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[www.afgazad.com](http://www.afgazad.com)

[afgazad@gmail.com](mailto:afgazad@gmail.com)

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## Civilian Deaths in Afghanistan

### Germany Clears Way to Compensate Kunduz Bombing Victims



Members of the community attend a funeral following the deadly air strike near Kunduz, Afghanistan in September

After mulling the issue for months, the German government is preparing to pay compensation in the wake of the Sept. 4 bombing near Kunduz in northern Afghanistan that caused numerous civilian deaths. But Berlin could still face lawsuits over the controversial air strike.

Families of the victims of the deadly [air strike](#) on Sept. 4 near Kunduz ordered by Germany's Bundeswehr armed forces are expected to receive compensation of, on average, €4,000 (\$5,173) each, SPIEGEL has learned. In the next few weeks, commanders at the German base in the northern Afghanistan provincial capital are expected to call a meeting of village elders in the affected region around Chahar Dara that is also to be attended by the Afghan human rights organization AIHRC and the International Organization for Migration.

During the meeting, relatives of the civilian victims and those identified as injured during the attack are to be compensated as quickly as possible. The German military has allocated a total budget of €400,000 for the compensation, which is being provided as a service "without recognition of any legal liability." The Bundeswehr's deployment staff have issued a directive stating that the "financial contribution" can be processed "in installments" or as a "payment in kind."

### **Chaotic Deliberations?**

Among the ideas being discussed for "in kind" payments, is the possibility of purchasing cattle for the families of the victims. Meanwhile, the German Defense Ministry has broken off talks with two Bremen-based attorneys who claim to be representing the interests of 80 victims because of a lack of clarity over their mandate. The two attorneys are now threatening to sue the Bundeswehr for damages over the alleged chaos that has ensued in deliberations over possible compensation for the victims. In particular, they have criticized leaders in the German Defense Ministry, who they claim did not take independent steps to determine the identity of possible civilian victims who were among the 142 who died.

The Bundeswehr had ordered the air strikes after Taliban hijacked two tanker trucks, and the bombs were dropped as dozens of people tried to tap fuel from the vehicles. The lawyers said to be representing the families claim the ministry had been ill-prepared for dealing with the demands they had issued to the Defense Ministry.

But now Defense Minister Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg of the Christian Social Union -- the Bavarian sister party to Chancellor Angela Merkel's Christian Democratic Union -- has opened the path for individual compensation to be paid out to victims' families during the coming weeks, SPIEGEL reports in its Monday issue.

The bombing sparked a major [national debate](#) in Germany about the country's role in Afghanistan, forcing leading politicians to admit that rather than participating in a civilian reconstruction and peacekeeping mission, Bundeswehr soldiers there found themselves in a "war-like" situation. The German parliament is currently investigating the bombings.