

Journal of Global Faultlines, 2017
Vol. 4, No. 1, 57-70.

Report

Human Security and the Emergence of Modern-Day Body Counts: The *Law*, the *Theory*, and the *Practice* of Casualty Recording

Lily Hamourtziadou¹

The “human security” approach puts the individual, the citizen, the civilian, at the center of understanding security, rather than the state and its borders. The Commission on Human Security (CHS) was established in January 2001, in response to the UN Secretary-General’s call at the 2000 Millennium Summit for a world “free of want” and “free of fear.” On May 1, 2003, Co-Chairs of the CHS, Sadako Ogata and Amartya Sen, presented the Commission’s Final Report, *Human Security Now*, to the United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan.

According to the United Nation’s CHS, human security is:

to protect the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfilment. Human security means protecting fundamental freedoms – freedoms that are the essence of life. It means protecting people from critical (severe) and pervasive (widespread) threats and situations. It means using processes that build on people’s strengths and aspirations. It means creating political, social, environmental, economic, military and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood and dignity. (“Human Security Now,” 2003, 4)

Overall, the definition proposed by the CHS re-conceptualizes security by moving away from traditional, state-centric conceptions of security that focused primarily on the safety of states from military aggression, to one that concentrates on the security of the individuals, their protection, and empowerment; drawing attention to a multitude of threats that cut across different aspects of human life and thus highlighting the interface between security, development, and human rights; and promoting a new integrated, coordinated, and people-centered approach to advancing peace, security, and development within and across nations.

Human security means freedom from violence and from the fear of violence, from extreme impoverishment, pollution, hunger, homelessness, ill health, and illiteracy, all of which are inextricably connected to human dignity and well-being.

As the shift was made from state to person, so the need to account for the human casualties of armed conflict grew. In 2002, Iraq Body Count (IBC), a human security project, was co-founded by Hamit Dardagan and John Sloboda, to document civilian deaths in Iraq following the US-led invasion in 2003. Other projects, such as Airwars, a collaborative project aimed at tracking and archiving the international air war against Islamic State and other groups, in both Iraq and Syria, and the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an information office documenting human rights abuses in Syria, since 2011, followed a few years later.

The need to secure the civilian and holder of fundamental rights has led to the moral imperative to track, record, document, and memorialize the killing and the suffering of those who find themselves in the midst of violent conflict.

¹ Lily Hamourtziadou is a lecturer in Birmingham City University. She has been a Senior Researcher and Analyst of Iraq Body Count (IBC). E-mail: lily.hamourtziadou@bcu.ac.uk.

Sir John Chilcot (2016) underlined the need for documenting the effects of military action on civilians in his report, published on July 6, 2016. It is the government's responsibility, he wrote, to identify and understand the likely and actual effects of its military action. Referring to the Iraq War, he wrote:

Greater efforts should have been made in the post-conflict period to determine the number of civilian casualties and the broader effects of military operations on civilians. More time was devoted to the question of which department should have responsibility for the issue of civilian casualties than it was to efforts to determine the actual number. (Key findings, section 17, p. 170)

Among his recommendations was that:

the Government should be ready to work with others, in particular NGOs and academic institutions, to develop such assessments and estimates over time. (p. 219)

Section 17 points out:

In June 2006, along with many other states, the UK Government signed the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development. Signatories resolved to take action to reduce armed violence and its negative impact on socio-economic and human development, including by supporting initiatives "to measure the human, social and economic costs of armed violence, to assess risks and vulnerabilities, to evaluate the effectiveness of armed violence reduction programmes, and to disseminate knowledge of best practices." (Section 17, para 216, p. 207)

This article explores human security and casualty recording in the 21st century, as concepts arising from our understanding of fundamental human rights, the protection of populations in war and the importance of bearing witness to a life and to a death. The discussion centers on three topics: (a) war and the violation/protection of human rights; (b) casualty recording, aims, and methods; and (c) the importance of identifying the dead.

War and Human Rights

Human security and human rights are mutually reinforcing, as they identify the rights that need to be protected and recognize the ethical and political importance of securing the holders of those rights. Protecting human rights and upholding humanitarian law are essential to human security.

According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on December 10, 1948, human beings have the right to life, freedom, and security. The first three articles set these out:

Article 1. All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.

Article 2. Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

Article 3. Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

The following year, in August 1949, the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, defined humanitarian protections for civilians in a war zone. In the General Provisions, Article 3 states that even where there is not a conflict of international character, the parties must as a minimum adhere to minimal protections described as: non-combatants, members of armed forces who have laid down their arms, and combatants who are *hors de combat* (out of the fight) due to wounds, detention, or any other cause *shall in all circumstances be treated humanely*, with the following prohibitions:

- a. violence to life and person, in particular murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture;
- b. taking of hostages;

- c. outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment
- d. the passing of sentences and the carrying out of executions without previous judgment pronounced by a regularly constituted court, affording all the judicial guarantees which are recognized as indispensable by civilized peoples.

