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Human rights group criticizes Afghanistan's pro-government militias

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Kabul - A human rights group in Afghanistan highlighted the emergence of pro-government armed groups and their misdeeds in a report published Tuesday.

'These groups have been deplored as criminal and predatory by many Afghans and been accused of severe human rights violations such as child recruitment and sexual abuse,' the report by Afghanistan Rights Monitor said.

The Kabul-based independent human rights organization has been monitoring and reporting on rights violations since 2008.

Earlier this week, the Afghan government signed an agreement with the United Nations to stop recruiting children to security forces.

The government has been hiring and equipping local militias, supported by the United States and NATO allies, in a bid to fill the security gaps and combat the insurgency.

Afghans are concerned that the reemergence of militia groups will revive and empower old criminal gangs and warlords that have a record of killing, abuse and violating human rights, the report said.

'But little or nothing has been done by the Afghan government to ensure the militias operate within the legal boundaries and held accountable for their misdeeds,' the group said in its annual report on the civilian casualties of war.

In some instances, it said, civilians were shot dead by the pro-government militias and dubbed 'suspected insurgents.'

The group also said it recorded accusations against US and NATO forces that civilians had suffered heavy casualties in areas where the international troops had conducted operations.