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**Humanitarian Directed Violence in Afghanistan:  
Neutrality and Humanitarian Space.**

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## Acronyms

ACBAR	Agency Co-ordinating Body for Afghan Relief
ANSO	Afghan NGO Security Office
BAAG	British Agencies Afghanistan Group
DFID	Department for International Development, UK Government
DIIS	Dutch Institute of International Studies
ECHO	European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office, UK Government
GAO	The United States General Accounting Office
HABITAT	United Nations Human Settlement Programme
HRW	Human Rights Watch
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
IHRL	International Human Rights Law
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IAM	International Assistance Mission
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ISI	Inter-Service Intelligence
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NGO	Non- Government Organisation
OSAC	Overseas Security Advisory Council
PDPA	Communist Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
UK	United Kingdom
UK-MoD	United Kingdom Ministry of Defence
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Childrens Fund
URD	Urgence Rehabilitation Development
US	United States (of America)
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
WHO	World Health Organisation

## Abstract

The increased violence towards humanitarian workers represents an insidious trend throughout Afghanistan. Humanitarian workers have become legitimised targets since the 2001 US led invasion of Afghanistan in *Operation Enduring Freedom*.

The increased identification of NGOs with Western military forces and the Afghan government makes the aid community a target by association, whether it is a real or perceived association by the belligerents. Neutrality for NGOs in Afghanistan has been lost.

Overwhelmingly, authors and aid practitioners make clear statements about NGOs being legitimised for violence due to the perception of complicity, propagated by either the armed forces themselves or Coalition political leaders. However, army officers involved in the civilian-military relationship are dismissive of the NGOs plight and believe the issue of NGO neutrality to be overplayed.

Indeed the Coalition's Provincial Reconstruction Teams and the NATO commander in Afghanistan believe that the lack of co-ordination or pooling of NGOs' resources with the military or one another is an impediment to development and improving the security in Afghanistan.

The Taliban have gained de facto military control over a growing number of provinces, emanating from the South with humanitarian space in that environment diminished so as to be non-existent.

The civilian-military relationship is not responsible for the loss of humanitarian space in its entirety. Opium production, warlord-ism, banditry, corruption, conflict of cultures, religion, and external funding of terrorism marry to produce a uniquely hostile environment not conducive to humanitarian intervention. The lack of heterogeneity between what NGOs agree is acceptable collusion in a civilian-military context also makes it unlikely that accepted operating procedures will be adopted by the civilian humanitarian community as a whole.



