¹²⁰

In February 2021, the UN Security Council highlighted that ISKP had 'degraded combat capability' but was trying to regain some influence. According to UN estimates, ISKP had between 1 000 and 2 200 fighters in Afghanistan and was still present in Achin district. ISKP was also considered a continuing threat in 'urban areas in the east of Afghanistan', among others.¹²¹ The New York Times added that its urban cells worked independently from one another, making their dismantlement harder.¹²² Despite the arrest and/or killing of numerous alleged ISKP fighters and leaders during operations throughout the reporting period, including in Jalalabad,¹²³ Surkhrod¹²⁴ and Behsud,¹²⁵ these efforts were deemed unlikely to remove ISKP and prevent it from conducting deadly attacks.¹²⁶ According to the United

américaines [informal translation, In Achin, fear returns after US troops withdrawal], in Yahoo ! Actualités, 14 October 2020, [url](#)

¹¹³ UN Security Council, Letter dated 19 May 2020 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council, 27 May 2020, [url](#), para 72

¹¹⁴ BBC, Islamic State group claims deadly attack on Afghanistan prison, 3 August 2020, [url](#); NYT, Afghan Journalist Is Killed in Latest Attack on Media Figures, 10 December 2020, [url](#); NYT, Foes in Afghan War See a Common Threat of Islamic State's Return, 22 March 2021, [url](#)

¹¹⁵ USDOD, Enhancing Security & Stability in Afghanistan, 23 April 2021, [url](#), p. 12; Foreign Policy, Jalalabad Jailbreak Highlights Resurgence of 'Eliminated' ISIS, 7 August 2020, [url](#)

¹¹⁶ Al Jazeera, Afghan troops retake prison attacked by ISIL group, 29 killed, 4 August 2020, [url](#)

¹¹⁷ Washington Post (The), Attack on Afghan prison ends with dozens dead, 4 August 2020, [url](#)

¹¹⁸ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2021, 19 December 2020, [url](#), p. 6

¹¹⁹ UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Humanitarian Update (27 July – 2 August 2020), 7 August 2020, [url](#); UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Humanitarian Update (3 – 9 August 2020), 12 August 2020, [url](#)

¹²⁰ UN Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, Twelfth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2557 (2020) concerning the Taliban and other associated individuals and entities constituting a threat to the peace stability and security of Afghanistan, 28 April 2021, [url](#), para 65

¹²¹ UN Security Council, Letter dated 21 January 2021 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities addressed to the President of the Security Council, 3 February 2021, [url](#), pp. 14-15

¹²² NYT, Foes in Afghan War See a Common Threat of Islamic State's Return, 22 March 2021, [url](#)

¹²³ Pajhwok Afghan News, Daesh intelligence chief killed in Nangarhar raid, 2 August 2020, [url](#); Pajhwok Afghan News, Daesh chief justice killed in NDS operation: Source, 18 August 2020, [url](#); Pajhwok Afghan News, Daesh commander among 4 killed in Jalalabad, 23 September 2020, [url](#); Pajhwok Afghan News, Senior Daesh members among 4 held in Nangarhar, 1 November 2020, [url](#); Pajhwok Afghan News, Daesh rebels among 4 detained in Nangarhar raids, 9 December 2020, [url](#); Pajhwok Afghan News, Daesh recruitment head detained in Jalalabad, 28 December 2020, [url](#); Khaama Press, NDS' special operatives kill 7 Daesh militants, ANP members killed, 15 February 2021, [url](#)

¹²⁴ Pajhwok Afghan News, Daesh media wing in-charge among 7 arrested in Nangarhar 3 October 2020, [url](#); Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban, Daesh deputy district chiefs held in Nangarhar, 25 October 2020, [url](#); Pajhwok Afghan News, Commander among 9 Daesh suspects held in Nangarhar, 28 April 2021, [url](#)

¹²⁵ BBC Monitoring, Programme summary of Afghan Sharq TV news in Pashto 1530 gmt 5 Oct 20, 14 October 2020, [url](#);

¹²⁶ VoA, IS Khorasan Able to Stage Attacks Despite Depleted Leadership, Experts Say, 19 August 2020, [url](#)

States Department of Defence (USDOD), ISKP regained strength in the first quarter of 2021, maintained a steady operational tempo and retained its ability to carry out attacks in Kabul and other major cities.¹²⁷ Sources noted an increase in attacks claimed by or attributed to ISKP in the first quarter of 2021, with many occurring in the eastern provinces, including Nangarhar¹²⁸ and in Jalalabad in particular.¹²⁹

In March 2021, the New York Times reported on 'poor and sometimes educated radicalized' urban residents joining ISKP, notably in Jalalabad.¹³⁰ Jalalabad's Nangarhar University was among the three universities which provided ISKP with the most recruits.¹³¹ The group was also said to recruit students of Gulf states-backed Salafist madrasas in Nangarhar and Kunar.¹³²

Sources have pointed to the damage ISKP has caused in Afghanistan. The brutal bombings and numerous civilian deaths have left Afghans with a trauma that continues to reverberate despite the recent downsizing of the group.¹³³

2.3.2. Taliban

According to a 2017 Landinfo report, the Taliban's position in Nangarhar was weaker, compared to other (insurgent) groups.¹³⁴ This was also the assessment of AAN's Obaid Ali in March 2020, who pointed out that they had not been able to prevent ISKP from setting up bases in Nangarhar and had to mobilize fighters from other provinces to expel ISKP.¹³⁵ However, according to an Afghanistan analyst interviewed in January 2020 by Sweden's Migration Agency, the Taliban were able to consolidate their presence in areas that they had cleared from ISKP and had thus become the strongest armed group in Nangarhar.¹³⁶

Obaid Ali noted that, after their respective operations against ISKP in late 2019, both the Taliban and the Afghan government had expanded their control in Nangarhar – the former in the 'remote, mountainous parts where ISKP had most of its remaining bases', the latter in lower-altitude areas. According to Ali, as of March 2020, the government 'almost entirely' controlled 10 out of Nangarhar's 22 districts, including Behsud. The Taliban were controlling the largest part of four districts, including Surkhrod, with the ANDSF only present in the district centres and the adjacent villages.¹³⁷ Jalalabad, capital of Nangarhar province, was under government control.¹³⁸ A map published by the Al Khattabi

¹²⁷ USDOD, Lead Inspector General (IC) for Overseas Contingency Operations, Operation Freedom's Sentinel - Report to the United States Congress 1 January - 31 March 2021, 18 May 2021, [url](#), p. 22

¹²⁸ UNSG, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 12 March 2021, [url](#), para 22

¹²⁹ HRW, Afghanistan: Targeted Killings of Civilians Escalate, 6 March 2021, [url](#)

¹³⁰ NYT, Foes in Afghan War See a Common Threat of Islamic State's Return, 22 March 2021, [url](#)

¹³¹ Osman, B., Bourgeois Jihad: Why Young, Middle-Class Afghans Join the Islamic State, USIP, 1 June 2020, [url](#), p. 11

¹³² FP, In Afghanistan, Religious Schools Are a Breeding Ground for Islamic State Influence, 24 January 2020, [url](#)

¹³³ NYT, ISIS Is Losing Afghan Territory. That Means Little for Its Victims, 2 December 2019, [url](#)

¹³⁴ Landinfo, Temanotat Afghanistan: Sikkerhetssituasjonen i den østlige regionen [Thematic note Afghanistan: The security situation in the eastern region], 2 October 2017, p. 12, [url](#)

¹³⁵ Ali, O., Hit from Many Sides 1: Unpicking the recent victory against the ISKP in Nangarhar, 1 March 2020, [url](#)

¹³⁶ Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Säkerhetsläget i Afghanistan (version 2.0.) [Security situation in Afghanistan], 7 April 2020, [url](#), p. 41

¹³⁷ Ali, O., Hit from Many Sides 1: Unpicking the recent victory against the ISKP in Nangarhar, AAN, 1 March 2020, [url](#)

¹³⁸ USDOD, Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan - June 2020, 1 July 2020, [url](#), pp. 2, 18; USIP, Afghanistan Study Group Final Report, February 2021, [url](#), p. 37; Pajhwok Afghan News, Govt, Taliban Make Exaggerated Claims of Territory They Control, 12 February 2021, [url](#); USDOD, Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan - December 2020, 23 April 2021, [url](#), p. 33; CNN, 'No One Can Dare Ask Why' What It's Like to Live

center on 23 June 2021 showed Behsud and Jalalabad districts as 85 % to 100 % under government control and Surkhrod as 70 % to 85 % under Taliban control.¹³⁹

While Obaid Ali expressed doubts in March 2020 about the Taliban's capability to stand up against ISKP if the latter were to remobilize its fighters, and to increase their control of territory in Nangarhar at the expense of the government,¹⁴⁰ the group appeared to take advantage of the withdrawal of US troops from several outposts. By mid-2020 the Taliban were reported to resume or increase their activities in districts such as Surkhrod,¹⁴¹ which led some civilians and members of the security forces to join them – not only in rural areas, but also in Nangarhar universities.¹⁴²

In May 2020, the UN Security Council listed Mullah Mohammad Essa, originally affiliated to the Peshawar Shura network, as the shadow governor of Nangarhar. He was appointed after the 'reshuffle' of the Taliban government structure ahead of the 2020 fighting season.¹⁴³ However, he was reportedly replaced by Mawlawi Neda Mohammad in early 2021.¹⁴⁴

In March 2021, the Afghan MoD informed the press about the arrest of the Taliban's intelligence chief for Nangarhar province.¹⁴⁵

A survey by Pajhwok Afghan News conducted from November 2020 until February 2021¹⁴⁶ estimated that 86.31 % of Nangarhar's territory (1.5 million inhabitants) was under government control, 13.27 % (189 712 inhabitants) under Taliban control, and less than 1 % (6 009 inhabitants) controlled by neither side.¹⁴⁷

As of 11 June 2021, an assessment by the Long War Journal (LWJ) presented in a frequently updated map and based on open-source information indicated Surkhrod district as 'Taliban-controlled', Behsud as 'contested' and Jalalabad as 'government-controlled'. For its Surkhrod assessment, LWJ referred to the Taliban defeating ISKP in late 2019 and shutting down a health clinic in Surkhrod in January 2020. Regarding Behsud, LWJ stated that 'the Taliban continues to launch attacks on Afghan security forces in the district'.¹⁴⁸

in a Town Where Everything Is Controlled by the Taliban, 14 April 2021, [url](#); RFE/RL (Gandhara), Taliban Making 'Strategic' Military Gains in Afghanistan as Foreign Forces Pull Out, 1 June 2021, [url](#)

¹³⁹ Al Khattabi Center (KRW), أفغانستان في السيطرة لتوزع خريطة أحدث [unofficial translation: Latest map of distribution of control in Afghanistan], 23 June 2021, [url](#)

¹⁴⁰ Ali, O., Hit from Many Sides 1: Unpicking the recent victory against the ISKP in Nangarhar, AAN, 1 March 2020, [url](#)

¹⁴¹ BBC Monitoring, Programme summary of Afghan Sharq TV news in Pashto 1530 gmt 27 Jul 20, 1 August 2020, [url](#)

¹⁴² FP, Resurgent Taliban Bode Ill for Afghan Peace, 7 July 2020, [url](#); FP, Feeling Abandoned by Kabul, Many Rural Afghans Flock to Join the Taliban, 24 September 2020, [url](#)

¹⁴³ UN Security Council, Letter dated 19 May 2020 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council, 27 May 2020, [url](#), pp. 8-9, 27

¹⁴⁴ Tolonews, Taliban Reshuffles Key Posts as New Fighting Season Nears, 6 March 2021, [url](#)

¹⁴⁵ Lead IG, Operation Freedom's Sentinel Lead Inspector General Report to the United States Congress. January 1, 2021–March 31, 2021, 18 May 2021, [url](#), p. 24

¹⁴⁶ For this survey Pajhwok Afghan News interviewed (through telephonic interviews or by distributing questionnaires) a total of 1 266 respondents, randomly selected across the country.

¹⁴⁷ Pajhwok Afghan News, Govt, Taliban Make Exaggerated Claims of Territory They Control, 12 February 2021, [url](#)

¹⁴⁸ LWJ, Mapping Taliban Control in Afghanistan, n.d., [url](#) The source, however, does not specify when and which information of the aforementioned map was last updated.

