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Report: 2010 worst for Afghanistan

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The current year has been the most violent in Afghanistan since the US-led forces invaded the land-locked central Asian country in 2001, an Afghan rights group has said.

According to the Afghanistan Rights Monitor (ARM), civilian deaths have risen amid increased insecurity and the Taliban remains far from being defeated.

"In terms of insecurity, 2010 has been the worst year since the demise of the Taliban regime in late 2001," it said on Monday.

"Not only have the number of security incidents increased, the space and depth of the insurgency and counter-insurgency-related violence have maximised dramatically," ARM said.

About 1,074 civilians were killed and more than 1,500 injured in war-related incidents in the first six months of 2010, compared with 1,059 killed in the same period last year, ARM said.

Taliban 'resilient'

In late December, Barack Obama, the US president, ordered an extra 30,000 American troops into Afghanistan as part of a new strategy designed to reverse the Taliban momentum and speed up an end to the nine-year war.

But ARM's mid-year report entitled "Civilian Casualties of Conflict", said that Obama's policy of intensifying operations against the Taliban has not disrupted, dismantled or defeated the fighters.

On the contrary, it says, "the insurgency has become more resilient, multi-structured and deadly".

"Up to 1,200 security incidents were record in June, the highest number of incidents compared to any month since 2002," it said.

Most civilian deaths - 661 - were caused by Taliban fighters, who showed "little or no respect for the safety and protection of non-combatants in their armed rebellion against the government and its foreign supporters", it said.

The United States and Nato have more than 140,000 troops in Afghanistan with another 10,000 due in coming weeks as part of the counter-insurgency strategy.

The Taliban's main weapon, homemade bombs known as improvised explosive devices, were blamed for most of the deaths and injuries among Afghan civilians in the period, ARM said.

ARM said that suicide attacks by Taliban bombers were the second biggest killer of civilians in the first half of this year, killing 127 non-combatants.

It said a reduction in air strikes, ordered by the former commander of foreign forces, US General Stanley McChrystal, had resulted in fewer civilian deaths attributed to US-led forces.