Article 4 defines who is a Protected person: Persons protected by the Convention are those who, at a given moment and in any manner whatsoever, find themselves, in case of a conflict or occupation, in the hands of a Party to the conflict or Occupying Power of which they are not nationals. Those persons are to be protected regardless of race, nationality, religion, or political opinion.

Article 32 states that a protected person shall not have anything done to them *of such a character as to cause physical suffering or extermination*.

Collective punishments are also prohibited

Article 33. No persons may be punished for an offense he or she has not personally committed. Collective penalties and likewise all measures of intimidation or of terrorism are prohibited. Pillage is prohibited. Reprisals against persons and their property are prohibited.

Under the 1949 Geneva Conventions, collective punishment is a war crime.

International humanitarian law seeks to limit the effects of armed conflict, by protecting those who are not or are no longer participating in the hostilities, and by restricting the means and methods of warfare. International humanitarian law is also known as the law of war or the law of armed conflict. Starting in the nineteenth century, an increasing number of states have contributed to its development, and today it forms a universal body of law. A major part of international humanitarian law is contained in the four Geneva Conventions of 1949. The Conventions have been developed and supplemented by two further agreements: the Additional Protocols of 1977 relating to the protection of victims of armed conflicts.

Other agreements prohibit the use of certain weapons and military tactics and protect certain categories of people and goods. These agreements include the 1954 Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, plus its two protocols; the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention; the 1980 Conventional Weapons Convention and its five protocols; the 1993 Chemical Weapons Convention; the 1997 Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel mines; the 2000 Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

International humanitarian law and human rights law

International humanitarian law protects those who do not take part in the fighting, such as civilians and medical personnel. It also protects those who have ceased to take part, such as wounded, shipwrecked, and sick combatants, and prisoners of war. These categories of person are entitled to respect for their lives and for their physical and mental integrity. More specifically, it is forbidden to kill or wound an enemy who surrenders or is unable to fight; the sick and wounded must be collected and cared for by the party in whose power they find themselves. Medical personnel, supplies, hospitals, and ambulances must all be protected.

International humanitarian law prohibits all means and methods of warfare which fail to discriminate between those taking part in the fighting and those, such as civilians, who are not, the purpose being to protect the civilian population, individual civilians, and civilian property. In addition, tribunals have been created to punish acts committed in conflicts. An international criminal court, with the responsibility of repressing inter alia war crimes, was created by the 1998 Rome Statute.

Just War theory is closely related to the international law of war crimes. “Was the decision to wage war morally justified (*jus ad bellum*), and were the tactics employed in war morally justified (*jus in bello*)?” (May, 2007, p. 4). The violation of a person’s rights and of rules of humanitarian law is subject to prosecution as a war crime. *Jus in bello* carries the requirement of discrimination, or distinction. The Institute of International Law adopted a resolution at its 1969 Edinburgh meeting concerning the principle of distinction. The resolution declared:

- The obligation to respect the distinction between military objectives and nonmilitary objectives, as well as between persons participating in the hostilities and members of the civilian population, remains a fundamental principle of international law.
- Existing international law prohibits all armed attacks on the civilian population.
- Existing international law prohibits the use of all weapons which, by their nature, affect indiscriminately both military objectives and nonmilitary objects, or both armed forces and civilian populations. (May, 2007p. 169)

Ingrid Detter, in *The Law of War*, writes:

The protection of civilians is, from the humanitarian point of view, the most important task of any legislative effort on warfare as such persons include the weakest members of the community most in need of protection, such as women, children and the aged. (Detter, 2000, p. 317)

The status of being vulnerable is key to the principle of discrimination or distinction.

The value of human life and the importance of its protection are evident in all this modern legislation. The case for the protection of human life and security is made on many levels and from many aspects: moral, legal, political, and religious. From the Christian commandment “Thou shalt not kill” and the Hebrew “Whoever destroys a soul, it is considered as if he destroyed an entire world. And whoever saves a life, it is considered as if he saved an entire world” (Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5; Yerushalmi Talmud 4:9, Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 37a), to Kant’s “treating people as ends, not means,” to the Enlightenment and the principles of the French Revolution, with Rousseau writing that “each man is born free,” to 20th- and 21st-century values of Liberalism, Individualism, and human rights, we see a slow but steady development of the idea that each person is deserving of respect and protection as a free-thinking being equal to all others. The right to life is paramount, and this is reflected by the abolition of the death penalty in many Western countries in the last 100 years.