2.3.3. Unidentified armed groups

All parties to the conflict have been reporting their attacks much more sparingly since the signing of the Doha Agreement between the Taliban and the US in February 2020. This has resulted in a strong increase in unattributed insurgent attacks in urban areas.¹⁴⁹ According to AAN analyst Kate Clark, the war in Afghanistan became a little 'murkier' in 2020. Clark suggested this 'may point to the Taleban carrying out attacks without wanting to appear to do so, or to an actual muddying of the waters, with elements within the Taleban operating without explicit permission from the leadership or with ISKP now carrying out attacks without claiming them'.¹⁵⁰

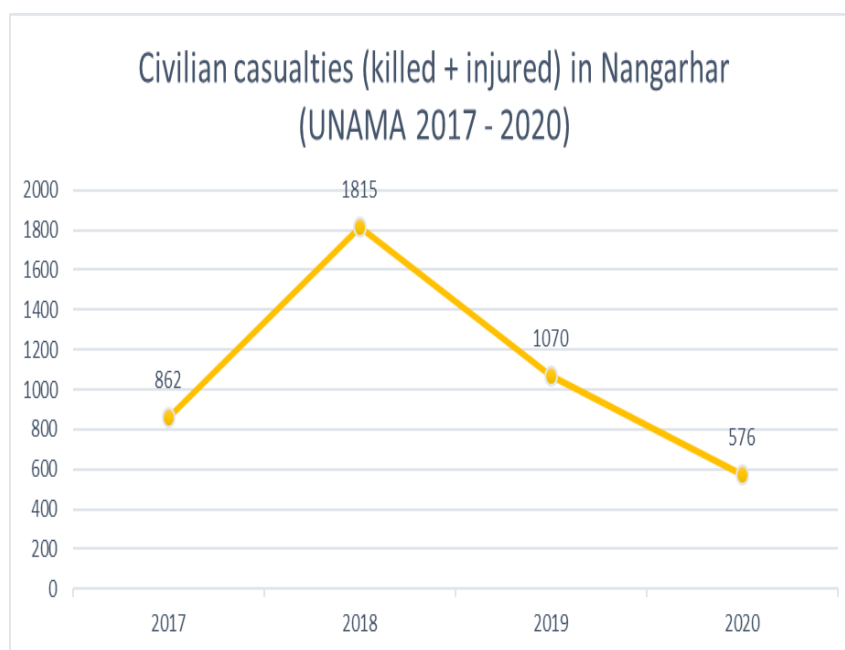
¹⁴⁹ Clark, K., Behind the Statistics: Drop in Civilian Casualties Masks Increased Taleban Violence, AAN, 27 October 2020, [url](#); HRW, Afghanistan: Targeted Killings of Civilians Escalate, 6 March 2021, [url](#)

¹⁵⁰ Clark, K., War in Afghanistan in 2020: Just as Much Violence, but No One Wants to Talk about It, AAN, 16 August 2020, [url](#)

3. Recent security trends in Nangarhar and in particular in Jalalabad, Behsud and Surkhrod districts

In his 2020 periodical reports to the General Assembly, the UN Secretary-General (UNSG) described the general security situation in Afghanistan alternately as '(highly) volatile' and 'unpredictable'.¹⁵¹ In 2020 and early 2021, the eastern region was the region where the second or third highest number of security incidents were recorded.¹⁵² Documenting violence trends in the first quarter of 2021, SIGAR reported on the continuation of targeted killings of Afghan government officials and journalists, suspected to have been perpetrated by the Taliban, ISKP or other unidentified groups.¹⁵³

3.1. Civilian casualties



Following a sharp increase in civilian casualties in Nangarhar province in 2018, UNAMA documented a decrease in the number of civilian casualties in 2019 and a further decline in 2020. Despite a 46 % decrease in civilian casualties in 2020, Nangarhar province still had the third highest number of civilian casualties in Afghanistan, after Kabul and Balkh, with 576 civilian casualties (190 killed and 386 injured). Leading causes of civilian casualties were suicide attacks, followed by non-suicide IEDs and ground engagements.¹⁵⁴

Graph 1. Number of civilian casualties (killed and injured) documented by UNAMA in Nangarhar province from 2017 until 2020.

¹⁵¹ UNSG, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 17 June 2020, [url](#), para 18; UNSG, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 18 August 2020, [url](#), para 18; UNSG, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 9 December 2020, [url](#), para 18;

¹⁵² UNSG, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 17 June 2020, [url](#), para 19; UNSG, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 18 August 2020, [url](#), para 19; UNSG, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 9 December 2020, [url](#), para 19; UNSG, 15 June 2021, [url](#), para 17

¹⁵³ SIGAR, Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, 30 April 2021, [url](#), p. 59

¹⁵⁴ UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2020, 23 February 2021, [url](#), p. 110

The graph above shows data on civilian casualties taken from UNAMA's annual reports. In its reports, UNAMA states that it applied a definition of civilian that reflects international humanitarian law:

'Civilian: For the purposes of this report and the application of the principle of distinction under international humanitarian law, civilians are any persons who are not members of military/paramilitary forces or members of organized armed groups with continuous combat function and are protected against direct attacks unless and for such time as they directly participate in hostilities. Civilians participating directly in hostilities are not counted as 'civilian casualties' in this report. Members of law enforcement agencies lose their protection as civilians when they function as part of the armed forces or directly participate in hostilities. For members of police units that do not have continuous combat functions, the use of force in self-defence is not considered to result in a loss of protection as a civilian. In Afghanistan, UNAMA considers as civilian police personnel who are carrying out law enforcement functions and who are not directly participating in hostilities or involved in counter-insurgency operations.

Civilian Casualties: Killed or injured civilians. UNAMA documents civilian casualties resulting from conflict related violence, including casualties caused by explosive remnants of war. It does not document casualties where the civilian(s) was (were) directly participating in hostilities at the time of death or injury, nor does it document the death or injury of individuals protected from attack under international humanitarian law who are not considered to be civilians, such as persons hors de combat or the medical and religious personnel of the armed forces. UNAMA considers civilians 'injured' when they require medical treatment for physical injury – through admission to healthcare facilities or by receiving medical assistance from medically-trained personnel. Injuries do not include shock or non-physical effects or consequences of incidents, such as psychological trauma.¹⁵⁵

No specific data on the number of civilian casualties due to the conflict on individual district level were available. Nor was there any information on the share of security personnel or insurgents among the victims.

In 2020, UNAMA documented a countrywide decrease in the number of civilian casualties attributed to ISKP for the second year in a row and the lowest number since the insurgent group first formally appeared in Afghanistan in 2015. Over 95 % of all civilian casualties attributed to ISKP in 2020 were caused by mass-casualty incidents in Kabul and Jalalabad and a suicide attack in Kuz Kunar district.¹⁵⁶

UNAMA expressed its concern over the continuing trend of AGE attacks deliberately targeting civilians in 2020, including attacks on members of the judiciary, healthcare workers and facilities, education-related personnel and facilities as well as civilians at educational institutions, aid workers, human rights defenders and civil society activists, journalists and civilians working for the civilian government administration.¹⁵⁷ In the first quarter of 2021, UNAMA expressed its continued concern about the deliberate targeting of civilians by AGEs, particularly through targeted killings and including a trend of targeting women.¹⁵⁸ Several such incidents were documented in Jalalabad and were generally included in the violent events coded by ACLED as *violence against civilians* (see under sub-chapter [3.3.2](#)).

¹⁵⁵ UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict - Annual Report 2020, 23 February 2021, [url](#), pp. 9, 105

¹⁵⁶ UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict - Annual Report 2020, 23 February 2021, [url](#), pp. 18, 43

¹⁵⁷ UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict - Annual Report 2020, 23 February 2021, [url](#), pp. 14, 18-19, 53, 54-55

¹⁵⁸ UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict - First Quarter Update: 1 January to 31 March 2021, 14 April 2021, [url](#), p. 3

[Incident types](#)). According to UNAMA, the deliberate targeting of civil society leaders, human rights defenders and journalists in many locations across the country, and the absence of claims of responsibility by perpetrators, has generated a climate of fear among the civilian population¹⁵⁹ and has paralysed many parts of society.¹⁶⁰

According to a diplomatic source interviewed by the Norwegian COI unit Landinfo in October 2019, ISKP was behind several targeted killings in Jalalabad city. Its targets included tribal leaders, religious leaders and businessmen.¹⁶¹ In addition to the incidents of *violence against civilians* recorded by ACLED, UNAMA also documented the shooting and killing of a Sufi cleric by ISKP in Jalalabad on 3 December 2020, targeted for his religious beliefs.¹⁶²

Some incidents that were coded by ACLED as other types of events - other than *violence against civilians* - and were mainly directed against specific targets, also caused collateral damage among civilians.¹⁶³ This will be further addressed and illustrated by examples in sub-chapter [3.3.2. Incident types](#)

At times it was unclear who was targeted in an incident although it resulted in civilian casualties, as in some incidents involving IEDs such as the explosion of a magnetic bomb attached to a rickshaw in Jalalabad's PD9 on 26 February 2021¹⁶⁴ or a roadside bomb explosion in Jalalabad's PD5 on 18 March 2021 that killed two civilians and wounded eight others.¹⁶⁵

3.2. Geographical spread of violence in Afghanistan and in Nangarhar province

The graphs used in subchapters 3.2. and 3.3. are based on violent events coded by ACLED in Nangarhar province between 1 February 2020 and 31 May 2021.¹⁶⁶ These are incidents ACLED categorises as *battles*, *explosions/remote violence* en *violence against civilians*. ACLED also includes other incidents in its database, under the categories *riots*, *protests* en *strategic developments*. Those are not included in this report. A full overview of the different types and subtypes of incidents, with their definitions, can be found in a note by Cedoca on ACLED's methodology.¹⁶⁷

According to ACLED data, Nangarhar ranks fourth in terms of provinces with the highest number of security incidents in Afghanistan between 1 February 2020 and 31 May 2021, with 641 violent events representing 6 % of the total number in Afghanistan in this period. Nangarhar was also ranked among the four provinces with the highest number of security incidents in Afghanistan in the different United Nations Secretary General's (UNSG) periodic reports throughout 2020 and early 2021.¹⁶⁸

¹⁵⁹ UNAMA, Special Report: Killing of Human Rights Defenders, Journalists and Media Workers in Afghanistan 2018-2021, February 2021, [url](#), pp. 3, 4, 9, 10, 15, 25

¹⁶⁰ UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict - Annual Report 2020, 23 February 2021, [url](#), p. 11

¹⁶¹ Landinfo, Sikkerhetssituasjon og konfliktmønster i 2019 [Afghanistan: Security situation and conflict pattern in 2019], 22 January 2020, [url](#), pp. 21-22

¹⁶² UNAMA, Afghanistan. Protection of civilians in armed conflict. Annual Report 2020, 23 February 2021, [url](#), p. 56

¹⁶³ Cedoca analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Export tool, Afghanistan - Nangarhar province, update 20 June 2021, [url](#); BBC Monitoring, Afghan media highlights 11 October 2019, 12 October 2019, [url](#)

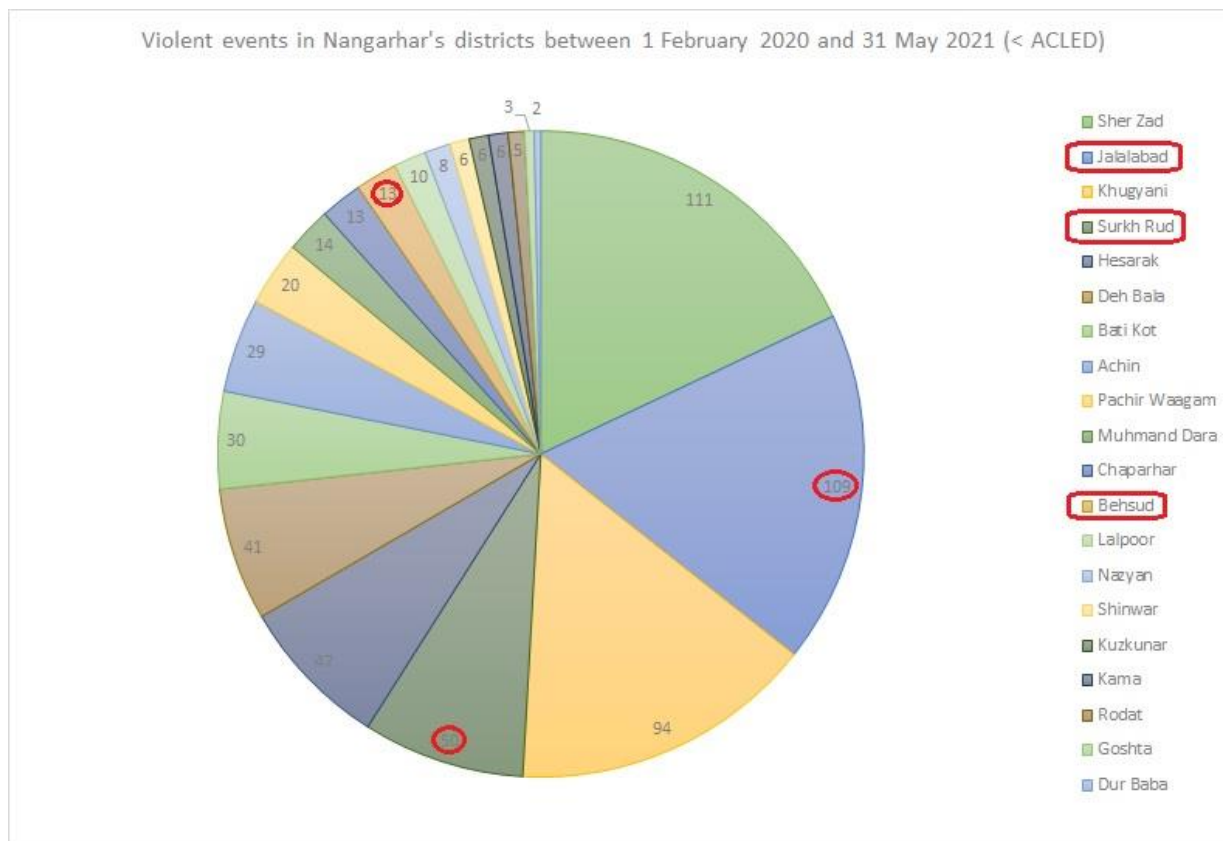
¹⁶⁴ Pajhwok Afghan News, Magnetic bomb blast killed driver destroy Rakshaw in Jalalabad, 26 February 2021, [url](#)

¹⁶⁵ NYT, Afghan War Casualty Report: March 2021, 4 March 2021 (updated 1 April 2021), [url](#)

¹⁶⁶ Cedoca analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Export tool, Afghanistan - Nangarhar province, update 20 June 2021, [url](#)

¹⁶⁷ CGVS / CGRA - Cedoca, Nota. ACLED: methodologie, 21 May 2019, [url](#)

¹⁶⁸ UNSG, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 17 March 2020, para 21, [url](#); UNSG, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 18 August



Graph 2. Violent events in Nangarhar in 2020, per district. Graph by Cedoca based on ACLED data.

