

A charter for the recognition of every casualty of armed violence

This charter 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.

It is a universal charter which applies equally to every person, and encompasses every party to armed violence. Its terms are few, but far-reaching.

Armed violence causes many kinds of harm to people and communities, including some that are indirect, non-lethal or delayed. This charter is for those most immediate and direct victims whose violent deaths and identities are all too often forever lost to the public record. It therefore applies equally to all forms and conditions of armed violence where victims are commonly unrecorded, be it due to armed conflict, extensive lethal criminality, or any other breakdown in civil security.

We, the civil society organisations and concerned parties who endorse this charter, call for resolute action by states to ensure that every direct casualty of armed violence is:

- Promptly recorded;
- Correctly identified; and
- Publicly acknowledged.

States bear particular responsibility for populations under their control or jurisdiction, or who are endangered by their actions. Information on deaths and the identity of the dead must be made public, after first informing bereaved families where possible. Only when there is a genuine risk of harm to the living should the implementation of these measures be delayed, but never indefinitely.

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:

- Fulfil the rights of victims of armed violence;
- Reduce the additional agony of not knowing the fate of loved ones, who are missing presumed dead;
- Provide a human face to the many nameless, hidden, often distant victims of armed violence;
- Enable more timely, transparent, reliable and comprehensive monitoring of armed violence than has been achieved before;
- Bring states and parties to armed violence into better compliance with the spirit as well as the letter of international law; and
- Support post-conflict recovery and reconciliation, which must always be grounded in truth.

From the moment they begin to be implemented, these measures will assert and strengthen the recognition of our common humanity across the globe. In doing so, they may move us closer to a world where armed violence is no longer the scourge it is today.