Individualism, Liberalism, and the moral worth of the individual

The doctrines of Individualism and Liberalism, doctrines on which much of Western society and culture has been constructed, dictate that all values and rights originate in the individual. Political individualists argue that states should protect the liberty of each individual to act as he or she wishes, just as long as he or she does not infringe on the same liberty of another (essentially the *laissez-faire* position at the heart of classical Liberalism, Libertarianism, and modern Capitalism).

According to Individualism, each person’s needs are more important than those of the group (society, nation, etc.), and each person’s interests are ethically paramount. Moreover, each individual must have freedom of action, independence, and protection from most external interference (society, state, religious institutions). Each self in the collective is autonomous and equal to all others, and the beliefs and aspirations of each are to be respected. As individuals are both moral and political agents in modern democracies, individual rights and liberties ought to be maximized. The political and moral agency of the individual are at the heart of the development of the concept of universal human rights, that is the rights of each individual regardless of the collective in which

they find themselves (national, religious, racial etc.) and regardless of gender, age, or physical ability.

Liberalism became a distinct political movement during the Enlightenment, in the 18th century, when old traditions were challenged in England, France, and America. In England, Thomas Paine's *The Rights of Man* (1791) and Mary Wollstonecraft's early feminist *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* encouraged mass support for democratic reform. Political philosopher John Gray identified the common strands in liberal thought as being *individualist*, *egalitarian*, *meliorist*, and *universalist*. The *individualist* element avers the ethical primacy of the human being against the pressures of social collectivism, the *egalitarian* element assigns the same moral worth and status to all individuals, the *meliorist* element asserts that successive generations can improve their sociopolitical arrangements, and the *universalist* element affirms the moral unity of the human species and marginalizes local cultural differences (Gray, 1995).

In the 20th century, Liberalism led to the recognition and establishment of universal suffrage and civil rights. Liberals sought and established a constitutional order that prized important individual freedoms, racial and gender equality. Liberal Internationalism was the driving force behind the establishment of the League of Nations, after World War I, and the United Nations, after World War II.

The recognition of the importance of human rights and the right of each individual to life, security, and liberty has placed great demands on governments and organizations to closely monitor and record human deaths from armed violence. The next section explains what casualty recording means, its methods, and its necessity.

Casualty Recording

Only five days before the publication of the Chilcot report, which stressed the importance of documenting civilian deaths and the effects of military operations on civilians, the White House released an executive order to address civilian casualties in US operations involving the use of force:

Section 1. Purpose. United States policy on civilian casualties resulting from U.S. operations involving the use of force in armed conflict or in the exercise of the Nation's inherent right of self-defense is based on our national interests, our values, and our legal obligations. As a Nation, we are steadfastly committed to complying with our obligations under the law of armed conflict, including those that address the protection of civilians, such as the fundamental principles of necessity, humanity, distinction, and proportionality. (White House 2016)

The principles of necessity, distinction, and proportionality are familiar grounds for the rules of war. What they mean is that "only soldiers, not civilians, should be targeted for attack, and the tactics used should only be those that are necessary to achieve a military objective that provides more benefit than the tactics cost" (May, 2007, p. 12). Humane treatment calls for sensitivity toward fellow humans in a situation of vulnerability. As Detter puts it, the protection of civilians is "the most important task of any legislative effort on warfare as such persons include the weakest members of the community most in need of protection, such as women, children and the aged" (Detter, 2000, p. 317).

The principle of necessity holds that military forces should cause no more destruction than is strictly necessary to achieve their objectives (Lackey, 1989). However, Lackey explains, "the principle of necessity does not say that whatever is necessary is permissible, but that everything permissible must be necessary" (p. 59). The military objective itself must be normatively compelling both in light of the objectives of the war and in light of how humans should treat each other. Humanitarian considerations give moral weight to the principle of necessity. "We must not allow the invocation of military necessity to become merely 'a

callous way of violating basic human rights,” writes Gewirth (2001; Jokic, 2001, p. 53). Necessity is not a blanket justification that admits endless exception. “The neorealists were simply wrong to think that military necessity could be employed to explode the restraints of the Just War theory and its rules of war” (May, 2007, p. 207).

Proportionality then puts further limits on necessity, as it says that tactics must not cause more suffering than they prevent, but also that “there must be no morally less costly way to accomplish a military objective that is thought to be necessary” (May, 2007, p. 211). So if there is a less costly means available, the principle of proportionality forbids the use of the more costly tactic, regardless of necessity, or imminence. Humane treatment is at the core of both principles, as even in emergency situations tactics should be chosen that minimize suffering, injury, or death.