Sherzad, Jalalabad and Khogyani districts together accounted for just over half of all security incidents ACLED recorded in Nangarhar province between 1 February 2020 and 31 May 2021, as shown in graph 2.¹⁶⁹ Surkhrod accounted for 8 % (50 incidents) and Behsud for 2 % (13 incidents).

It is important to note that the breakdown of incidents per administrative unit level 2 (districts) does not include the incidents coded by ACLED under geo-precision code 3, as ACLED has no information about the location of these incidents within the province.¹⁷⁰

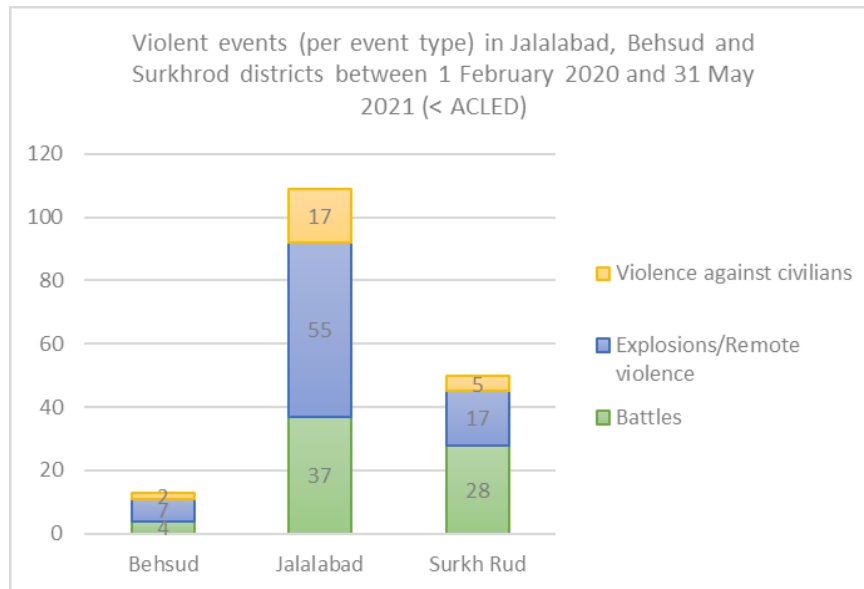
2020, para 19, [url](#); UNSG, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 9 December 2020, para 19, [url](#); UNSG, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 12 March 2021, para 18, [url](#); UNSG, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 June 2021, [url](#), para 17

¹⁶⁹ Cedoca analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Export tool, Afghanistan – Nangarhar province, update 20 June 2021, [url](#)

¹⁷⁰ ACLED, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) Codebook, 10 April 2019, [url](#), p. 29

3.3. Incident data and type of violence

3.3.1. Incident figures



Graph 3. Number of violent events in Jalalabad, Behsud and Surkhrod districts (Nangarhar) between 1 February 2020 and 31 May 2021. Graph by Cedoca based on ACLED data.

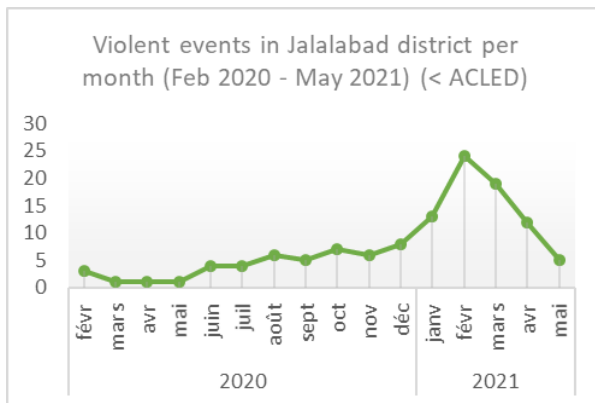
Between 1 February 2020 and 31 May 2021, ACLED collected data on 109 violent events in Jalalabad district, ranking it second in Nangarhar province in terms of number of incidents (see graph 2).¹⁷¹ The majority of those incidents were coded as *explosions/remote violence*¹⁷², as indicated in graph 3. In that same period, ACLED collected data on 50 violent events in Surkhrod district, where the majority of the incidents were coded as *battles*¹⁷³ and 13 violent events in Behsud district.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹ 24 events (19 battles and 5 remote violence) coded by ACLED under Jalalabad district, but for which ACLED has no information about the location within Nangarhar province (geo-precision code 3), were not included in this graph

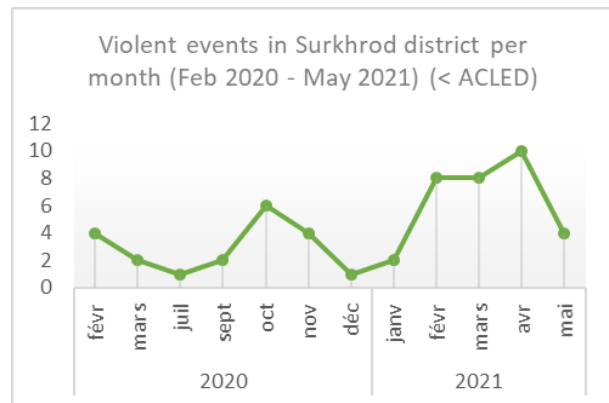
¹⁷² According to ACLED these include 'one-sided violent events in which the tool for engaging in conflict creates asymmetry by taking away the ability of the target to engage or defend themselves and their location.' (ACLED, ACLED Definitions of Political Violence and Protest, 11 April 2019, [url](#), p. 9)

¹⁷³ ACLED describes battles as "a violent interaction between two politically organized armed groups at a particular time and location." (ACLED, ACLED Definitions of Political Violence and Protest, 11 April 2019, [url](#), p. 7)

¹⁷⁴ Cedoca analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Export tool, Afghanistan – Nangarhar province, update 20 June 2021, [url](#)



Graph 4. Number of violent events in Jalalabad district per month between 1 February and 31 May 2021. Graph by Cedoca based on ACLED data.



Graph 5. Number of violent events in Surkhrod district per month between 1 February and 31 May 2021. Graph by Cedoca based on ACLED data.

In February 2021, Pajhwok reported that out of 24 security incidents the news agency had registered in Nangarhar province in the preceding month, 15 occurred in Jalalabad. Residents expressed concern about the worsening security situation in Nangarhar province and in Jalalabad in particular, saying fear of explosions and targeted killings made it difficult to leave their homes and caused psychological distress.¹⁷⁵ In its 1-7 March 2021 bulletin, UNOCHA noted that the 'overall security situation in the east especially Jalalabad City remained volatile.'¹⁷⁶

While a local student interviewed by AAN in April 2020 described the situation in Surkhrod as 'relatively calm' since ISKP was ousted from the region,¹⁷⁷ by the Summer of 2020 another resident of Surkhrod living near an ANDSF checkpoint described the situation since the Doha agreement as worse, with Taliban attacks on the checkpoint occurring more frequently.¹⁷⁸ Partly because they no longer had to fear airstrikes, the Taliban were reported to have resumed or increased their activities in districts such as Surkhrod by July 2020.¹⁷⁹ In some of its weekly bulletins covering March and April 2021, UNOCHA reported armed clashes between ANDSF and insurgents in some of Nangarhar's districts, including Surkhrod.¹⁸⁰ Tolonews also noted a surge in Taliban attacks in April 2021 in various regions of Afghanistan and mentioned Surkhrod as one of the districts affected in Nangarhar province.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁵ Pajhwok Afghan News, Nangarhar: 103 people suffer casualties in a month, 16 February 2021, [url](#)

¹⁷⁶ UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Weekly Humanitarian Update (1 - 7 March 2021), 10 March 2021, [url](#)

¹⁷⁷ Clark, K., Voices from the Districts, the Violence Mapped (2): Assessing the conflict a month after the US-Taliban agreement, AAN, 8 April 2020, [url](#)

¹⁷⁸ Quilty A., Taliban Opportunism and ANSF Frustration: How the Afghan conflict has changed since the Doha agreement, AAN, 12 October 2020, [url](#)

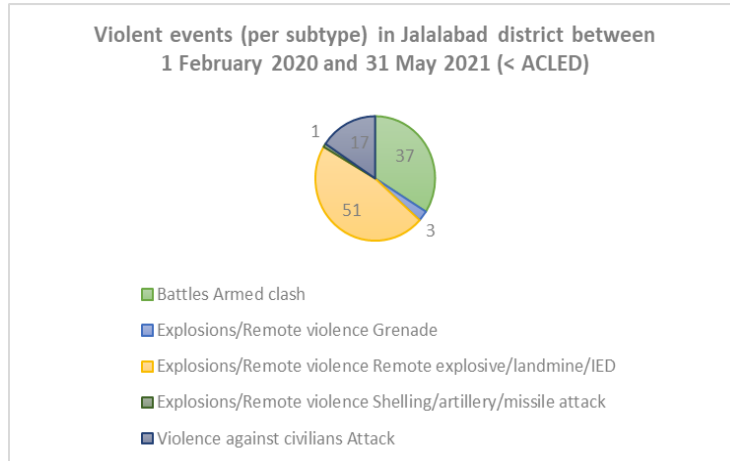
¹⁷⁹ FP, Resurgent Taliban Bode Ill for Afghan Peace, 7 July 2020, [url](#)

¹⁸⁰ UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Humanitarian Update (29 March - 4 April 2021), 7 April 2021, [url](#); UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Weekly Humanitarian Update (12 - 18 April 2021), 21 April 2021, [url](#)

¹⁸¹ Tolonews, Taliban Attacks Rising Despite Intl Efforts for Peace, 20 April 2021, [url](#)

3.3.2. Incident types

3.3.2.1. Jalalabad



In a conversation with Cedoca in March 2017, a Western security analyst in Kabul called the use of IEDs the main tactic of the insurgents in Jalalabad.¹⁸² This was also reflected in ACLED's data for the period under review in this report. Within Nangarhar province, Jalalabad ranked first in terms of number of incidents coded as *remote explosive/landmine/IED*¹⁸³. Out of the 55 incidents of *explosions/remote violence in Jalalabad*, ACLED coded 51 as *remote explosive/landmine/IED*, representing nearly half of all incidents in Jalalabad and 37 % of such incidents registered in all of Nangarhar province.

Graph 6. Violent events (per sub-type) in Jalalabad district between 1 February 2020 and 31 May 2021. Graph by Cedoca based on ACLED data.

These incidents were mainly attacks against security personnel¹⁸⁴ but also included attacks against other targets, such as government officials¹⁸⁵ and buildings,¹⁸⁶ local community leaders,¹⁸⁷ employees of Afghanistan's power distributor company, Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat (DABS),¹⁸⁸ or medical staff¹⁸⁹.¹⁹⁰ While the insurgents typically use IEDs against specific targets, some of those attacks cause collateral damage among civilians.¹⁹¹ For example, two passers-by were injured in Surkh Diwal area

¹⁸² Western security officer, senior analyst, meeting, 17 March 2017. This contact explicitly wished to remain anonymous.

¹⁸³ According to ACLED these include incidents during which 'remotely- or victim-activated devices are detonated in the absence of any other engagement. Examples include landmines, improvised explosive devices (IEDs) whether alone or attached to a vehicle, or any other sort of remotely detonated or triggered explosive. Unexploded ordinances (UXO) also fall under this category.' Not included in this category are Suicide Vehicle-borne Improvised Explosive Device (SVBIED) and the safe defusal of an explosive or its accidental detonation by the actor who planted it. (ACLED, Codebook, 10 April 2019, [url](#))

¹⁸⁴ NYT, Afghan War Casualty Report: December 2020, 10 December 2020 (updated 31 December 2020), [url](#); NYT, Afghan War Casualty Report: January 2021, 7 January 2021 (updated 28 January 2021), [url](#); NYT, Afghan War Casualty Report: February 2021, 4 February 2021 (updated 25 February 2021), [url](#); Khaama Press, Nangarhar Blast Claims 1, Hurts 3, 15 September 2020, [url](#); Tolonews, Policeman Killed in Nangarhar Roadside Mine Blast, 18 May 2021, [url](#)

¹⁸⁵ Reporterly, Surkhrod District Deputy Succumbs To Blast Injury In Jalalabad, 2 July 2020, [url](#)

¹⁸⁶ Tolonews, One Civilian Killed, Another Wounded in Nangarhar Twin Blasts, 21 March 2021, [url](#)

¹⁸⁷ NYT, Afghan War Casualty Report: March 2021, 4 March 2021 (updated 1 April 2021), [url](#); Khaama Press, Explosion in Helmand claims gov't prosecutor, 6 March 2021, [url](#)

¹⁸⁸ Tolonews, 6 Wounded as Blast Targets DABS Employees in Nangarhar, 29 April 2021, [url](#)

¹⁸⁹ NYT, Afghan War Casualty Report: March 2021, 4 March 2021 (updated 1 April 2021), [url](#); Tolonews, Female Doctor Killed in Nangarhar Blast, 4 March 2021, [url](#)

¹⁹⁰ Cedoca analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Export tool, Afghanistan – Nangarhar province, update 20 June 2021, [url](#)

¹⁹¹ NYT, Afghan War Casualty Report: December 2020, 10 December 2020 (updated 31 December 2020), [url](#); NYT, Afghan War Casualty Report: March 2021, 4 March 2021 (updated 1 April 2021), [url](#); NYT, Afghan War Casualty Report: April 2021, 8 April 2021 (updated 30 April 2021), [url](#); Pajhwok Afghan News, Police officer killed in Jalalabad gun attack, 9 July 2020, [url](#)

of Jalalabad's PD9 on 2 January 2021 when a Special Police forces vehicle hit a landmine.¹⁹² A civilian was killed in an IED blast targeting the vehicle of a Nangarhar provincial council member in February 2021.¹⁹³ Several explosions in different parts of Jalalabad on 21 March 2021 caused several civilian casualties.¹⁹⁴ An explosion in Jalalabad's PD2 on 7 April 2021 occurred in a crowded area and caused at least a dozen civilian casualties, even if initial reports indicated that police forces were targeted.¹⁹⁵

