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## Fears of civil war in Afghanistan

By: Mirwais Jalalzai

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Recent violence allegedly sparked by the behavior of Arbaki forces (pro government militants) and local warlords in north, central and southwestern provinces of Afghanistan has raised fears that the planned withdrawal of international forces by 2014 could lead to renewed violence even in the generally more peaceful central Kabul province the capital of the country.

“Violence has been increasing, since the Hamid Karzai government has been in power we have not seen such high levels of violence here,” said Mojeeb Wafa , head of a women support NGO in the central Maidan wardak province 40 km from Kabul “Before, we didn’t have cases of militia killing women and children- not even once a year. This year we have already seen several cases.”

The foreign force pull out and security transition, which has started, will see the Afghan military take over from the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) by the end of 2014, but NGOs say the situation in the country is tricky, with rising violence against civilians, growing internal displacement, and increasing protection concerns.

Violence has increased in all around the country even in capital Kabul the most secure place in the country since the drawdown got under way, according to local human rights activist Maiwand Mohajeer. “When the Americans and western allies were here, these old Mujahedin

(holly fighters) commanders – now Afghan Local Police – felt if they did anything wrong they would be held accountable. When they were going to commit a crime, they would think twice. But now they know that every issue ends with the Afghan government and courts, and many of them have strong links with top government officials, so they feel they can do anything they want. And this is why personally I am scared of them because they are not care of human rights even their religion Islam.”

Making matters worse is the fact that people are re-arming in the country, said Mojeeb a university student in Kabul. “If the international community is no longer there, many of the commanders and militia think they will have to be responsible for everything and everyone by themselves because too many of them are in the power or have close relation with the corrupt Afghan ministers, parliament member and local elders. There are many feuds in the villages. It’s not uncommon for two commanders from separate villages to have problems with each other. Now that they are armed again and it is easy for them to target each other without anyone overseeing them or holding them responsible.”

## **Impunity**

Afghan and international human rights groups such as Amnesty International have raised concerns over the American CIA backed Afghan Local Police (ALP) program, in which locals are hired and armed with guns and (RPG) rockets to keep the Taliban out of their villages where Afghan national security forces international coalition forces have weak or no presence.

In a recent report by New York based human rights watch and Afghan independent human rights commission, the Arbaki force which are the same like local militants rise major concern as a result of the local police assuming more power: the weakening of the state’s national sovereignty, an increase in violence and insecurity in communities, and growing crime and human rights violations by local police.

In a recent case, two young sisters, 12 and 16 were abducted by men of an Arbaki commander in Dehsala distract of northern Baghlan province.

“The girls war raped in the same night by the CIA backed local police and the dead body of one them was found near to their village after few days,” uncle of the girls said . “They raped my 16-years-old girl, and then killed her. The other girl was raped on the same nights and we found her after few days in a very critical condition, few km away from our area, she is badly abused physically and mentally,” he said on the condition that his name should not be mentioned.

Kabul based national human rights activists say questions regarding US backed Arbaki forces which is called Afghan Local Police (ALP’s) capability to serve local communities, and their awareness of (and ability to comply with) the law, have been raised since the group’s recruitment in just beginning of 2010 by US spy agency CIA and special forces . Now, as they assume more responsibility with fewer oversight mechanisms in place, what human rights groups predicted would happen, is happening: they and other local militants such us Taliban, warlords, and Hezb-e-Islami Group are committing series crimes and escaping punishment.

In Andar District, Ghazni Province, at least 10 people have been killed in the past 4 months due to infighting between two rival local police commanders, although the Afghan government says the Arbaki forces (local police) are under the National police command. In Chardro district of northern Kunduz province on the route to central Asian countries, has recorded similar incidents.

Villagers from Chardro say militia arrested in connection with the recent human rights abuses were released from prison by the direct order of Afghan National Police (ANP) commanders. “Why is the Americans, NATO and Afghan national forces looking for Taliban; why are they not capturing this commander of local police force that has committed crimes several time in the villages under his command?” the villagers said.

In the most recent high-profile case, some Arbaki men led by one of the province’s first commanders to undergo the US special forces ALP program, were accused of kidnapping a 22-year-old woman, holding her hostage for almost one week and repeatedly raped her in their base in Logar province 50 km south of capital Kabul. Afghan officials initially denied the claim, only later admitting the ALP’s involvement after local and international media highlighted the incident. The commander has still not been arrested. Observers say the case highlights the militia’s impunity.

“Today, if you ask the people how the situation is they will tell you that they are very unhappy and scary about the future of their country there is no one to keep eye on the situation.”

“We all Afghans know the situation is worst and the knife reach the boon,” said Mahbobullah employer of a US contractor company Contract International, “But, the local police are the only way to keep the Taliban out the villages, so what can the US force and afghan government do?”

Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), said, while they do not specifically track families leaving villages due to Arbaki and other militia-related conflict, it is “highly likely” that growing abuses on the part of the police and militia are adding to rising numbers of internally displaced persons.

Many Afghans feel nervous about the situation of their country beyond 2014 that are quite afraid, because a huge number of Afghan citizens have arms in their houses. Approximately 300,000 guns including machine guns, RPGs and anti tank missiles are unregistered inside the country, an Afghan MOI official says. “Almost every family has arms – everyone has not been disarmed by the government yet, so we’re scared that a war will begin again after the international force pullout.”