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94 self-immolation cases registered in western Afghanistan

By Ahmad Quraishi

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HERAT CITY - Over the past year, 94 cases of self-immolation were registered in western

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Afghanistan, where 88 of the incidents involved women, an official said on Wednesday.

A year before, when 95 cases of self-immolation were recorded, 54 people, including seven men, had died of burns, according to Dr. Mohammad Arif Jalali, based in Herat City, the provincial capital.

About last year's death toll, he said, 59 people, including four men, had died after setting themselves on fire.

Jalali said 60 percent of the cases took place in districts and 15 in the city of Herat while 25 percent in neighbouring provinces, such as Farah, Ghor, Badghis, Nimroz, and Helmand.

The doctor saw family disputes, poverty, forced marriage, drug addiction and underage marriage as major reasons behind the cases.

Typically, young women are often burnt by fuel or cooking oil. Many suffer terrible scars and in some cases the injuries prove fatal.

The women under treatment in hospitals refused to speak to this scribe about the reasons behind their extreme step.