Other incidents coded as *explosions/remote violence* included three grenade attacks, two of which caused civilian casualties,¹⁹⁶ and one where the Taliban claimed to have fired missiles at a military base in Jalalabad in February 2020.¹⁹⁷

No air strikes were carried out in Jalalabad district, according to ACLED data.¹⁹⁸

Unlike in previous years and in line with a more recent countrywide trend, Jalalabad was less affected by suicide bombings and mass casualty attacks in the reporting period. No suicide bombings were registered by ACLED between 1 February 2020 and 31 May 2021.¹⁹⁹ However, when analysing ACLED's data, it is important to keep in mind that:

"Both event types and sub-event types are hierarchical to accommodate for concurrent tactics within the same event, in order to avoid double-counting. This means that an Explosions/Remote violence event (e.g. an air strike) occurring within the same context as a ground Battle event would be coded as one Battles event. Or a Violence against civilians event (e.g. attack on a civilian) occurring with the same context as an Explosions/Remote violence event (e.g. use of a remote explosive) would be coded as one Explosions/Remote violence event. A similar structure holds for sub-event types. Shelling occurring simultaneously as an air strike being dropped would be coded as Air/drone strike as it is higher on the hierarchy than Shelling/artillery/missile attack. Or a civilian abducted and then killed would be coded as Attack because it is higher on the hierarchy than Abduction/forced disappearance. The event types and sub-event types noted above are presented in hierarchical order."²⁰⁰

A notable example was the August 2020 prison attack in Jalalabad for which ISKP claimed responsibility. This attack began with the explosion of a (suicide) VBIED at the prison entrance gate on 2 August 2020 and ended in a 20-hour clash with security forces.²⁰¹ This incident was not coded by ACLED under *explosions/remote violence*, but as *armed clash* under *battles*.²⁰²

¹⁹² Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 civilians, 3 security men wounded in Nangarhar blast, 2 January 2021, [url](#)

¹⁹³ Khaama Press, IED explosions rock Kabul, Nangarhar provinces, 27 February 2021, [url](#)

¹⁹⁴ UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Weekly Humanitarian Update (15 - 21 March 2021), 24 March 2021, [url](#); Tolonews, One Civilian Killed, Another Wounded in Nangarhar Twin Blasts, 21 March 2021, [url](#)

¹⁹⁵ Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 civilians killed, 18 injured in Nangarhar explosion, 7 April 2021, [url](#); Tolonews, Two Civilians Killed, Several Wounded in Nangarhar Blast: Sources 7 April 2021, [url](#)

¹⁹⁶ Pajhwok Afghan News, 3 wounded as grenades lobbed into Nangarhar house, 5 May 2021, [url](#)

¹⁹⁷ Cedoca analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Export tool, Afghanistan – Nangarhar province, update 20 June 2021, [url](#)

¹⁹⁸ Cedoca analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Export tool, Afghanistan – Nangarhar province, update 20 June 2021, [url](#)

¹⁹⁹ Cedoca analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Export tool, Afghanistan – Nangarhar province, update 20 June 2021, [url](#)

²⁰⁰ ACLED, ACLED Definitions of Political Violence and Protest, 10 April 2019, [url](#), p. 5

²⁰¹ UNSG, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 18 August 2020, [url](#), para 21; USDOD, Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan, 23 April 2021, [url](#), p. 9; Pajhwok Afghan News, 73 people suffer casualties in Nangarhar attack, 3 August 2020, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Afghan troops retake prison attacked by ISIL group, 29 killed, 4 August 2020, [url](#)

²⁰² Cedoca analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Export tool, Afghanistan – Nangarhar province, update 20 June 2021, [url](#)

About one third of the violent events in Jalalabad were coded by ACLED as *battles* and more specifically as *armed clash*²⁰³. These were almost exclusively attacks by the Taliban, ISKP or unidentified AGEs targeting members of the Afghan police²⁰⁴ or NDS,²⁰⁵ checkpoints, government personnel or judicial staff and to a lesser extent they also included operations and attacks carried out by the ANDSF against insurgents. As pointed out earlier, the ISKP-claimed²⁰⁶ prison attack in Jalalabad on 2-3 August 2020 that caused 59 civilian casualties²⁰⁷ and enabled the escape of hundreds of prisoners,²⁰⁸ was also coded as *armed clash* by ACLED.²⁰⁹

All seventeen incidents of *violence against civilians*²¹⁰ in Jalalabad were coded by ACLED as *attacks*. They accounted for 44 % of all incidents of this type in Nangarhar province and included the (attempted) killing by insurgents of individuals, such as government officials,²¹¹ medical staff,²¹² education personnel,²¹³ religious scholars,²¹⁴ judicial personnel,²¹⁵ journalists,²¹⁶ media workers²¹⁷ and activists²¹⁸ (see also [3.1. Civilian casualties](#)). Most of these incidents were attributed to unidentified AGEs, but some were claimed by ISKP.²¹⁹ Also included were two operations by the Afghan forces, as reported by the Taliban, during each of which a civilian was killed.²²⁰ While ACLED included the killing of eight members of the same family by unidentified armed men in April 2021, some sources pointed at a personal land dispute as a possible motive.²²¹

²⁰³ ACLED describes 'armed clash' as a battle in which armed, organized groups engage, with no reports indicating a change in territorial control (ACLED, Codebook, 10 April 2019, [url](#))

²⁰⁴ NYT, Afghan War Casualty Report: February 2021, 4 February 2021 (updated 25 February 2021), [url](#); NYT, Afghan War Casualty Report: March 2021, 4 March 2021 (updated 1 April 2021), [url](#)

²⁰⁵ NYT, Afghan War Casualty Report: January 2021, 7 January 2021 (updated 28 January 2021), [url](#)

²⁰⁶ Pajhwok Afghan News, Nangarhar prison attack ends, 8 assailants killed, 2 August 2020, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Afghan troops retake prison attacked by ISIL group, 29 killed, 4 August 2020, [url](#)

²⁰⁷ UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection Of Civilians In Armed Conflict Third Quarter Report: 1 January To 30 September 2020, October 2020, [url](#), pp. 2; 10

²⁰⁸ Pajhwok Afghan News, 73 people suffer casualties in Nangarhar attack, 3 August 2020, [url](#); Pajhwok Afghan News, Around 100 Daesh, Taliban prisoners on the run, 4 August 2020, [url](#)

²⁰⁹ Cedoca analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Export tool, Afghanistan – Nangarhar province, update 20 June 2021, [url](#)

²¹⁰ According to ACLED these are 'violent events where an organised armed group deliberately inflicts violence upon unarmed non-combatants.' (ACLED, Codebook, 10 April 2019, [url](#))

²¹¹ Pajhwok Afghan News, Former CEO advisor shot dead in Nangarhar, 3 August 2020, [url](#); Pajhwok Afghan News, Nangarhar's Canal Dept chief survives blast, 25 October 2020, [url](#)

²¹² SIGAR, 30 April 2021, [url](#), p. 59; Lead IG, Operation Freedom's Sentinel Lead Inspector General Report to the United States Congress. JANUARY 1, 2021–MARCH 31, 2021, 18 May 2021, [url](#), p. 18; NYT, Afghan War Casualty Report: February 2021, 4 February 2021 (updated 25 February 2021), [url](#); Al Jazeera, Female polio vaccination workers shot dead in Afghanistan: Report, 30 March 2021, [url](#)

²¹³ Etlaatroz, لال اباد ښار کې ناپېژنده وسله والو د یو خصوصي ښوونځي مدیر وژلی [informal translation, Unidentified gunmen kill a private school principal in Jalalabad], 4 February 2021, [url](#)

²¹⁴ NYT, Afghan War Casualty Report: October 2020, 8 October 2020 (updated 29 October 2020), [url](#)

²¹⁵ SIGAR, Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, 30 April 2021, [url](#), p. 59; NYT, Afghan War Casualty Report: January 2021, 7 January 2021 (updated 28 January 2021), [url](#); NYT, Afghan War Casualty Report: February 2021, 4 February 2021 (updated 25 February 2021), [url](#)

²¹⁶ SIGAR, Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, 30 April 2021, [url](#), p. 59; UNAMA, Afghanistan. Protection of civilians in armed conflict. Annual Report 2020, 23 February 2021, [url](#), p. 54

²¹⁷ Lead IG, Operation Freedom's Sentinel Lead Inspector General Report to the United States Congress. January 1, 2021–March 31, 2021, 18 May 2021, [url](#), p. 18; Guardian (The) (Doucet, Lyse), Afghans dread the 'danger hours' as fragile gains of 20 years slip away, 7 March 2021, [url](#)

²¹⁸ NYT, Afghan War Casualty Report: October 2020, 8 October 2020 (updated 29 October 2020), [url](#)

²¹⁹ Cedoca analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Export tool, Afghanistan – Nangarhar province, update 20 June 2021, [url](#); Guardian (The) (Doucet, Lyse), Afghans dread the 'danger hours' as fragile gains of 20 years slip away, 7 March 2021, [url](#)

²²⁰ Voice of Jihad, War Crimes (November 2020), 10 December 2020, [url](#); Voice of Jihad, War Crimes (October 2020), 11 November 2020, [url](#)

²²¹ Al Jazeera, Gunmen kill eight members of a family in Afghanistan, 18 April 2021, [url](#); Tolonews, Eight Members of One Family Killed in Gunmen Attack in Nangarhar, 18 April 2021, [url](#)

Jalalabad, as well as Kabul, has been increasingly affected by targeted attacks in the reporting period.²²² While not a new phenomenon, these killings have sharply increased since peace talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government were launched in September 2020.²²³

3.3.2.2. Behsud

Of the thirteen violent events in Behsud district, four were coded by ACLED as *battles*, more specifically *armed clash*. These included Taliban attacks against Afghan security personnel or clashes between insurgents and security forces.²²⁴

Incidents coded by ACLED as *explosions/remote violence* included an ISKP-claimed suicide attack in May 2020²²⁵ and six IED-incidents targeting security or government personnel.²²⁶ A roadside bomb explosion on 11 February 2021 killed a police officer and one civilian and injured three others.²²⁷

No air strikes were carried out in Behsud district, according to ACLED data.²²⁸

ACLED also coded two incidents of *violence against civilians* in Behsud district, more specifically the killing of a former jihadi commander on 1 December 2020 and the killing of a religious scholar on 28 April 2021.²²⁹

Since part of Behsud district is considered a part of the Jalalabad city region, as delineated in this [interactive map](#) based on UN-Habitat data,²³⁰ this report attempts to provide an insight into the nature of security incidents within the district. Sources, however, only rarely specify the exact location of a violent incident. The district in which an incident took place is mentioned more or less consistently but only in a few cases is the village or the locality also mentioned. Sources specified the location within the district only in seven of the incidents registered by ACLED in Behsud district, of which Cedoca was able to locate four with the help of different maps. Three incidents occurred in Farm Hada, located within the zone that is considered part of the Jalalabad city region: an insurgent attack, using a magnetic bomb on a former military commander, the aforementioned attack on a former jihadi commander on 1 December 2020 and the May 2020 suicide attack.²³¹ An armed confrontation between ANDSF and unidentified AGEs took place in the zone of Behsud outside of the Jalalabad city region. A

²²² Tolonews, Female Police Officer Killed in Gunmen Attack in Nangarhar, 1 April 2021, [url](#); Tolonews, Two People Killed in Kabul, Nangarhar Blasts, 27 February 2021, [url](#)

²²³ Al Jazeera, 'Nobody is safe': New killings deepen Afghan journalists' fears, 4 March 2021, [url](#); Le Monde, En Afghanistan, trois employées d'une chaîne de télévision tuées en pleine rue dans une attaque revendiquée par l'Etat islamique, 3 March 2021, [url](#); Jackson, A. & Sampaio, A., Afghan Cities Become Key Battlegrounds, War on the Rocks, 9 April 2021, [url](#)

²²⁴ Cedoca analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Export tool, Afghanistan – Nangarhar province, update 20 June 2021, [url](#)

²²⁵ UNSG, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 17 June 2020, [url](#), para 23

²²⁶ Cedoca analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Export tool, Afghanistan – Nangarhar province, update 20 June 2021, [url](#); NYT, Afghan War Casualty Report: April 2021, 8 April 2021 (updated 30 April 2021), [url](#); Pajhwok Afghan News, Kunar governor survives blast in Nangarhar, 27 May 2021, [url](#)

²²⁷ NYT, Afghan War Casualty Report: February 2021, 4 February 2021 (updated 25 February 2021), [url](#)

²²⁸ Cedoca analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Export tool, Afghanistan – Nangarhar province, update 20 June 2021, [url](#)

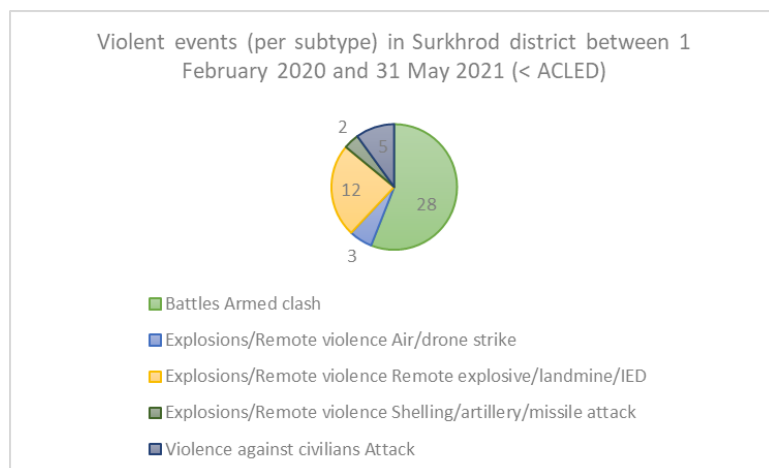
²²⁹ Cedoca analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Export tool, Afghanistan – Nangarhar province, update 20 June 2021, [url](#); Pakhwok Afghan News, Religious scholar gunned down in Nangarhar, 29 April 2021, [url](#); Afghan Islamic Press (@aip_news), [Twitter] posted on: 2 December 2020, [url](#)

²³⁰ More about this interactive map can be found in NMU2019-264: Kaart Jalalabad City Region dated 27 November 2019, drawn up by the New Media Unit van Cedoca

²³¹ Cedoca analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Export tool, Afghanistan – Nangarhar province, update 20 June 2021, [url](#); Pajhwok Afghan News, District chief, son injured in Nangarhar suicide attack, 21 May 2020, [url](#)

sticky bomb explosion on 27 May 2021 causing injuries to the Kama district governor and his guards occurred in the Daman area in Behsud according to some sources,²³² while other sources mentioned Jalalabad's PD8.²³³ The number of incidents in the period under review in this report and the limited availability of information on the location of incidents make it difficult to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the types of incidents within or outside the zone of the Jalalabad city region in Behsud.

