

UN deplores pre-election killings and attacks, urges Afghans to defy terror, and vote

With just hours to go before Saturday's parliamentary elections in Afghanistan, the UN has been expressing concern at the uptick in deadly political violence in the country, whilst encouraging Afghans to exercise their right to vote.

In a [statement](#) released on Friday, the UN mission in Afghanistan ([UNAMA](#)) called for the elections to be held in a safe and secure environment, at a time when Taliban extremists have indicated their intention to attack schools used as polling stations. UNAMA urged the militants not to threaten civilians or attack them simply for exercising their right to vote.

Responding to the killing of senior Afghan government officials in Kandahar on Thursday, for which the Taliban reportedly claimed responsibility, the Mission's statement condemned the attack which has "contributed to a feeling of uncertainty and insecurity at a moment when many Afghan citizens were preparing to exercise their constitutional right to elect their representatives."

Following the killings, voting in Kandahar will be postponed for one week.

UNAMA declared that schools, voters and civilians working in polling stations cannot be regarded as military targets, and that international humanitarian law "explicitly prohibits attacks against civilians and acts or threats of violence aimed at terrorizing the civilian population."

United Nations Secretary-General [António Guterres](#) and the members of the [Security Council](#) added their own calls for Afghan voters to be protected from political violence.

Mr. Guterres said in a statement that, through the act of voting, Afghans will "contribute to the development of sustainable democratic institutions and creating conditions conducive for a more stable and peaceful Afghanistan," and called on all political leaders to "work together to ensure full respect for the electoral process, in which every voter, in particular women and minority groups, will be able to cast their ballot."

The Security Council statement also condemned "in the strongest terms" the Afghan attacks that have taken place over recent weeks, underscoring the importance of a secure voting environment, and emphasizing that "violence in any form, or the threat thereof, intended to disrupt the elections and democratic process in Afghanistan is unacceptable."