The recognition of those principles has led to, just days apart, official recognition by the US and by the UK of the importance of casualty recording in war and armed conflict. The same executive order by President Obama added an undertaking to:

- i. review or investigate incidents involving civilian casualties, including by considering relevant and credible information from all available sources, such as other agencies, partner governments, and nongovernmental organizations, and take measures to mitigate the likelihood of future incidents of civilian casualties;
- ii. acknowledge U.S. Government responsibility for civilian casualties and offer condolences, including ex gratia payments, to civilians who are injured or to the families of civilians who are killed;

relying on

credible reporting from nongovernmental organizations regarding non-combatant deaths resulting from strikes undertaken by the U.S. Government against terrorist targets outside areas of active hostilities. (Executive Order – United States Policy on Pre- and Post-Strike Measures to Address Civilian Casualties in U.S. Operations Involving the Use of Force, July 1, 2016)

By then, there had been a number of bodies painstakingly recording the violent deaths of hundreds of thousands of people on a daily basis.

The Every Casualty project was initiated in 2007 as a project at the Oxford Research Group (ORG), by Hamit Dardagan and John Sloboda, who together had co-founded IBC in 2002. “The Every Casualty Campaign refers to the civil society organisations who endorse a call on states to agree an international framework on casualty recording, building on the Charter for the recognition of every casualty of armed violence” (<http://www.everycasualty.org/campaign>).

The Charter for the recognition of every casualty of armed violence is founded on the principle that no person should die unrecorded, and calls on states to uphold this principle for the victims of armed violence. The Charter applies equally to every person and encompasses every party to armed violence. All casualties of armed conflicts must be promptly recorded, correctly identified and publicly acknowledged. Any personal details must be verifiably established and be made accessible to all.

States and their military bear particular responsibility for populations under their control or jurisdiction, or who are endangered by their actions. For this reason, they must ensure that the information produced is adequate and accessible as a basis for addressing the rights and needs of victims, take all relevant actions at the national level and work with others to develop an international framework for casualty recording.

While accepting that we cannot erase the harm already done to the dead, their families and friends, we are convinced that much good will flow from these measures, as they will:

- Relieve the common anguish of not knowing the fate of loved ones who are missing, presumed dead;
- Enable more timely, transparent, reliable and comprehensive monitoring of armed violence, including its impact on specific groups, than has ever been achieved before;

- Give a human face to the many nameless, hidden, often distant victims of armed violence;
- Provide essential information for all parties to take every possible step to protect civilians from armed violence, thereby encouraging them to do so;
- Uphold and advance the rights of victims of armed violence;
- Bring states and parties to armed violence into better compliance with the spirit as well as the letter of international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law;
- Support post-conflict recovery and reconciliation, which must always be grounded in truth. (http://www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/publications/other_media/charter)

Many violent deaths from conflict around the world are either poorly recorded or not recorded at all. In fact, many people do not even see the need or purpose of recording civilian deaths. The questions most often asked are: “What is the point?” or “For what purpose?” or simply “Why?”

The ORG has researched the work of forty organizations and individuals who record the casualties of different conflicts across the globe, conducting the largest study of casualty recording practice ever carried out. They have provided some reasons why this practice is important, *during* and *following* an armed conflict or war. According to them, casualty recording can support the rights and recognition of victims and their families; fuller knowledge of the trends and consequences of conflict, which can help inform humanitarian response planning and violence reduction policies; and processes to uphold the law.

Casualty Recorders provide information that may counteract misinformation or ignorance about casualties. Collecting and sharing knowledge about human losses could achieve positive changes in policy, humanitarian response, or planning and could contribute to the on-going assessment of a conflict.

Casualty recording can be used for policy evaluation and conflict analysis, by governments, international organizations such as the WHO, UNDP, the World Bank, and the EU for research and assessment of conflict dynamics, media organizations, NGOs, and university researchers. Identifying patterns and trends in deaths and violence can help assess the impact of strategy.

Casualty recording by nongovernmental groups like IBC has contributed to official records or counts of the dead, the allocation of war benefits by the state to the families of people who died, the seeking of compensation, criminal investigations, and prosecutions by regional and international courts. This way it can make a contribution to accountability, justice, the upholding of human rights, and the prosecution of those who have violated them. The information provided can and has been used to seek asylum as well.

In addition, it provides a body of evidence of how violence has affected particular communities or groups, as well as individuals, for example, the Yazidis, in Iraq, or the Kurds, in Syria. Such evidence is useful not only for highlighting the persecution of innocents, or for the prosecution of the perpetrators of violence, but also for political transition and future conflict prevention. By knowing and understanding who died and why, we can address and redress harm done, and prevent its recurrence. Any such historical record centered on the victims of war is valuable for both living and future generations. It is valuable for the families and communities of the victims, for policymakers and governments, for humanitarian and legal bodies, NGOs, researchers, and the general public.