3.3.2.3. Surkhrod



A little over half of the violent events in Surkhrod between 1 February 2020 and 31 May 2021, were coded by ACLED as *battles*, and specifically *armed clash*. These included attacks by the Taliban targeting Afghan security personnel and members of pro-government militias (often referred to as *arbaki*), attacks on checkpoints²³⁴ and convoys and, to a lesser extent, operations and attacks by the ANDSF targeting insurgents.²³⁵

Graph 7. Violent events (per sub-type) in Surkhrod district between 1 February 2020 and 31 May 2021. Graph by Cedoca based on ACLED data.

Of the seventeen incidents of *explosions/remote violence* twelve were coded by ACLED as *remote explosive/landmine/IED*.²³⁶ These were mainly attacks against security personnel.²³⁷ Also included were a bomb attack on a seminar in which a religious scholar died²³⁸ and the destruction of a bridge on the Kabul-Jalalabad highway in May 2021.²³⁹ ACLED also coded two air strikes and one drone attack in Surkhrod targeting the Taliban in the reporting period.²⁴⁰ The remaining two incidents of

²³² Xinhua, 3 including district chief wounded in bomb blast in E. Afghanistan, 27 May 2021, [url](#)

²³³ Pasbanan, Nangarhar district governor wounded in a landmine explosion, 27 May 2021 [url](#)

²³⁴ NYT, Afghan War Casualty Report: April 2021, 8 April 2021 (updated 30 April 2021), [url](#)

²³⁵ Cedoca analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Export tool, Afghanistan – Nangarhar province, update 20 June 2021, [url](#)

²³⁶ Cedoca analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Export tool, Afghanistan – Nangarhar province, update 20 June 2021, [url](#)

²³⁷ Cedoca analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Export tool, Afghanistan – Nangarhar province, update 20 June 2021, [url](#); Tolonews, Border Police Member Killed, 2 Wounded In Nangarhar Blast, 2 February 2021, [url](#)

²³⁸ Pajhwok Afghan News, Blast kills religious scholar inside Nangarhar seminary, 17 October 2020, [url](#)

²³⁹ Pajhwok Afghan News, Bridge blown up on Kabul-Jalalabad highway, 26 May 2021, [url](#)

²⁴⁰ BBC Monitoring, Programme summary of Afghan Noor TV news in Dari 1300 gmt 8 Feb 20, 9 February 2021, [url](#); Afghan Islamic Press via BBC Monitoring, Seven Taliban militants killed in east Afghanistan, 7 January 2021, [url](#)

explosions/remote violence were incidents of shelling of security personnel, as reported by the Taliban.²⁴¹

In the reporting period, ACLED coded five incidents of *violence against civilians* in Surkhrod district. These included an air strike carried out by international forces in the Ka(k)(a)rak area causing civilian casualties in February 2020,²⁴² an ISKP-attributed murder of an off-duty military commander and some members of his family,²⁴³ the murder of seven Hazara daily wagers from Bamiyan in a plaster factory in Surkhrod,²⁴⁴ the killing of a civilian by so-called *arbaki*, as reported by the Taliban²⁴⁵ and the ISKP-attributed killing of a tribal elder in May 2021, as reported on Twitter^{246, 247}

Since a part of Surkhrod district is considered as belonging to the Jalalabad city region, as delineated in this [interactive map](#) based on UN-Habitat data,²⁴⁸ this report also attempts to provide an insight into the nature of security incidents within this district. As mentioned before, sources only rarely specify the exact location of a violent incident. Sources specified the location within the district only for seventeen of the incidents registered by ACLED in Surkhrod district, of which Cedoca was able to locate twelve with the help of different maps. Out of those twelve, eleven incidents occurred outside the zone in Surkhrod that is considered part of the Jalalabad city region. These included four IED-incidents and four airstrikes.²⁴⁹ The limited availability of information on the location of incidents makes it difficult to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the types of incidents within or outside the zone of the Jalalabad city region in Surkhrod.

3.4. Displacement

For an overview of the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) originating from the Jalalabad region and the number of IDPs arriving in the Jalalabad area, Cedoca used UNOCHA data on registered IDPs who were displaced due to conflict. It is important to note that UNOCHA does not distinguish between Jalalabad city and Jalalabad district. Therefore, the number of IDPs presented below always refer to the Jalalabad district. Since various sources indicate that parts of the surrounding districts of Behsud and Surkhrod also belong to a wider 'Jalalabad City Region', an overview of the number of IDPs to and from these districts is also included.

UNOCHA collected data for the period 1 February 2020 – 31 May 2021, reporting 38 720 persons displaced from Nangarhar. With the exception of eight IDPs who sought refuge in Kunar, all were displaced within Nangarhar province. Two out of three IDPs from Nangarhar originated from Sherzad district, where displacement was noted throughout the reporting period²⁵⁰ but especially in January

²⁴¹ Cedoca analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Export tool, Afghanistan – Nangarhar province, update 20 June 2021, [url](#)

²⁴² NYT, Afghan War Casualty Report: February 2020, 6 February 2020 (updated 29 October 2020), [url](#)

²⁴³ Afghan Islamic Press via BBC Monitoring, Pro-government militia commander killed in east Afghanistan, 28 November 2020, [url](#)

²⁴⁴ NYT, Afghan War Casualty Report: March 2021, 4 March 2021 (updated 1 April 2021), [url](#); Pajhwok Afghan News, 7 factory workers gunned down in Nangarhar, 4 March 2021, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Bomb kills female Afghan doctor, gunmen kill 7 workers: Officials, 5 March 2021, [url](#)

²⁴⁵ Voice of Jihad, War Crimes (April 2021), 25 May 2021, [url](#)

²⁴⁶ FJ (@Natsecjeff), [Twitter], posted on: 31 May 2021, [url](#); Kohlmann E. (@Inteltweet), [Twitter], posted on: 1 June 2021, [url](#); (@AbdulMateenImr1), [Twitter], posted on: 1 June 2021, [url](#)

²⁴⁷ Cedoca analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Export tool, Afghanistan – Nangarhar province, update 20 June 2021, [url](#)

²⁴⁸ More about this interactive map can be found in NMU2019-264: Kaart Jalalabad City Region dated 27 November 2019, drawn up by the New Media Unit van Cedoca

²⁴⁹ Pajhwok Afghan News, 51 fighters killed, 23 hurt in Nangarhar raids, firefight, 24 October 2020, [url](#)

²⁵⁰ UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Humanitarian Update | 27 January to 02 February 2020, 3 February 2020, [url](#); UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Humanitarian Update (10 – 16 August 2020), 18 August 2020, [url](#)

2021. Larger groups were also registered from Hesarak in January 2021, Mohmand Dara in September 2020 and Khogyani in January 2021. Those four districts together accounted for 98 % of all IDPs registered from Nangarhar. It is worth noting that over 25 000 of Nangarhar's IDPs were displaced in January 2021, the large majority from Sherzad, but also from Hesarak and Khogyani districts due to ongoing fighting.²⁵¹ No displacement was registered from Jalalabad, Behsud and Surkhrod districts in the period under review.²⁵²

In addition to the 38 712 people displaced within the province, Nangarhar also hosted 5 073 IDPS from other provinces, mainly from neighbouring Kunar.

A January 2018 study on displacement by Samuel Hall, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) indicated that 'people tend to flee rural areas for their regional centres.' Figures from this study show that 76 % of the respondents from eastern Afghanistan sought refuge in Jalalabad.²⁵³ According to a 2018 Oxfam report based on field research, including in Nangarhar, 'people from insecure districts have fled to safer districts such as Behsud and Surkh Rod.'²⁵⁴ The UNOCHA bulletins and data covering the reporting period indicated that Jalalabad, Behsud and Surkhrod were among the districts in Nangarhar province hosting most of the conflict-related IDPs.²⁵⁵

Surkhrod hosted 40 % (17 502) of all IDPs registered in Nangarhar province between 1 February 2020 and 31 May 2021. Most were people who left Sherzad district due to conflict in January 2021.²⁵⁶

UNOCHA registered 4 863 people displaced to Jalalabad district, over half of them originating from Sherzad district, mainly in January and March 2021. Jalalabad also received a few hundred IDPS from Hesarak in January 2021, Khogyani in January and March 2021 and from Kunar's Chawkay district in February 2020.²⁵⁷

Behsud district hosted 5 052 IDPs between 1 February 2020 and 31 May 2021, mainly from Sherzad and Hesarak districts in January 2021, but a large group as well from Kunar's Chawkay district in February 2020 and a few hundred from Nari, Sheltan and Watapur districts in Kunar in January 2021.²⁵⁸

After Kabul, Nangarhar province has received the highest number of returnees since 2002.²⁵⁹ Returnees from Pakistan tend to settle around the cities of Kandahar, Jalalabad and Kabul.²⁶⁰ Many returnees have no intention of returning to their province of origin or cannot return, sometimes due to insecurity or because their houses were destroyed and their land taken away, or due to a lack of

²⁵¹ UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Weekly Humanitarian Update (11 – 17 January 2021), 19 January 2021, [url](#); UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Weekly Humanitarian Update (1 – 7 February 2021), 10 February 2021, [url](#)

²⁵² UNOCHA, Afghanistan – Conflict Induced Displacements in 2020, last updated: 30 March 2021, [url](#); UNOCHA, Afghanistan – Conflict Induced Displacements in 2021, last update: 4 June 2021, [url](#)

²⁵³ Samuel Hall, NRC, IDMC, 24 January 2018, [url](#), p. 20

²⁵⁴ Oxfam (Kamminga J., Zaki A.), 31 January 2018, [url](#), p. 28

²⁵⁵ UNOCHA, Afghanistan – Conflict Induced Displacements in 2020, last updated: 30 March 2021, [url](#); UNOCHA, Afghanistan – Conflict Induced Displacements in 2021, last update: 4 June 2021, [url](#); UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Weekly Humanitarian Update (1 – 7 March 2021), 10 March 2021, [url](#); UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Weekly Humanitarian Update (8 – 14 March 2021), 16 March 2021, [url](#)

²⁵⁶ UNOCHA, Afghanistan – Conflict Induced Displacements in 2020, last updated: 30 March 2021, [url](#); UNOCHA, Afghanistan – Conflict Induced Displacements in 2021, last update: 4 June 2021, [url](#)

²⁵⁷ UNOCHA, Afghanistan – Conflict Induced Displacements in 2020, last updated: 30 March 2021, [url](#); UNOCHA, Afghanistan – Conflict Induced Displacements in 2021, last update: 4 June 2021, [url](#)

²⁵⁸ UNOCHA, Afghanistan – Conflict Induced Displacements in 2020, last updated: 30 March 2021, [url](#); UNOCHA, Afghanistan – Conflict Induced Displacements in 2021, last update: 4 June 2021, [url](#)

²⁵⁹ Tufts University – Feinstein International Center, Homeland, but no land for Home: A Case Study of Refugees in Towns (Jalalabad, Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan), 15 October 2018, [url](#), p. 4

²⁶⁰ The Asia Foundation, A Survey of the Afghan Returnees. 2018, 14 May 2019, [url](#), p. 13

job opportunities and social services such as schools, health facilities or markets, especially in rural areas.²⁶¹ The (un)voluntary return of Afghan refugees – mainly from Pakistan – increased in 2016 and during the first half of 2017. In 2016, nearly 600 000 Afghans, both registered refugees and undocumented Afghans, returned from Pakistan, especially in the second half of the year.²⁶² According to findings from a 2018 study, most settled in Nangarhar province.²⁶³ Since 2018, return from Pakistan has been remarkably lower.²⁶⁴

An increasing number of in Afghanistan live in informal settlements in major urban centres,²⁶⁵ including near Jalalabad,²⁶⁶ as shown on the map from REACH²⁶⁷ below (Map 6). They are joined by many returnees who often move to fast-growing settlements around cities such as Jalalabad because they cannot return to their home due to insecurity.²⁶⁸

According to IOM data relating to the second half of 2020, one out of three persons in Nangarhar province was either an IDP or a returnee.²⁶⁹ According to estimates cited in a 2017 analysis conducted by Oxfam, 59 % of the population of Jalalabad city was reported to be either IDPs or returnees. It is worth noting that these estimates dated from just before the outbreak of the large influx of returnees mentioned earlier in this report.²⁷⁰

²⁶¹ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Bulletin. Afghanistan. Issue 73, 1-28 February 2018, 25 March 2018, [url](#)

