

AFGHANISTAN | Displacement and Protection Risks Severity Analysis - Afghanistan-Pakistan Military Escalation

Updated on 31 March 2026

Situation Overview

Since 26 February, airstrikes and cross-border clashes between Afghanistan and Pakistan have escalated into sustained hostilities through the end of March. Six provinces have reported displacement, while twelve provinces have experienced airstrikes or active clashes. Drone strikes, anti-aircraft fire, and explosions have also been recorded across multiple areas. Hostilities remain ongoing in several provinces as of 31 March.

KEY FIGURES			
2026 HNRP Figures		Afghanistan-Pakistan Military Escalation Figures ⁱ	
19.5M	14M	473K¹	283K
POPULATION LIVING IN 12 AFFECTED PROVINCES	Population living in 12 Affected provinces with protection risks (HNRP)	Population exposed to conflict-related protection risks (model) in 12 Affected provinces	PROJECTED PEOPLE DISPLACED IN 60 AFFECTED DISTRICTS of 10 Affected provinces
<i>Kabul, Kandahar, Khost, Kunar, Laghman Nangarhar, Nuristan, Parwan, Paktia, Paktika, Panjshir Zabul provinces</i>			

Overview and Context

This is the **second update of the predictive analysis**, building on the initial assessment conducted on 17 March 2026. This update incorporates newly available data collected in mid-to-late March, including additional findings from the Protection Rapid Needs Assessment (PRNA), CRNA, updated ACLED conflict event data, protection risk severity and expanded explosive ordnance (EO) hazard contamination data.

The updated analysis reflects **increased conflict intensity, expanded geographic coverage, and revised estimates of displacement and protection risk exposure**. As a result, both projected displacement and population exposure figures have increased compared to the previous analysis. Two additional provinces (Panjshir and Zabul) have been included in this update based on newly available data and evolving conflict dynamics.

Projected displacement increased from **215K → 283K**
Population exposed to risks increased from **338K → 473K**

The model estimates potential conflict-related displacement and population exposure to protection risks at the province level across Afghanistan. The purpose of the analysis is to provide an **early warning perspective** on where displacement may occur and where populations are most likely to experience protection risks if current conflict dynamics persist.

Methodology

The model estimates displacement and protection risk exposure by combining conflict intensity, population distribution, and vulnerability indicators.

¹ While approximately 14 million people live in provinces where protection risks are present, the model estimates that around 473,000 people are currently exposed to conflict-related protection threats linked to the recent escalation. The difference reflects the modelling approach, which assumes that only a portion of district populations are directly affected by conflict events rather than the entire provincial population.

Exposure to conflict is calculated using a proxy approach that assumes only a portion of the population within affected districts is directly impacted by conflict events. This avoids overestimating exposure across entire district populations. The proportion of exposed population varies depending on the intensity and frequency of conflict events.

Projected displacement is derived by applying a calibrated displacement share to the estimated exposed population. This calibration is informed by field data collected through CRNA and PRNA assessments in conflict-affected districts.

Protection risk exposure is calculated by combining district-level protection severity scores with conflict intensity. The model estimates the proportion of the exposed population likely to experience protection risks, including violence against civilians, gender-based violence, movement restrictions, forced recruitment, and psychological harm.

All results should be interpreted as forward-looking estimates, not confirmed figures.

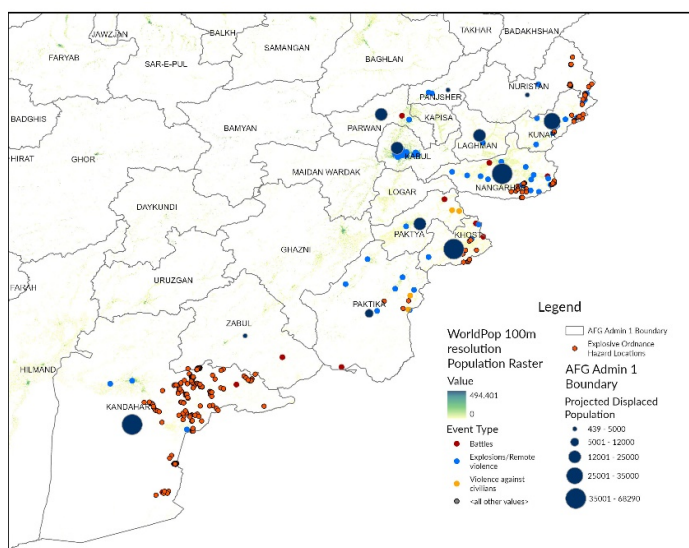


Figure 2: Projected Displacement

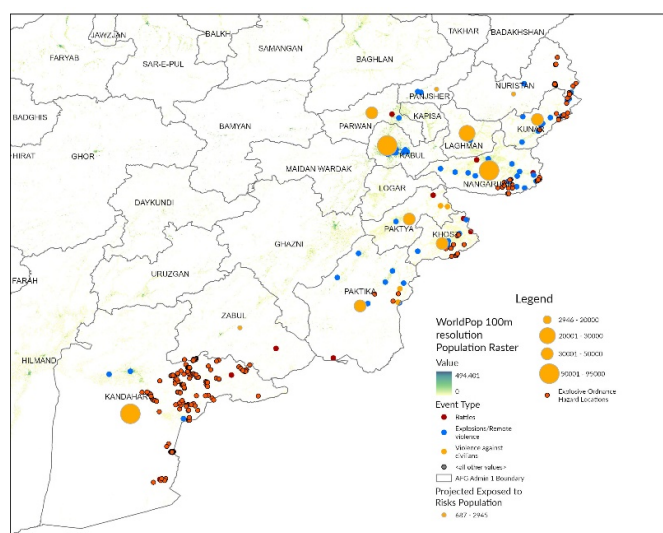


Figure 1: Projected People Exposed to Risks (PER)

Key Conclusions

Emerging Displacement Hotspots

The updated analysis identifies Nangarhar, Kandahar, and Kunar as the provinces with the highest projected displacement levels. These areas reflect overlapping conflict intensity, high protection risk severity, and large exposed populations.