There are many ways the recording of casualties can be done, using a range of sources of information and methodologies, either during or after a conflict, which will give different levels of accuracy, certainty, or confirmation, and different levels of detail about victims and incidents. Casualty recording usually involves the documenting of the deaths of individual people or groups of people, giving (where possible) details such as names, dates, locations, number of people killed, and the type of violence used.

Two casualty recording projects are IBC and Airwars.

IBC

IBC records the violent deaths that have resulted from the 2003 military intervention in Iraq, civilian deaths caused by the US-led coalition, Iraqi government forces, and paramilitary or criminal attacks by others. IBC uses media reports of violence leading to deaths, or of bodies being found, and is supplemented by the careful review and integration of hospital, morgue, NGO, and official figures or records. Each deadly incident is stored in the database, including (where possible) the names, ages, and occupations of those killed, when and how, and by whom.

The IBC project was founded in January 2003 by volunteers from the UK and the US who wanted to ensure that the human consequences of military intervention in Iraq were not neglected. They believed that our common humanity demanded the recording of the deaths resulting from that invasion and wanted to promote a more human-centered approach to conflict. For this reason, they wished to make the recording of civilian deaths a priority, rather than a side effect of the “War on Terror.”

The project collects and analyses media reports written or published in the English language, but also in Arabic. Almost all data in the IBC database is derived from information acquired by journalists from “primary” human sources, including injured survivors, family members, and other eyewitnesses, as well as emergency department medics, local police, and other officials. IBC also includes specific information from non-political NGOs in Iraq, such as the Iraqi Red Crescent. Official cumulative figures are obtained from reports by the Medico-Legal Institutes (morgues) and the Ministry of Health, for corroborating purposes.

In all, IBC systematically extracts 18 pieces of information in relation to each incident and/or person killed:

Table 1. IBC - extracted variables

IBC-extracted variables		10	Killers
For each incident		11	Media sources
1	Date	12	Primary witnesses
2	Time	For each person	
3	Place	13	Name
4	Target	14	Age
5	Minimum deaths	15	Gender
6	Maximum deaths	16	Marital status
7	Minimum injuries	17	Parental status
8	Maximum injuries	18	Occupation
9	Weapons		

Airwars

Airwars.org is a collaborative, not-for-profit transparency project maintained by a team of professional journalists based in Europe and the Middle East, who track and archive the international air war against Islamic State (Daesh) and other parties, in both Iraq and Syria. They document combatant and non-combatant killings from “friendly fire,” coalition

airstrikes, indicated by credible monitoring agencies and media sources. A key aim of Airwars is to assess all known claims of civilian non-combatants killed or injured in Coalition strikes. Data are drawn from a number of sources, including international and local news agencies, social media sites including local residents' groups, Facebook pages (e.g., martyrs' pages), YouTube footage of incidents, tweets relating to specific events, as well as NGOs based in Iraq, Syria, and elsewhere. Airwars employs a *grading system* for events alleging non-combatant or "friendly fire" deaths from Coalition airstrikes, representing their own judgment and assessment of the information available.

- **Confirmed:** Where the Coalition or an individual nation has accepted responsibility for the killing of non-combatants or allied forces in a particular incident.
- **Fair:** Where there is a reasonable level of public reporting of an alleged incident from two or more generally credible sources (often coupled with biographical, photographic, and/or video evidence). Crucially, there are also confirmed coalition strikes in the near vicinity for the date in question. We believe these cases in particular require urgent investigation.
- **Weak:** These are single source claims. Nevertheless, these can at times feature biographical and photographic detail from a reputable source, with Coalition strikes also confirmed in the vicinity on that date.
- **Contested Events:** These occur where there are claims of both Coalition and Iraqi/Syrian aircraft having carried out strikes on a location.
- **Disproven:** Those cases where our researchers or others can either demonstrate that those killed were combatants, or that an incident did not result in any civilian casualties; or that other parties (eg the Iraq government or Assad regime) were most likely responsible for reported casualties. (<https://airwars.org/methodology-new-draft/>)

Airwars airstrike data comes from military briefings by Coalition forces in Iraq and Syria, and from the Russian Ministry of Defence, with the US military being the dominant source. Air Force Central Command (AFCENT) publishes monthly Airpower Summaries for Iraq and Syria, featuring tables of data including the number of weapons released; intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR); and fueling missions flown. The Coalition in its reports lists the number of strikes, in Iraq and in Syria, the areas hit, and the damage caused to buildings, vehicles, or equipment, but mentions no casualties.