²⁶² HRW, Pakistan Coercion, UN Complicity The Mass Forced Return of Afghan Refugees, 13 February 2017, [url](#), pp.1; 11; 32-33

²⁶³ Oxfam (Kamminga J., Zaki A.), Returning to fragility: exploring the link between conflict and returnees in Afghanistan, 31 January 2018, [url](#), p. 28

²⁶⁴ IOM, BMA R11 — Afghanistan — Baseline Mobility Assessment Summary Results (July—December 2020), 2 May 2021, [url](#), p. 4

²⁶⁵ NRC & TLO, Listening To Women And Girls Displaced To Urban Afghanistan, January 2015, [url](#), p. 8

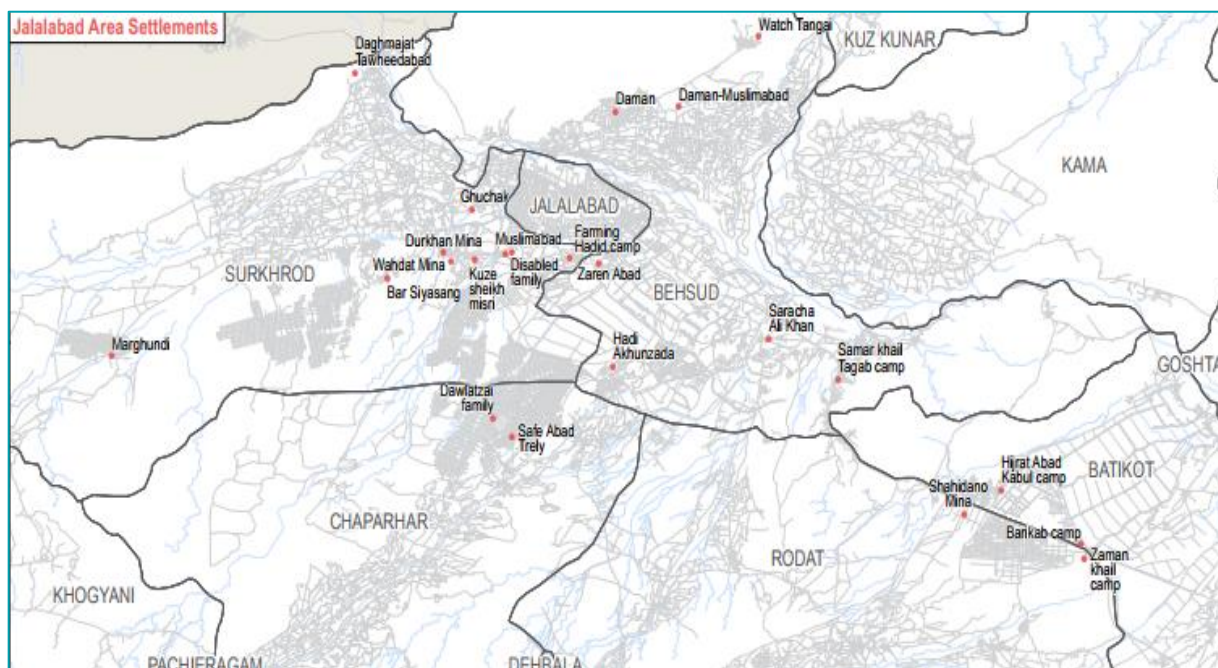
²⁶⁶ REACH, Nangarhar Informal Settlement Profiling, January 2017, [url](#) ; Oxfam, Emergency Market Mapping and Analysis Labour and Housing Market Systems in Nangarhar Province, Eastern Afghanistan, 12 May 2017, [url](#), p. 28; UN-Habitat, Covid-19 Vulnerability In Informal Settlements: A Case Study Of An Urban Idp Community In Jalalabad, Afghanistan, June 2020, [url](#), pp. 2-3

²⁶⁷ REACH, Nangarhar Informal Settlement Profiling, January 2017, [url](#); UN Habitat, e-mail, 9 January 2018

²⁶⁸ The New Humanitarian, As deportations soar, Afghan returnees struggle on home soil, 26 January 2021, [url](#) ; Mahmoudi R., Linking Relief, Rehabilitation And Development Programme (LRRD) In Afghanistan. Jalalabad: A Resort City Of Change. Case study of Jalalabad City (Nangarhar Province), Groupe U.R.D., 2006, [url](#), p. 6

²⁶⁹ IOM, BMA R11 — Afghanistan — Baseline Mobility Assessment Summary Results (July—December 2020), 2 May 2021, [url](#), p. 1

²⁷⁰ Oxfam, Emergency Market Mapping and Analysis Labour and Housing Market Systems in Nangarhar Province, Eastern Afghanistan, 12 May 2017, [url](#), p. 19



Map 6: Informal IDP locations in Nangarhar province – January 2017

Sources point out that Afghanistan is having a hard time coping with the challenges of urban planning due to population growth compounded by massive internal displacement.²⁷¹ In the second half of 2020, Behsud and Surkhrod were the districts hosting the largest numbers of returnees and IDPs in Nangarhar, according to IOM.²⁷² The influx of vulnerable populations in the cities of Kabul and Jalalabad, both common settlement destinations for IDPs and returnees, has made humanitarian needs high in Kabul and Nangarhar provinces.²⁷³

3.5. Further impact on the civilian population

3.5.1. Functioning of public services

Citing an international source that wished to remain anonymous, the Norwegian COI unit Landinfo described in 2018 the neighbouring districts of Jalalabad as strategically important regions where the security forces had a relatively large presence and deployed many resources to maintain control and stability.²⁷⁴ Nangarhar was one of the provinces where the ANDSF continued to conduct operations to secure key highways and cities in 2021.²⁷⁵

²⁷¹ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2020. Afghanistan, 17 December 2019, [url](#), pp. 10-11, 27; Jackson, A. & Sampaio, A., Afghan Cities Become Key Battlegrounds, War on the Rocks, 9 April 2021, [url](#)

²⁷² IOM, BMA R11 – Afghanistan – Baseline Mobility Assessment Summary Results (July–December 2020), 2 May 2021, [url](#), p. 6

²⁷³ The Asia Foundation, A Survey of the Afghan Returnees. 2018, 14 May 2019, [url](#), p. 106

²⁷⁴ Landinfo, Afghanistan: Sikkerhetssituasjonen i den østlige regionen – oppdatering [Afghanistan: Security situation in the eastern region – update], 18 April 2018, [url](#), p. 4

²⁷⁵ UNSG, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 15 June 2021, [url](#), para 20

Although the Afghan security forces are frequently in the news for foiling attacks,²⁷⁶ arresting insurgents,²⁷⁷ or killing Taliban or ISKP leaders they deem responsible for attacks in Nangarhar or Jalalabad,²⁷⁸ residents of the city of Jalalabad sometimes complain about the incompetence of the law enforcement and security forces.²⁷⁹ An analysis described the August 2020 prison raid in Jalalabad as a major security failure, with several heavily armed men able to infiltrate and attack a fortified building inside a major city.²⁸⁰

In the Summer of 2017, Pajhwok interviewed several residents of Jalalabad city who spoke of growing insecurity in the city due to the increase in targeted attacks, murders and rising crime.²⁸¹ An economic mafia, the monopoly of power of local individuals, illegal armed men and weak security organs were said to be at the root of the insecurity in Nangarhar province.²⁸² An article in the NYT pointed out in October 2018 that corruption and mafia infiltration made the situation in Nangarhar province increasingly complex. This, along with the fact that the city was hit by several successive suicide bombings in spring and summer of 2018 prompted the government to replace all senior police officers and hand over control of Jalalabad's security to the army in August 2018.²⁸³ Earlier, in May 2018, the governor of Nangarhar was dismissed due to the worsening security situation in the province.²⁸⁴ According to the UN Secretary-General, 'the robust presence of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces in Jalalabad City since August [2018] appeared to have a positive impact on the overall security situation in the city.'²⁸⁵ As mentioned earlier, the UN Secretary-General attributed the decline in suicide attacks in Afghanistan in autumn 2018 and 2019 to successful interdiction efforts by the ANDSF in the cities of Kabul and Jalalabad.²⁸⁶

In response to several explosions hitting the city on 13 May 2019, the security of Jalalabad was handed over to the Special Security forces.²⁸⁷ In early July 2019, the provincial police headquarters of Nangarhar announced that a 60-strong new police unit had been set up to guard the gates of Jalalabad city and search vehicles entering the city.²⁸⁸ In addition to the existing units in Kabul area (222 and

²⁷⁶ Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 would-be bombers arrested in Nangarhar, 30 November 2020, [url](#); Pajhwok Afghan News, Would-be suicide bomber detained in Nangarhar, 12 January 2021, [url](#)

²⁷⁷ Pajhwok Afghan News, Daesh recruitment head detained in Jalalabad, 28 December 2020, [url](#)

²⁷⁸ Khaama press, NDS Kills ISIL Judge, Arrests Suicide Bomber Mastermind During Raid, 19 October 2020, [url](#) ; Pajhwok Afghan News, Daesh intelligence chief killed in Nangarhar raid, 2 August 2020, [url](#); Pajhwok Afghan News, Daesh chief justice killed in NDS operation: Source, 18 August 2020, [url](#); Pajhwok Afghan News, Daesh commander among 4 killed in Jalalabad, 23 September 2020, [url](#); Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban, Daesh explosions masterminds killed, 23 December 2020, [url](#); Khaama Press, Daesh 'mastermind' busted in Nangarhar, 28 February 2021, [url](#)

²⁷⁹ BBC Monitoring, Programme summary of Afghan Sharq TV news in Pashto 1530 gmt 24 Jul 19, 1 August 2019, [url](#)

²⁸⁰ Sarkar S., Factors behind the Jalalabad prison raid by the Islamic State Khorasan Province, CAPS, 19 August 2020, [url](#), p. 2

²⁸¹ Pajhwok Afghan News, Nangarhar govt fails on security front: activists, 16 July 2017, [url](#); Pajhwok Afghan News, Jalalabad moneychangers say received life threats, 5 august 2017, [url](#); Pajhwok Afghan News, Doctors, druggists go on strike in Jalalabad, 18 September 2017, [url](#)

²⁸² Pajhwok Afghan News, Nangarhar govt fails on security front: activists, 16 July 2017, [url](#)

²⁸³ NYT, Election rally bombing in Afghanistan heightens security fears, 2 October 2018, [url](#)

²⁸⁴ RFE/RL, UN Condemns Deadly Attack On Afghan Cricket Match, 19 May 2018, [url](#)

²⁸⁵ UNSG, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 7 December 2018, [url](#), pp. 5,6

²⁸⁶ UNSG, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 7 December 2018, [url](#), pp. 5,6; UNSG, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, 14 June 2019, [url](#), p. 5

²⁸⁷ Pajhwok Afghan News, Jalalabad security handed over to Special Forces, 14 May 2019, [url](#)

²⁸⁸ BBC Monitoring, Programme summary of Afghan Bost radio news in Pashto 1630 gmt 6 Jul 19, 18 July 2019, [url](#)

333) and Kandahar (444),²⁸⁹ the General Command of Police Special Units (GCPSU) established three National Mission Units (NMU) in three regional centers, including Jalalabad (999).²⁹⁰ The NMU are counted among the best performing ANDSF units.²⁹¹ The additional three new units were reported to have reached full operating capability in March 2020.²⁹² The 999 unit carried out a special operation in Jalalabad's PD7 in January 2021, during which they raided a house occupied by ISKP members and killed three of them.²⁹³

Despite the adoption of new security measures²⁹⁴ and the dismantlement of Taliban²⁹⁵ and ISKP²⁹⁶ urban cells, a Nangarhar provincial council's member criticised the authorities' response as 'symbolic' in February 2021, while a civil society activist blamed the increased insecurity on the weakness of the intelligence agencies and the negligence of the provincial government.²⁹⁷

Appointed in February 2021,²⁹⁸ Juma Gul Himmat announced he was quitting his position as Nangarhar police chief in May 2021. He claimed to have initiated security reforms but could not count on the cooperation of the Ministry of Interior and central agencies in carrying out those reforms. General Satan Daud replaced him as Nangarhar's new police chief.²⁹⁹

3.5.2. Access to basic services

A 2014 Samuel Hall study on poverty, food insecurity and resilience in major Afghan cities put Jalalabad, alongside Kandahar, at the top of the list of Afghan cities with the highest level of food insecurity.³⁰⁰ Although access to basic facilities and services (especially access to running water) appeared to be less of a challenge in Jalalabad than in other cities, access to electricity, however, did appear to be a problem. Samuel Hall's study indicated that much food in Jalalabad was imported at lower prices from Pakistan. IDPs in Jalalabad in particular faced food insecurity.³⁰¹ The combination of a rapid urban population growth, migration from the countryside to the cities and displacement has put basic services under significant pressure.³⁰²

²⁸⁹ Skovlund M. Jr., This Elite Police Force Is Afghanistan's Secret Weapon Against Violent Extremists, Task and Purpose, 15 November 2017, [url](#); DVIDS, Afghanistan grows its special police forces, 8 February 2018, [url](#)

²⁹⁰ DVIDS, GCPSU Commander: On Fighting Terrorism, Criminals, and Narcotics and Drug Traffickers, 13 May 2018, [url](#); USDOD, Enhancing Security & Stability in Afghanistan, June 2020, [url](#), pp. 91-92

²⁹¹ Skovlund M. Jr., This Elite Police Force Is Afghanistan's Secret Weapon Against Violent Extremists, Task and Purpose, 15 November 2017, [url](#)

²⁹² USDOD, Enhancing Security & Stability in Afghanistan, June 2020, [url](#), pp. 91-92

²⁹³ Ariana News, Daesh members killed in Nangarhar operation, 13 January 2021, [url](#)

