

LETTER

### **CIVILIAN CASUALTIES**

Around 92,000 leaked US military files on the war in Afghanistan covering the period 2004-2009 were released on 25 July, 2010 by the website Wikileaks.

“The picture that emerges from the leaked data on civilian casualties is that NATO’s leadership did not know exactly what was happening on the ground,” said Sam Zarifi, Amnesty International’s Asia-Pacific Director. “The military logs bear out Amnesty International’s longstanding concerns that there is no coherent or consistent system for accounting for civilian casualties.”

The leaked documents show better monitoring of incidents after new rules of engagement were put in place in June 2009 by the former NATO commander, US General Stanley McChrystal.

But since General McChrystal’s dismissal in June 2010, his replacement, US General David Petraeus has been under pressure from military officials and US lawmakers to ease restrictions that had provided more protection to civilians.

“Those leaks need to galvanise the NATO command into redoubling their protection of civilians. Killings must be investigated in a transparent, consistent and coherent way across all the different forces in Afghanistan, providing justice and compensation for victims and their families,” said Sam Zarifi.

Amnesty International reports on civilian casualties such as the Kunduz airstrike of September 2009 and the killing of two brothers in a Kandahar night raid in 2008 found that international forces were failing to account for civilian casualties in a systematic manner.

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