Both IBC and Airwars place great importance on documenting any personal details about victims that are available, rather than simply report numbers. Why are names so important? What effect does identifying the dead have?

Identifying the Dead: Names, Memorials, and What Is Lost

Cemeteries are strange places. Many avoid them as eerie, or spooky, or simply too sad for reminding us of our mortality. Others spend years of their lives bent over a tombstone bearing the name of a loved one. Each grave contains a death and bears witness to a life. The remains of the dead: their physical remains and what remains of their identity. Those who knew them will remember them and even those who did not know them will come to know something about who they were: their names, affiliations, images, and so on.

Each person is identified as an individual and as a member of a group (familial, ethnic, religious, professional) through their name and title. When someone is born, they are registered as bearers of a name and surname, in some cultures receiving their name through baptism. In the course of their lives, people may change their name to mark a change in identity or in line with local and traditional norms. A "Miss" may become a "Mrs," her husband's

family name replacing her maiden name; a woman be named “the wife of” the man she married, or she (and also he) become “the mother of” (or “the father of”) their eldest son; a fitting nickname be gladly accepted for common and lifelong use. Our names are at the core of who we are and of who we are perceived to be by others. When we die, we leave behind something of ourselves through our name, through the recollection of all that name enclosed.

Nations have always commemorated their dead by making lists of those who gave their lives, or lost their lives, as members of that nation, and by building war memorials, to honor those who have died. To remember and honor the dead is important for nations, for states, and for families all over the world. It is important for each individual too, for we all want to be remembered, we all want our death to be a loss to someone, just as much as we want our lives to have mattered.

The British military has ensured those British soldiers who gave their lives in Iraq are not forgotten. A list of the 179 soldiers who died there can be found easily: Names, titles, the manner of their death, their images, and so on, some smiling, others serious, some holding a child that will have to grow up without their dad or mum.

Our terrorism victims are also commemorated, those civilians who tragically died as they went about their lives, those innocents who met such an untimely and violent end.

Police named all 52 known victims of the London bombers. Some families released statements, paying tribute to loved ones lost in the attacks, as the site explains.

More names and photographs. More smiling faces. Some young and bright-eyed.

Phil Beer, 22, from Borehamwood, Herts, was on the Underground with friend Patrick Barnes when the explosion struck between King’s Cross and Russell Square on Thursday. His family said Mr Beer, a hairdresser, was a “fun-loving and colourful” character who had red and black hair, a lip stud and a tattoo of a Celtic dragon on his arm.

Mr Beer’s family has requested that mourners wear bright colors on the day of his funeral to reflect his personality.

In a statement, they said: “His loss has left us feeling very empty and we miss his infectious loud laugh.”

A wonderful tribute to a son. A loss indeed.

Another tragic loss:

Elizabeth Daplyn, a 26-year-old administrator from north London, died in the Piccadilly Line blast while travelling to work at University College Hospital.

In a statement her family said: “Liz leaves behind dozens of people who loved and admired her, including her boyfriend Rob, parents Pam and Mike and sister Eleanor.”

Her family said she was a talented artist and musician who read Fine Art at Oxford University. It is hard not to feel the pain of the loss of those lives. It is hard to stay dry-eyed as you look at those names and those faces.

A memorial that fills one with both horror and a sense of loss is the 9/11 Memorial in New York.

The 2,983 names of the men, women, and children killed in the attacks of September 11, 2001 and February 26, 1993, are inscribed into bronze parapets surrounding the twin Memorial pools, located in the footprints of the Twin Towers.

And these are names carefully inscribed in bronze, whose outlines one can trace with one’s fingers, and on a memorial from where one can be assured not a single name is missing.

The public recording of the deaths of civilians in Iraq has been a different story, with only 1 in 12 of the deaths in our database able to be recorded with identifying details, as we shall see below. Usually, the larger the incident in which people are killed, the rarer it is for their names to be included, especially all their names.

Here is one such rare and recent occasion, as reported in Al-Iraq News (February 14, 2015), of a tribal elder, his son (a student at Glasgow University), and his entourage escorting

him for security (all also family members) who were abducted in Baghdad and shot. Al-Iraq News' terse list reads as follows:

1. *Sheikh Qasim Karim Swaidan al-Janabi – uncle of MP Zaid al-Janabi*
2. *Dr. Mohammad Qasim Swaidan al-Janabi – cousin of Zaid al-Janabi*
3. *Basim Hussein al-Janabi – security detail*
4. *Saif Nayif al-Janabi – MP security detail*
5. *Mohammad Nasr al-Ubaidi – security detail*
6. *Mohammad Khalid al-Janabi – security detail*
7. *Ali Hussein al-Janabi – security detail*
8. *Amer Hannush al-Janabi – security detail*
9. *Uday Hamid al-Janabi – security detail*

Rarest of all is that the loss of these Iraqi lives was illuminated by stories of their hopes and dreams, and who they were:

Al Janabi's father was working to negotiate better treatment for local people and a secure place for displaced Sunnis to live, [a friend of his] said. Mohammed had intended to help with that work, having successfully defended his PhD, and was to return to Glasgow to graduate in June. "He told us to put the date in our diary and we said we wouldn't miss it for the world."