²⁹⁴ Etilaatroz, ننګرهار کې د داعش او نورو وسله والو ځپل، چارواکي يې لامل د امنيتي پېښو مخنيوي نوي تدابیر يادوي [informal translation, ISIL and other militants crushed in Nangarhar Officials cite new security measures as the reason], 15 February 2021, [url](#)

²⁹⁵ Etilaatroz, جلال اباد ښار کې ملي امنيت د وسله والو طالبانو د ښاري شبکې مشر نيولی [informal translation, In Jalalabad, the National Directorate of Security (NDS) arrested the leader of the Taliban's urban network], 8 December 2020, [url](#)

²⁹⁶ AP, Afghan troops kill senior Islamic State militant, 2 August 2020, [url](#); Reuters, Afghan Police Seize Four Tonnes Of Bomb-Making Chemical [in RFE/RL/Gandhara], 29 September 2020, [url](#); Pajhwok Afghan News, Daesh recruitment head detained in Jalalabad, 28 December 2020, [url](#); Pajhwok Afghan News, 1 Daesh fighter killed, 2 detained in Jalalabad, 13 February 2021, [url](#)

²⁹⁷ Pajhwok Afghan News, Nangarhar: 103 people suffer casualties in a month, 16 February 2021, [url](#)

²⁹⁸ Sharq TV via BBC Monitoring, Programme summary of Afghan Sharq TV news in Pashto 1530 gmt 13 Feb 21, 7 March 2021, [url](#)

²⁹⁹ Afghanorband, Juma Gul Himmat: I lost my dignity because I quit my job, 22 May 2021, [url](#)

³⁰⁰ Samuel Hall, Urban Poverty Report: A Study of Poverty, Food Insecurity and Resilience in Afghan Cities, 31 January 2014, [url](#), pp. 6-7

³⁰¹ Samuel Hall, Urban Poverty Report: A Study of Poverty, Food Insecurity and Resilience in Afghan Cities, 31 January 2014, [url](#), pp. 6-7, pp. 44-49, p.78

³⁰² Jackson, A. & Sampaio, A., Afghan Cities Become Key Battlegrounds, War on the Rocks, 9 April 2021, [url](#)

Of all 141 health facilities in Nangarhar in 2020, '57 % are over-burdened and were serving more than 3.9 million host, IDPs and returnees'.³⁰³ In 2017, the city of Jalalabad housed eighteen health facilities³⁰⁴ and the main hospital was said to be overcrowded and struggling to provide services.³⁰⁵ Many people in the eastern and southern parts of the country travel to Jalalabad to seek medical help, as the health facilities in their own, often rural, areas are inadequate.³⁰⁶ In 2019, UNOCHA pointed out that a 'combination of widespread conflict, prohibitive costs, as well as inadequate coverage and capacity, continue to disrupt, delay or deny people's access to the healthcare they need.'³⁰⁷

Between 1 January and 31 December 2020, 15 health facilities were closed in Nangarhar province, out of 57 throughout Afghanistan.³⁰⁸ In January 2020, the Taliban confirmed that they had ordered the closure of several health centres in the provinces of Nangarhar and Paktia, claiming this happened because aid organisations had not fulfilled their commitments to equip the clinics. They added that the closures did not mean that they wanted to prevent the provision of health care but stated their intention to improve healthcare for the population through monitoring by their health committee. One of the affected health centres was an unnamed clinic in Surkhrod district. In response, the spokesperson for the Governor of Nangarhar said that some health centres had reopened thanks to the people's mediation and that no clinic in Nangarhar remained closed.³⁰⁹ UNOCHA reported that 15 hospitals in five different districts of Nangarhar – including Surkhrod – that had been closed since 13 January 2020 reopened on 9 February 2020.³¹⁰ In January 2021, a UNHCR-funded health clinic was inaugurated in Surkhrod district.³¹¹

According to findings of the 2014 Samuel Hall study, a large proportion of Jalalabad's population did not receive a full formal education.³¹² The large influx of IDPs and returnees also put a large strain on the education sector in Jalalabad city.³¹³ In Behsud district, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has established a number of schools so that children of IDPs can also enjoy education.³¹⁴ While poor quality education due to unsafe and improper infrastructure, insufficient teaching materials and overcrowding is a widespread problem in Afghanistan, regions that host large numbers of IDPs and returnees, such as Kunar and Nangarhar in the east, are especially affected.³¹⁵ Like elsewhere in the country,³¹⁶ education personnel was a potential target of violence in the reporting period in Jalalabad. In February 2021, a private school principal was killed in an unclaimed attack in the 6th district of Jalalabad.³¹⁷

³⁰³ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2020. Afghanistan, 17 December 2019, [url](#), p. 27

³⁰⁴ Westerse veiligheidsmedewerker, senior analist, e-mail, 19 December 2017

³⁰⁵ Muzhary F., Resettling Nearly Half a Million Afghans in Nangrahar: The consequences of the mass return of refugees, AAN, 12 May 2017, [url](#)

³⁰⁶ Norwegian Afghanistan Committee, Midwives graduate in Nangarhar Province, 22 January 2013, [url](#)

³⁰⁷ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview (2019), 6 December 2018, p.14, [url](#)

³⁰⁸ WHO, Afghanistan. Attacks on health care (January 01 – December 31, 2020), 11 January 2021, [url](#)

³⁰⁹ Afghan Islamic Press via BBC Monitoring, Taliban confirm closing down health clinics in east Afghanistan, 24 January 2020, [url](#)

³¹⁰ UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Humanitarian Update. 3 February to 9 February 2020, 12 February 2020, [url](#)

³¹¹ BBC Monitoring, Programme summary of Afghan Sharq TV news in Pashto 1530 gmt 3 Jan 21, 24 January 2021, [url](#)

³¹² Samuel Hall, Urban Poverty Report: A Study of Poverty, Food Insecurity and Resilience in Afghan Cities, 31 January 2014, [url](#), p. 71

³¹³ Muzhary F., Resettling Nearly Half a Million Afghans in Nangrahar: The consequences of the mass return of refugees, AAN, 12 May 2017, [url](#)

³¹⁴ UNICEF (Foster N.), Fleeing conflict, displaced children find solace and education in community-based schools, 25 May 2016, [url](#)

³¹⁵ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2020. Afghanistan, 17 December 2019, [url](#), p. 25

³¹⁶ UNAMA, Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict - Annual Report 2020, 23 February 2021, [url](#), pp. 37-38

³¹⁷ Etillaatroz, 'لال اباد ښار کې ناپېژندلې وسله والو ډيو خصوصي ښوونځي مدير وژلی' [informal translation, Unidentified gunmen kill a private school principal in Jalalabad], 4 February 2021, [url](#)

The city of Jalalabad experiences frequent power cuts. The limited power supply means that many residents of the city have to rely on generators to provide sufficient power.³¹⁸ The power cuts affect the security situation in the city and hamper industrial development in the area.³¹⁹ In June 2017, a third power transformer was installed in Jalalabad city in order to reduce power outages.³²⁰ According to a March 2019 AAN report, the existing electricity grid in Nangarhar was limited, with Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat (DABS), Afghanistan's power utility, only supplying electricity to Jalalabad and its surrounding districts Surkhrod and Behsud.³²¹ The construction of 30 small hydroelectric dams in Nangarhar, announced in February 2020, was intended to provide power to thousands of families in the province.³²² Conflict is disrupting a stable supply of electricity, with insurgents at times targeting transmission towers.³²³ In May 2021, DABS informed the press that two power pylons were destroyed in Surkhrod district.³²⁴

As pointed out in a 2012 USAID report, like elsewhere in Afghanistan, 'the city of Jalalabad does not have an updated urban plan, and until the city approves a new one, the existing 50-year old plan remains the official city blueprint.' As a result, community needs and municipal goals cannot be achieved and it affects service provision.³²⁵ Major construction and development projects in Jalalabad and in Behsud district such as construction of new roads, investment in hospitals, creation of markets, etc. were carried out to create jobs and boost trade.³²⁶

3.5.3. Accessibility

Jalalabad Airport is located about 5 km southeast of Jalalabad city. Adjacent to Jalalabad Airport is Forward Operating Base Fenty.³²⁷ Once one of the largest U.S. bases in Afghanistan, by the end of 2020 Jalalabad Air Base was said to house only a handful of U.S. troops, occupying a small corner of Jalalabad airport.³²⁸ Jalalabad airport is used for military purposes and sometimes by UN aircrafts.³²⁹ A first civilian test flight from Kabul to Jalalabad was carried out in early January 2021 after the airport, used by the US troops as a military base for 18 years, was handed over to the Afghan authorities

³¹⁸ Mahmoudi R., Linking Relief, Rehabilitation And Development Programme (LRRD) In Afghanistan. Jalalabad: A Resort City Of Change. Case study of Jalalabad City (Nangarhar Province), Groupe U.R.D., 2006, [url](#), pp. 7, 52

³¹⁹ The New Humanitarian, Power shortages hamper development, 20 December 2012, [url](#); IWPR, Afghanistan: Energy Theft a Burning Issue in Nangarhar, 15 July 2013, [url](#)

³²⁰ Wadsam Afghan Business Portal News, Afghan Business Portal News, Electricity transformer installed in Jalalabad resolves 75% of load shedding, 10 June 2017, [url](#)

³²¹ Soroush R., Kazemi S.R., One Land, Two Rules (4): Delivering public service, AAN, 25 March 2019, [url](#)

³²² Bakhtar News, Several Small Hydroelectric Power to be built in Nangarhar, 27 February 2020, [url](#)

³²³ Soroush R., Kazemi S.R., One Land, Two Rules (4): Delivering public service, AAN, 25 March 2019, [url](#)

³²⁴ Afghan Islamic Press via BBC Monitoring, Three power pylons destroyed in Kabul, Nangarhar provinces, 13 May 2021, [url](#)

³²⁵ USAID, Mapping a Future for Jalalabad, 13 February 2012, [url](#); USAID, March 2013, p. 16, [url](#); Sasaki, Jalalabad Strategic Development Framework, 12 February 2021, [url](#), p. II.2

³²⁶ Pajhwok Afghan News, Projects worth 2.6b afs executed in Nangarhar last year, 10 January 2018, [url](#); Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 development projects executed in Nangarhar, 23 January 2018, [url](#); Pajhwok Afghan News, Work on 40-meter wide road kicks off in Nangarhar, 24 January 2018, [url](#); Pajhwok Afghan News, New fruit market worth \$3m opens in Nangarhar, 6 February 2018, [url](#); Pajhwok Afghan News, Nangarhar: Efforts on to meet local fish demand, 26 January 2021, [url](#)

³²⁷ Migrationsverket, Temarapport: Afghanistan. Inrikesflyg till Jalalabad [Thematic report: Afghanistan. Domestic flights to Jalalabad], 24 May 2016, [url](#), pp. 1-2; Afghanistan. Civil Aviation Authority, Terms Of Reference Consultancy Services For Feasibility Study Nangarhar International Airport, 9 October 2018, [url](#), p. 3

³²⁸ Washington Post, U.S. shuts bases in Afghanistan during drawdown, 29 November 2020, [url](#)

³²⁹ Afghanistan. Civil Aviation Authority, Terms Of Reference Consultancy Services For Feasibility Study Nangarhar International Airport, 9 October 2018, [url](#), p. 3; Lifos (Migrationsverket), Temarapport: Inrikesflyg i Afghanistan (version 3.1) [Thematic report: Domestic flights in Afghanistan (version 3.1)], 7 February 2019, [url](#), p. 12

following the US-Taliban peace agreement. Some national airlines reportedly had committed to begin flights to Nangarhar airport,³³⁰ but no information was available on the possible start date of civilian air traffic to and from Jalalabad airport.

In January 2017, an Afghan official announced that initial construction work on a civilian airport in Nangarhar would start soon.³³¹ In October 2018, Afghanistan's Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) commissioned a feasibility study for a new international airport in Nangarhar, proposing two sites for the development of the airport, one in Kama (Khewa) district about 30 km north of Jalalabad and the other in Rodat district, about 25 km east of Jalalabad.³³² In July 2020, a ground-breaking ceremony was held and the foundation stone was laid for the new civilian airport outside Jalalabad, in Kuz Kunar (Khewa) district.³³³ In January 2021, Nangarhar's Aviation Director announced that the construction of an international airport in the eastern zone would 'be completed in a few years'.³³⁴

While Jalalabad airport and the adjacent military base have been attacked by insurgents on several occasions in previous years,³³⁵ no such incidents were registered by ACLED in the reporting period.³³⁶ In January 2021, additional forces were deployed to protect Jalalabad airport.³³⁷

Because the current airport is used exclusively for military purposes, the city of Jalalabad is only accessible to civilians from Kabul by road. The Kabul-Jalalabad Highway connects both cities and is about 150 km long.³³⁸ This route is of strategic importance. According to a local journalist interviewed by the Norwegian COI unit in April-May 2017, this road witnesses heavy civilian traffic with 20,000 vehicles daily.³³⁹ The high number of vehicles often causes traffic jams.³⁴⁰ The Kabul-Jalalabad Highway is known as one of the most dangerous roads in the world. The section through the Kabul river gorge is a beautiful but very dangerous stretch with steep climbs and drops. The numerous trucks sometimes struggle to get up the slope. Reckless passing manoeuvres by Afghan drivers frequently lead to fatal accidents.³⁴¹ Traffic safety has been a major problem on this road for years.³⁴² Often cited causes of accidents on this road include reckless driving, excessive speed and violation of traffic

³³⁰ Pajhwok Afghan News, Test flights begin from Kabul to Nangarhar, 7 January 2021, [url](#); MENAFN, Afghanistan-Jalalabad Airport Operates Its First Civilian Flight After 18 Years, 9 January 2021, [url](#)

³³¹ Pajhwok Afghan News, Initial work on Nangarhar civil airport to begin soon, 2 January 2017, [url](#)

