

Joint NGO Statement on Casualty Recording

Reclaiming the Protection of Civilians under International Humanitarian Law Oslo, May 2013

The founding members¹ of the *Every Casualty Campaign* welcome the inclusion of casualty recording as a critical issue during the May 2013 Oslo Conference on 'Reclaiming the Protection of Civilians under International Humanitarian Law.' Noting that the UN Secretary-General's May 2012 *Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict* recognises that casualty recording can 'clarify the causes of harm to civilians as well as the action needed to end such harm and prevent its recurrence'², we encourage states to use this conference to:

- Acknowledge that casualty recording provides a vital contribution to the protection of civilians, in particular, its capacity to provide information that allows:
 - the appropriate planning of humanitarian responses;
 - an enhanced compliance with the law;
 - the recognition of patterns of harm and accountability for violations; and
 - an assessment of protection missions' effectiveness.
- Recognise the current lack of casualty recording practice in protection missions, whilst highlighting successful precedents such as UNAMA; and
- Commit to discussions towards improved casualty recording in situations of armed conflict.

A compelling concern

A ubiquitous challenge within conflicts is the lack of adequate information regarding civilian deaths. In cases such as Syria, Somalia, and South Sudan, where civilian protection is of great concern, there has been a scarcity of information on civilian casualties. This challenge is not limited to these conflicts, but extends globally.

The work of the Human Rights Council's Commissions of Inquiry³ and numerous NGOs⁴ has shown that recording casualties is essential to demonstrating the consequences of armed conflict on individuals and, in turn, for evaluating protection and accountability for their conduct and towards the victims. Despite this, casualty recording is not done systematically even though it directly benefits the protection of civilians. Moreover, there are precedents for monitoring and reporting on the shoulders of which casualty recording may be built at the UN level.⁵

Acknowledging the UN Secretary-General's 2012 Report on the Protection of Civilians, and existing practice amongst NGOs, the Oslo conference on Reclaiming the Protection of Civilians under International Humanitarian Law provides a valuable opportunity for states and other representatives to engage on casualty recording and to build support for its advancement.

We encourage delegates to participate in the development of the Oslo conference's recommendations on this issue, which falls under Section 4 on enhancing documentation.

¹ Action on Armed Violence (AOAV), Article 36, and Oxford Research Group (ORG)

² S/2012/376

³ Report of the International Commission of Inquiry on Libya, 2 March 2012, A/HRC/19/68

⁴ Membership of the International Practitioner Network of casualty recording organisations can be found at <http://www.everycasualty.org/practitioners/ipn>

⁵ e.g. UNSC Resolution 1894 (2009) requests that the Secretary General monitor and analyse constraints on humanitarian access and enhance the Council's monitoring and oversight over protection missions; the monitoring and reporting mechanisms outlined in UNSC Resolutions 1960 (2010) and 1612 (2005) relating to sexual violence in armed conflict and children in armed conflict, respectively; the UN Secretary-General's 2010 Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict states that 'systematic monitoring and reporting on the impact of our efforts to improve the protection of civilians is essential'; and the UN Secretary-General's 2012 Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict recognises casualty recording as fundamental to informing the protection of civilians.