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Illegal gunmen kill 40, injure dozens in Baghlan this year

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Illegal armed individuals, believed to be numbering more than 1,000, have so far killed nearly 40 people and injured dozens more this year in northern Baghlan province, a public representative said on Sunday.

Most of such illegal armed groups are active in Andarabha zone consisting Banu, Deh Salah and Pul-i-Hisar districts. They are notorious for harassing people and causing casualties to civilians during their infightings.

A member of the provincial council, Mohamad Zarif Zarif, expressed his concern about the presence of illegal armed groups, saying these gunmen had killed 40 civilians and injured dozens others this year.

“There is no security for people and they cannot travel and even can’t sleep at night due to the activities of armed groups,” he said, asking the government to take urgent steps disbanding these illegal armed groups in the province. “Otherwise the situation will become more critical.”

In August, 22 wedding guests, including two children, were killed and nine others wounded during a clash between two illegal local commanders in Deh Salah district. Just two weeks ago, three brothers were killed by armed men due to prior enemy in Banu district.

At least 20 civilians, most of them residents of Andarab district, were killed by illegal armed men last year.

Baghlan police chief Col. Abdur Rashid Bashir said more than 1,000 illegal armed men were active in the province, torturing local people.

He said they had the plan to disarm these armed men through local elders. If the armed men did not hand over their weapons, the Afghan forces would forcibly disarm them, Bashir added.

A day earlier, three tonnes of ammunition and 17 different weapons were handed over to the Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG) programme officials after being seized from different areas of Baghlan.

However, Bashir said six tonnes of ammunition, mortar shells, rockets, artillery, BM1 and 70 different weapons seized this year had been handed over to DIAG in three phases.

DIAG chief Lt. Col. Lala Gul said the campaign would continue and collecting more weapons from illegal armed men would be discussed in meetings with security forces.

“The DIAG programme could not be implemented this year because Afghan forces were busy fighting against militants,” he said.