



Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief & Development

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No weapon

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Humanitarian inviolability is the ability of humanitarian relief agencies to act in situations of extreme human need and suffering particularly in circumstances of armed conflict, with the assurance that their personnel, their property, and their activities will not be attacked. It is a concept that is at the core of all humanitarian work, especially during conflict when the cooperation of the belligerent parties is essential to the relief of suffering and privation. It rests upon two pillars: neutrality which is the assurance by humanitarian agencies that their efforts are not in military and political support of either side, and impartiality which means such effort is rendered to the non-combatant of each side without distinction and according to need.

According to this, armed guards or the presence of weapons in NGOs' offices and guest houses could not be accepted for several major reasons:

- NGOs take no part in the conflict and they are supposed to be no threat to anyone, and therefore not to be a legitimate target.
- The presence of weapons in guesthouses or offices will likely be considered a threat. And presence of weapons may legitimate the person as a target for hostile people.
- The presence or weapons is sensitive, because weapons can be misused by anyone that gets them. Even in environments where weapons are authorized, safe storage and specific rules would need to be followed and this has certain costs.
- NGO personnel are not trained to use weapons and they cannot be affiliated with weapons in any case.
- Experience in Afghanistan shows that police are often a target. Any attack on police may have a spillover effect to surrounding areas and personnel. If police are attacked, the attackers will look for remaining personnel elsewhere. That elsewhere is usually the compound the police were supposed to guard. Police guards will always show that there is something or someone of interest inside the compound. No police makes it more difficult to spot those places. Police presence will also, over time, increase the chance of green on blue attacks. There are always trends of negative development.
- Per definition, NGOs and any armed governmental organization are not to be affiliated in any way.
- There are chances that popular support among the population will decrease if the NGOs are looked upon as affiliated with any agency which carries weapons.

Notes for Editors

- **ACBAR, the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief & Development**, is an Afghan independent body bringing together 128 national and international NGOs working in Afghanistan and abiding by the humanitarian principles of independence, neutrality, impartiality and humanity. As the collective voice of NGOs operating in Afghanistan, ACBAR's activities have focused heavily on providing information to its members / the aid community, coordination of activities at the national / regional levels, and advocacy on issues affecting the work of its members. <http://www.acbar.org>

- **Humanitarian Principles**

Humanity: Human suffering must be addressed wherever it is found. The purpose of Humanitarian action is to protect life and health and ensure respect for human beings.

Neutrality: Humanitarian actors must not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

Impartiality: Humanitarian action must be carried out on the basis of need alone, giving priority to the most urgent cases of distress and making no distinctions on the basis of nationality, race, gender, religious belief, class or political opinions.

Independence: Humanitarian action must be autonomous from the political, economic, military or other objectives that any actor may hold with regard to areas where humanitarian action is being implemented.

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