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Rights Commission: Afghan Civilian Deaths Up in 2010

By Jason Ditz

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Record [death tolls for foreign troops](#) in Afghanistan are regularly reported and lamented, but seldom is data available on the civilian toll of the war. Today, however, Afghanistan's human rights commission reported that the first 7 months of 2010 saw a 6 percent increase over 2009.

The [figures from the commission said 1,325 civilians were killed and blamed the Taliban for 68 percent of them](#). Both the figures and the "blame" percentages are doubtless matters of no small contention, particularly in the wake of WikiLeaks documents which showed a large number of the civilians killed by the US troops have traditionally gone unreported in the press.

[Even when killings are admitted to reliable figures are difficult to obtain](#), but the IHRC figures are still valuable in showing the trend of the death toll which, as with all negative metrics in Afghanistan, is on the rise.

Official codes of conduct for both the international forces and [the Taliban insurgency](#) pay particular attention to the importance of avoiding civilian deaths, as a strategy for trying to convince the civilian population to support their side over the other. Yet the figures suggest neither side is particularly successful in avoiding those killings, and polls continue to show that, by and large, civilians aren't keen on either force.