Rising Protection Risk Exposure

Approximately 473,000 people are estimated to be exposed to conflict-related protection risks across affected districts. Exposure remains concentrated in eastern and southeastern regions, where hostilities and cross-border tensions continue.

Divergence Between Exposure and Displacement

Not all exposed populations are expected to be displaced. Several districts show high protection risk exposure with lower displacement projections, indicating populations may remain in place while facing significant protection threats.

Increased Displacement Risk

If current conflict dynamics persist or intensify, an estimated 284,000 people could be displaced. This represents a significant increase compared to the previous analysis and underscores the need for preparedness.

Priority Areas for Response

Districts with overlapping high displacement projections and protection risks should be prioritized for:

- Shelter and emergency assistance
- Protection services and monitoring
- Contingency planning and coordination

Continued Monitoring

Given the rapidly evolving security situation, displacement patterns and protection risks may shift quickly. Continued monitoring of conflict events, displacement trends, and protection indicators will be essential to refine projections and inform response planning.

Limitations

Changes in projected figures between updates reflect both evolving conflict dynamics and improved data availability, including expanded geographic coverage and additional assessment inputs. Results should therefore be interpreted with caution and not as direct measures of change on the ground alone.

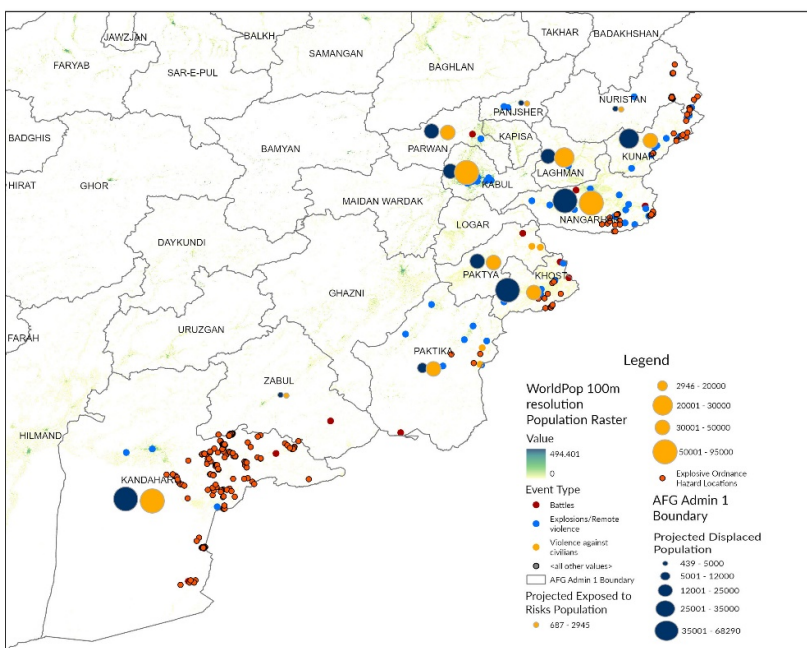


Figure 3: ACLED Events, EO Hazards, PRNA, CRNA, Displaced and Exposed to Risks Population

ANNEX 'A': Datasets Used

Dataset	Description	Source
Afghanistan Community Rapid Needs Assessment (CRNA) 15 March 2026	Protection indicators from the assessment were used to inform the calibration of protection risk severity and displacement assumptions in districts with recent conflict exposure.	Online Dashboard
Afghanistan_ADM2.shp	Administrative boundaries (district level).	OCHA Common Operational Dataset (COD).
Protection Risks Severity dataset	District-level protection risk severity scores (1–5).	Protection Cluster (2025 ICCT input).
Displaced and non-displaced dataset	Data from 2026 HNRP on affected population	OCHA
Population dataset	WorldPop 2026 population dataset at 100-meter resolution	WorldPop
Protection Rapid Needs Assessment (PRNA) 24 March 2026	PRNA is a quick, field-based evaluation (HH and KII level)	APC
Explosive Ordnance Hazard	Explosive Ordnance Contamination hazard data	Mine Action response

ANNEX 'B': Projected Displaced and Exposed to Risks by Provinces

adm1_name	adm1_pcode	Projected Displaced Population	Projected Exposed to Risks Population
NANGARHAR	AF06	68,290	93,240
KANDAHAR	AF27	59,369	89,922
KHOST	AF14	35,551	32,132
KUNAR	AF15	28,181	33,343
KABUL	AF01	22,838	84,936
PAKTYA	AF13	22,677	33,391
LAGHMAN	AF07	18,143	25,721
PARWAN	AF03	12,447	35,628
PAKTIKA	AF12	10,231	39,290
NURISTAN	AF16	4,985	2,945
ZABUL	AF26	-	1,417
PANJSHIR	AF08	-	687
Total		282,712	472,652

ⁱ Previous humanitarian planning estimates suggested that approximately 14 million people across the twelve eastern and southeastern provinces of Afghanistan were living in areas affected by protection risks. This updated analysis applies a more spatially targeted approach by incorporating recent ACLED conflict events, WorldPop data, EO Hazard and updated PRNA, CRNA inputs to estimate populations within a 2 km radius of active conflict. As a result, approximately 473,000 people are identified as currently exposed to protection risks—an increase from the previous analysis—reflecting both intensified conflict and improved data coverage. This lower, more refined figure does not indicate reduced needs but instead highlights populations facing immediate and heightened protection threats, compared to the wider population living in at-risk environments.