

UN News 7 June 2009 Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has called for more robust measures to protect civilians caught in the middle of armed conflict, noting the “appalling levels of human suffering” endured due to the failure of combatants to fully respect international law.

“Civilians still account for the vast majority of casualties and continue to be targeted and subjected to indiscriminate attacks and other violations by parties to conflict,” Mr. Ban wrote in his latest [report](#) on the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

Mr. Ban said that “for all the reports, resolutions and actions of the last decade, the situation that confronts civilians in current conflicts is depressingly similar to that which prevailed in 1999,” when the Security Council took on the concern as a thematic issue.

The changing nature of combatants over the last 10 years, with a growing number of non-State armed factions in places such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan and Somalia, has seriously endangered civilians as these groups “flagrantly violate international law” in a bid to overcome their military inferiority, said Mr. Ban. (...)

“Common to old and new ones alike are persistent and sometimes appalling levels of human suffering owing to the fundamental failure of parties to conflict to fully respect and ensure respect for their obligations to protect civilians,” wrote Mr. Ban.

The failure of warring parties to respect “their legal obligations to protect civilians and spare them from the effects of hostilities” is a defining feature of most conflicts, leading to the death and injury of hundreds of civilians every week and forcing thousands more to flee their home to escape the violence, the report said.

The Secretary-General called for determined efforts to meet five critical challenges facing the protection of civilians in armed conflict: enhancing compliance to international law; enhancing compliance by non-State armed groups; enhancing protection through more effective and better resourced UN peacekeeping and other relevant missions; enhancing humanitarian access; and enhancing accountability for violations.

Source:

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=31176&Cr=protection+of+civilians&Cr1>

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Report of the SG on the protection of civilians:

<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N09/343/97/PDF/N0934397.pdf?OpenElement>