He was unmarried, she said. He was such a handsome guy and tall for an Iraqi, with a beautiful smile. You would think girls would be throwing themselves at him, but he just wanted to finish his studies and didn't want to stay anywhere in the world, but Iraq.

Al Janabi's story received more than the usual attention in the Scottish press because a part of his life was in Glasgow, as well as in Iraq. And such stories describing Iraqi victims in life as well as the circumstances of their death (including those who never left the country) do appear in the Western and global media from time to time (some of which are so remarkable we have highlighted them before). It is just that any detailed remembering is the exception rather than the rule.

Both the scale and the relentless nature of Iraq's violence have made it very difficult for journalists and others to report and record civilian deaths in appropriately humanizing detail. Every day more are added to this long list of violent deaths by guns, bombs, and beheadings in a country that remains a battlefield.

On the 12th anniversary of the invasion, over 154,000 civilian deaths were recorded by IBC. With combatants of all nationalities included, the human toll rose to 211,000. By January 2014, we had managed to gather the name or other identifying details for 11,000 individual victims – a staggering number, but still only 1 in 12 of the civilians reported killed up to that date.

Others are described simply as "policeman" or "lorry driver." Most are merely "male, adult." Of yet others – some two thirds of the victims in our database – the public record contains nothing at all about the individual who lost his or her life, except that they were non-combatant, usually going about their ordinary daily business, and met a violent and premature death at the hands of others. Clearly their deaths must be counted, and matter, as much as the deaths of those who (for whatever, often arbitrary, reason) are better known. But their loss is at present only represented in numbers.

Yet numbers alone cannot possibly represent human lives. Knowing how many have died cannot be enough without also knowing *who* has died, because figures cannot adequately communicate the loss of individuals. For many countries (not only Iraq), public casualty reporting and recording often consists solely of statistics, of numbers, a poor representation of what is lost.

Whose children were they? Whose parents? How many miss them? What did they like to do? What kind of people were they? Did they have a talent? Were they someone's beloved?

Will we in the West directly and indirectly involved in the dissolution of the Iraqi state ever truly know what has been lost? Will we remember? Will the Iraqis know who all those people were, who all those people are whose blood is spilt in their streets every day. Will the identities of the thousands found as “bodies in mass graves” be known? Are the lives of Iraqis less valuable, a smaller loss than those of British people, of Americans, military and civilian?

The commemoration of a life lost must not have ethnicity, religion, color, or monetary value. It cannot be reserved for the European, for the American, for the white, for the Christian, for the powerful, or for the well to do. It has to include the non-white, the poor, the Asian, the African, the illiterate, the beggar boy blown up, the elderly woman shot on her way to market, and the Yazidi girl beheaded for not wearing her scarf. The commemoration of a life must know no boundaries or restrictions.

Nobody’s name, identity, life, is lesser than another’s. And nobody’s loss is any easier to bear by those who knew and cared for them, those who will forever mourn their passing.

The IBC database identifies thousands of civilians, as in the sample below:
An Airwars entry reads like this:

Table 2. Sample IBC table

Individuals

IBC page	Date	Name or personal identifier	Age	Sex	Location	Occupation
a3546-fn3426	31 January 2016	Shihab Barakat Al-Juboury	Adult	Male	Qayyarah, south of Mosul	Tribal leader
a3546-nv3295	31 January 2016	Khalaf Saddam Al-Juboury	Adult	Male	Qayyarah, south of Mosul	Tribal leader
a3546-bc3228	31 January 2016	Hajim Monem Al-Juboury	Adult	Male	Qayyarah, south of Mosul	Tribal leader
a3546-hr3245	31 January 2016	Abdullah Abd Rabah Al-Juboury	Adult	Male	Qayyarah, south of Mosul	Tribal leader
a3534-kn3237	31 January 2016	son of dead couple	Unrecorded	Male	the White Road, Himreen mountains, east of Tikrit	
a3534-nb3438	31 January 2016	wife of dead man	Adult	Female	the White Road, Himreen mountains, east of Tikrit	
a3534-dh3378	31 January 2016	husband of dead woman	Adult	Male	the White Road, Himreen mountains, east of Tikrit	
a3525-dz3201	30 January 2016	Zuhair Mamoon Al-Hadeedi	Adult	Male	al-Nahrawan, west Mosul	
a3524-dv3275	30 January 2016	Adnan Nadir Al-Ka’kool	Adult	Male	Hay al-Araby, north Mosul	Health official
a3515-xk3370	29 January 2016	Ali Al-Hussein Al-Yousif Al-Juhaishy	Adult	Male	Mosul	Tribal leader