³³² Afghanistan. Civil Aviation Authority, Terms Of Reference Consultancy Services For Feasibility Study Nangarhar International Airport, 9 October 2018, [url](#)

³³³ Reporterly, Civilian Airport To Be Built In Nangarhar, 12 July 2020, [url](#)

³³⁴ Pajhwok Afghan News, Test flights begin from Kabul to Nangarhar, 7 January 2021, [url](#)

³³⁵ Tolo News, Taliban Attack US Military Base, Jalalabad Airport, 2 December 2012, [url](#); Reuters, Taliban attacks NATO air base in east Afghanistan, 21 June 2014, [url](#)

³³⁶ Cedoca analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Export tool, Afghanistan – Nangarhar province, update 26 May 2021, [url](#)

³³⁷ Pajhwok Afghan News, Local army graduates to guard Jalalabad airport, 3 districts, 17 January 2021, [url](#)

³³⁸ Afghanistan. Civil Aviation Authority, Terms Of Reference Consultancy Services For Feasibility Study Nangarhar International Airport, 9 October 2018, [url](#)

³³⁹ Landinfo, Temanotat Afghanistan: Sikkerhetssituasjonen i den østlige regionen [Thematic note Afghanistan: The security situation in the eastern region], 2 October 2017, [url](#), pp. 4; 12

³⁴⁰ Pajhwok Afghan News, In 10 years, only 40pc work done on Kabul-Jalalabad road, 4 November 2020, [url](#); Pajhwok Afghan News, No security issue on 2nd Kabul-Jalalabad highway: Locals, 20 May 2021, [url](#)

³⁴¹ The Diplomat (Gady F.-Z.), Next Stop Jalalabad: Traveling on One of the World's Most Dangerous Roads, 13 December 2015, [url](#)

³⁴² NYT, On Afghan Road, Scenes of Beauty and Death, 7 February 2010, [url](#); Pajhwok Afghan News, Kabul-Jalalabad road accidents claim 200 lives, 20 March 2013, [url](#); BBC Monitoring South Asia, Programme summary of Afghan Sharq TV news in Pashto 1530 gmt 31 Dec 19, 10 January 2020, [url](#)

rules.³⁴³ In the period under review, road accidents on the Kabul-Jalalabad Highway resulted in several deaths and injuries.³⁴⁴

During a Skype call with Cedoca on 11 January 2018, an independent consultant who travelled frequently between Jalalabad and Kabul in 2016 and 2017 said to have noticed little in the way of illegal checkpoints in 2017, while indicating that in 2016, there were such illegal checkpoints, especially in Laghman Province.³⁴⁵ In a conversation with Landinfo in October 2019, an international source described the road between Kabul and Jalalabad as sufficiently safe, including for international travelers. However, the source emphasized that illegal checkpoints can occur in almost the entire country, even in areas where the Taliban are weak.³⁴⁶ In the reporting period, Cedoca has found media reports about insurgent checkpoints on the Kabul-Jalalabad highway.³⁴⁷

After complaints from drivers and passengers about insecurity, security forces launched clearing operations in September 2019 in some districts of Laghman province to improve security on the Kabul-Jalalabad highway.³⁴⁸ In the reporting period, incidents on the highway continued to be reported.³⁴⁹

The construction of a second Kabul-Jalalabad highway (reserved for long-transit vehicles)³⁵⁰ started in 2010 but, as of November 2020, was still delayed. According to the Ministry of Public Works, this was due to security concerns in Hesarak, Khogyani and Sherzad. Provincial officials, however, called this an excuse for not implementing the project, claiming there were no security problems hindering the project.³⁵¹ In April 2021, after an attack on a checkpoint in Fatehabad area in Surkhrod, a bridge on a road said to be used mostly by people from Surkhrod, Khogyani, Sherzad and Hesarak districts but also as the second Kabul-Jalalabad highway, was blown up. Passengers were stuck on both sides of the bridge until Afghan soldiers were able to temporarily repair it and reopen the road to traffic.³⁵² This is an important road for the exploitation of the numerous talc mines in the area.³⁵³ In October 2020, a bridge had already been blown up in that same area.³⁵⁴ In May 2021, the Ministry of Public Works again invoked insecurity to halt a survey on the second Kabul-Jalalabad highway. Again, this was dismissed by the local population and officials as an excuse to delay the road construction.³⁵⁵

The 70 km long Jalalabad-Torkham Road connects the city with the border crossing in Torkham on the Afghan-Pakistan border. Torkham is an important border crossing point for the city as goods are imported and exported to and from Jalalabad through this crossing.³⁵⁶ In October 2019, an international source informed Landinfo that the security on the road in Nangarhar had improved,

³⁴³ Pajhwok Afghan News, Kabul-Jalalabad road accident leaves 1 dead, 2 September 2017, [url](#); Pajhwok Afghan News, 9 people killed in traffic accident on Kabul-Jalalabad Highway, 12 December 2019, [url](#)

³⁴⁴ Bakhtar News, Traffic Accident on Kabul-Jalalabad Highway Left One Dead and Four Injured, 15 May 2021, [url](#); The Killid Group, Two Killed on Kabul-Jalalabad Highway, 2 March 2021, [url](#)

³⁴⁵ Independent consultant, Skype call, 11 January 2018

³⁴⁶ Landinfo, Sikkerhetssituasjon og konfliktmønster i 2019 [Afghanistan: Security situation and conflict pattern in 2019], 22 January 2020, [url](#), p. 29

³⁴⁷ Tolonews, Taliban Increase Presence on Kabul-Jalalabad Highway: Drivers, 3 December 2020, [url](#)

³⁴⁸ Pajhwok Afghan News, Offensive begins to improve Kabul-Jalalabad road security, 3 September 2019, [url](#)

³⁴⁹ UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Weekly Humanitarian Update (8 – 14 February 2021), 17 February 2021, [url](#); Pajhwok Afghan News, Bridge blown up on Kabul-Jalalabad highway, 26 May 2021, [url](#); Tolonews, Taliban Increase Presence on Kabul-Jalalabad Highway: Drivers, 3 December 2020, [url](#)

³⁵⁰ Pajhwok Afghan News, No security issue on 2nd Kabul-Jalalabad highway: Locals, 20 May 2021, [url](#)

³⁵¹ Pajhwok Afghan News, In 10 years, only 40pc work done on Kabul-Jalalabad road, 4 November 2020, [url](#)

³⁵² Pajhwok Afghan News, Taliban blow up bridge on Kabul-Jalalabad road, 9 April 2021, [url](#); Khaama Press, Taliban destroys bridge on Kabul-Jalalabad highway, 7 April 2021, [url](#)

³⁵³ Mansfield D., Mules, Pick-ups and Container Traffic: Cross-Border Production and Trade and the Shaping of the Political Economy of Nangarhar, AREU, June 2020, [url](#), p. 33

³⁵⁴ Pajhwok Afghan News, Bridge linking 4 Nangarhar districts blown up, 18 October 2020, [url](#)

³⁵⁵ Pajhwok Afghan News, No security issue on 2nd Kabul-Jalalabad highway: Locals, 20 May 2021, [url](#)

³⁵⁶ Xinhua, Pakistan receives 1st Afghan export since COVID-19 pandemic, 23 June 2020, [url](#); Dawn, [url](#), 15 December 2020, [url](#)

including on the stretch of road from Jalalabad to the Torkham border crossing.³⁵⁷ However, incidents along the Jalalabad-Torkham highway continued to be reported during this reporting period.³⁵⁸

At various times in recent years, the Pakistani government has closed the border with Afghanistan or tightened the border crossing rules for Afghans. Clashes have regularly led to the closure of the border, as for example in March 2017, when the Spin Boldak and Torkham borders were closed for almost 23 days after an incident between Afghan border police and Pakistani officials turned into an armed clash.³⁵⁹ In 2020 and 2021 there were also occasional reports on the temporary closure of the border crossing due to protests or clashes.³⁶⁰ In the period under review, the Torkham border crossing was closed a number of times for a longer period of time, due to COVID-19 movement restrictions. This resulted in thousands of people crossing the border once it reopened.³⁶¹ Closures of the Torkham border crossing affect the residents of Jalalabad. They also affect the freedom of movement of citizens in the wider region and hamper regional trade activities.³⁶²

³⁵⁷ Landinfo, Sikkerhetssituasjon og konfliktmønster i 2019 [Afghanistan: Security situation and conflict pattern in 2019], 22 January 2020, [url](#), p. 26

³⁵⁸ Pajhwok Afghan News, 2 civilians, 3 security men wounded in Nangarhar blast, 2 January 2021, [url](#)

³⁵⁹ Sabawoon, Ali M., The Gates of Friendship: How Afghans cross the Afghan-Pakistani border, AAN, 28 January 2020, [url](#)

³⁶⁰ Pajhwok Afghan News, Passengers stranded as Pakistan closes Torkham gate, 29 January 2020, [url](#); Garda, Afghanistan, Pakistan: Torkham border crossing closed as of May 28 due to violent protests, 28 May 2021, [url](#); Avapress, Torkham crossing closed for a few hours due to standoff between border guards, 22 November 2020, [url](#); UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Humanitarian Update (16 – 22 November 2020), 25 November 2020, [url](#)

³⁶¹ UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Humanitarian Update (30 March to 5 April 2020), 9 April 2020, [url](#); UNOCHA, Afghanistan: Weekly Humanitarian Update (6 April – 12 April 2020), 16 April 2020, [url](#); UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Humanitarian Update (20 April to 26 April 2020), 29 April 2020, [url](#); Pajhwok Afghan News, 'Nearly 80,000 Afghans returned from Pakistan in 4-day', 10 April 2020, [url](#)

³⁶² Reuters, Pakistan PM orders border re-opening amid tense Afghanistan ties, 20 March 2017, [url](#); Tribune, Torkham, Chaman border crossing reopen for trade, traffic, 21 October 2018, [url](#); UNOCHA, Afghanistan Weekly Humanitarian Update | 4 May to 10 May 2020, 13 May 2020, [url](#); Dawn, Exports to Afghanistan suspended as clearing agents go on strike, 15 December 2020, [url](#)

Summary

One of Afghanistan's five largest cities, Jalalabad has a strategic location and fulfils the role of regional capital of the eastern region of the country. Sources indicate that Jalalabad city extends beyond the Jalalabad district boundaries and comprises parts of surrounding districts, such as Behsud and Surkhrod.

Campaigns by Afghan and international forces, the Taliban and armed locals against ISKP have weakened, but not entirely wiped out the group. As in the past, ISKP again showed resilience and remained active in 2020 and 2021. In 2021, the group was still considered to be a threat, retaining urban (sleeper) cells in Jalalabad and elsewhere. Sources noted an increase in ISKP activity in Afghanistan, especially in the eastern region and in Jalalabad in early 2021.

Both the Taliban and the Afghan government were able to expand control in Nangarhar after their offensives against ISKP. The government maintained its control over Jalalabad and – almost entirely – over Behsud. Surkhrod district, however, was one of Nangarhar's districts said to be mostly under Taliban control. After an initial calmer period in the wake of the signing of the Doha agreement between the US and the Taliban in February 2020, by the summer of 2020 the Taliban appeared to resume or increase its activities in districts such as Surkhrod. More Taliban activity was also noted in Surkhrod in March and April 2021.

Reflecting a countrywide phenomenon, the majority of anti-government attacks in Jalalabad in the reporting period were attributed to unidentified armed groups. The remaining were almost equally attributed to the Taliban and ISKP. In Surkhrod district, most were attributed to the Taliban.

Following a decrease in 2019, the number of civilian casualties in Nangarhar province documented by UNAMA decreased again in 2020 by 46 % compared to the previous year. Suicide attacks were the primary cause of civilian casualties in Nangarhar province in 2020. Detailed figures on civilian casualties in Jalalabad, Behsud and Surkhrod districts were not (made) available.

With 109 violent events coded by ACLED, Jalalabad ranked second in terms of districts with the highest number of security incidents in Nangarhar province between 1 February 2020 and 31 May 2021. IED-incidents remained the most prevalent type of violence in Jalalabad. Within Nangarhar province, Jalalabad was the district most affected by IED-incidents as well as by incidents of violence against civilians. Targeted attacks are not new to Jalalabad, but they increased in the reporting period, as in other places, like Kabul.

Jalalabad is also one of the large cities in Afghanistan affected by crime.

Between 1 February 2020 and 31 May 2021, thirteen violent events were registered in Behsud district and fifty in Surkhrod district. While violence in those two districts was mostly directed against security forces or insurgents, some of the incidents also caused civilian casualties. IED-incidents were the most prevalent type of violence in Behsud, while in Surkhrod most security incidents were armed clashes.

As sources only rarely mention the exact location of a violent incident within a certain district, the location of all incidents could not be determined or verified. ISKP claimed responsibility for a suicide attack in a part of Behsud district that is considered as belonging to the Jalalabad city region. Out of twelve incidents in Surkhrod district for which the exact location was mentioned and could be determined, eleven occurred outside the Surkhrod zone considered to be part of the Jalalabad city region.

No displacement due to conflict was registered from Jalalabad, Behsud and Surkhrod districts in the period under review, but all three districts hosted IDPs seeking refuge in Nangarhar province, mainly

from within the province, but also from neighbouring Kunar province. Surkhrod received up to 40 % of all IDPs to Nangarhar in the reporting period. All three districts also host returnees.

A combination of rapid population growth, rural-urban migration and displacement is further increasing pressure on urban centres and leading to an ever-increasing demand for local facilities and basic services. The increasing population density is putting a strain on the existing services and infrastructures in the city of Jalalabad.

Jalalabad can only be reached by road from Kabul. The Kabul-Jalalabad Highway, a strategically important route, is notorious for its heavy traffic, and frequent accidents. Security incidents on the highway continued to be reported in the period under review.

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