Every Casualty Counts
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www.everycasualty.org

Ahead of Remembrance Day, casualty recorders call on the UK to support their work worldwide

As the United Kingdom prepares to mark Remembrance Day, we, organisations documenting casualties in conflict and post-conflict settings across the world, call on the UK Government to strengthen its support for those documenting the human cost of armed conflict.

With direct conflict deaths rising in the past three decades, including tens of thousands of civilian deaths each year, the need for reliable, independent casualty recording is more urgent than ever. Across the world, from Ukraine to Ethiopia to Afghanistan, our organisations work to document those killed in armed conflict, establish their identities and the circumstances of their deaths, and preserve records of lives lost.

The UK is involved in many of these conflicts through humanitarian assistance, but also, in some cases, through arms exports or other forms of military support which directly contribute to the number of lives lost, including civilian lives. It has a legal and moral responsibility to ensure that these deaths are investigated and documented, in line with its commitment under Sustainable Development Goal 16.1 to reduce violence and related deaths.

Reliable casualty recording can support accountability for war crimes and inform efforts to prevent civilian harm. It can help families establish the fate of their loved ones, facilitate burial in accordance with local traditions, and support access to compensation and other forms of assistance. Accurate information on who has been killed, how many, and in what circumstances is vital for informed UK decision-making and effective, evidence-based responses to conflict.

Yet our casualty recording work is frequently carried out in the face of official indifference or active opposition. Ongoing hostilities and restrictions on access to affected areas frequently prevent us from being able to verify reports of deaths promptly and in person. In some cases, the scale of violence overwhelms the resources available to investigate. Casualty recorders and their families may face threats and reprisals, as may witnesses who provide information. Lack of political and financial support [from international actors like the UK?] hampers our ability to sustain this work, leaving many deaths unrecorded and families without answers.

We therefore urge the UK Government to:

1. **Embed casualty recording in UK foreign policy and programmes supported by the** Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, particularly those relating to the protection of civilians and post-conflict recovery, and ensure that independently collected casualty data informs relevant policy decisions.

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2. **Provide sustained political, financial and technical support to independent casualty recording organisations worldwide**, enabling them to document deaths safely and independently and protect sensitive information.
3. **Establish a standardised system within the Ministry of Defence to record, investigate and respond to civilian harm arising from UK military operations**, including allegations reported by independent casualty recording organisations, and ensure that findings are used to prevent further civilian deaths and injuries.

As the UK remembers those killed in past wars, it must also acknowledge and respond to the human cost of ongoing conflicts, especially those in which it plays a role.

Signatories:

Airwars
Action des Chrétiens pour l'Abolition de la Torture (ACAT)
Documenta – Center for Dealing with the Past
African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies (ACJPS)
Kalkal Human Rights Development Organization (KAHRDO)
Darfur Network for Human Rights (DNHR)
Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR)
Volontaires des Pays des Grands Lacs (VPGL)
Abdullahi Abukar (individual signatory)
Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO)
Colombian Campaign Against Landmines (CCCM)
Remembering The Ones We Lost (RAWL)
Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union (UHHRU)
Action on Armed Violence (AOAV)
Ukraine Memorial Platform (UMP)
Amhara Association of America (AAA)
Somali Awareness and Social Development Organization (SASDO)
Daryeel Human Rights Organization Ry (DHRO)
Global Society Initiative for Peace and Democracy (GLOSIPAD)
Collectif Défenseurs Plus
Afghanistan Human Rights and Democracy Organization (AHRDO)
Humanitarian Law Center Kosovo (HLCK)