June 21st 2016: Raqqa, Raqqa governorate, Syria

Summary: Up to 32 civilians including six children and one woman were killed and up to 150 injured in airstrikes on Raqqa, according to multiple sources. While most sources allege that Russia carried out the attack, others do not say who the planes belonged to, while one report by the Shaam News Network claims the Coalition was responsible.

An initial report by Shaam News blamed Russia, but the network then appeared to change its position: “Coalition planes launched raids on al Dalla roundabout and the area of the electricity company in Raqqa which led to civilians deaths and wounded.” Both BBC Arabic and the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said it was unclear whose aircraft carried out the attacks. According to the Syrian Network for Human Rights the regime was responsible. It put the death toll at 23 including six children and two women.

But other sources pointed toward Moscow. LCCSY said Russia launched “several airstrikes with cluster bombs on the surroundings of Water Institution Building near the overcrowded Dalla roundabout area and Electricity Building”. And Raqqa is Being Slaughtered Silently published numerous posts naming those killed and alleged that the raids were carried out by Russia. It put the final death toll at 32 with 150 injured.

RBSS named 21 victims as:

Riyad Khudar al Said

Mohammad Al Ahmad al A'zzami

Ibrahim Juma'a al O'far

Ammar Abdallah Al Hassan al Satouf

Mohammad Khalil al Yassin

Jamal Al Batran

Mohannad abu Haif

Juma'a al Ibbo al Fannash

Nael al Fayyad

Khashab al Khashab

Tahseen al Hamoud

Khalif al Ibbo al Fannash

Mohammad Rashid Al Zoro a 15 year old child

Abd al Sattar Rashid al Zoro, a 10 year old child

Ibrahim Matar al Wakka

Musha'al Ibrahim al Wakka

Saleh al Jamal Al Nayef and his family [wife and children]

Abdallah Jamal al Nayef and his family [wife and children]

Jamila Hussein al Jazra

Hani al Hafez

Dr. Mohammad Ali al Heito and his wife and son

RBSS also named the following as injured:

Yasser al Satouf

Khaled al Satouf

Fadi al Satouf

Wafaa al Satouf

Fadia al Satouf

the child Wafaa al Satouf

It added that “Hafez Ibrahim al Wakka seriously injured leading to both feet being amputated.”

Civilians reported killed: 23– 32, including 6 children and 1 woman

Civilians reported injured: 150

- (<https://airwars.org/civcas-2016/>)

As Chris Woods argues, Non-combatants have all too often been the uncounted victims of modern warfare - an information vacuum which belligerents instead fill with fantastical claims of limited civilian deaths. By tallying the war dead as accurately as we can, civic society can help counter this false narrative – challenging optimistic government and military narratives with the harsher realities of conflict. And in naming the dead, we also seek to reclaim these victims of war. No longer anonymous statistics, they are revealed instead as ordinary men, women and children ripped from life. A named victim of war, like a counted victim, is far harder to deny. (Interviewed June 29, 2016)

A named victim is a recognized victim, a remembered life, witness to what is lost. Dignifying and memorializing those lost not only recognizes the right of every person to be remembered. It also gives victim communities a voice.

References

- Chilcot. (2016). "Report of the Iraq Inquiry." July 6. Available at <http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/the-report/>.
- Detter. I. (2000) *The Law of War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gray, J. (1995) *Liberalism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Gewirth, A. (2001) "War Crimes and Human Rights." In Jokic Aleksander (ed.) *War crimes and Collective Wrongdoing: A Reader*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- "Human Security Now: Commission on Human Security" (2003). Available at http://www.un.org/humansecurity/sites/www.un.org.humansecurity/files/chs_final_report_-_english.pdf.
- Jokic, A. (ed.) (2001) *War crimes and Collective Wrongdoing: A Reader*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Lackey, D. (1989) *The Ethics of War and Peace*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- May, L. (2007) *War Crimes and Just War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Paine, T. (2008) *The Rights of Man*. New York: Cosimo.
- White House (2016) Executive Order – United States Policy on Pre- and Post-Strike Measures to Address Civilian Casualties in U.S. Operations Involving the Use of Force. Available at <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/07/01/executive-order-united-states-policy-pre-and-post-strike-measures>.