

EVERY CASUALTY COUNTS

Ten year report
2014 - 2024



Contents

WHO WE ARE

About us	2
What we do	2
The need for casualty recording	3
What is casualty recording?	3
Our history	4

A MESSAGE FROM OUR DIRECTOR 5

LOOKING BACK OVER THE LAST DECADE

Casualty Recorders Network	7
Standards for Casualty Recording	13
Advocacy	16
Publications	18

WHAT'S NEXT? 21

THANK YOU 21

Who we are



Finding a name (<http://flic.kr/p/7U2qrr>) by Greg Jordan (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

About Us

Established as an independent entity in 2014, Every Casualty Counts is a unique organisation that focuses exclusively on promoting and supporting the effective recording of all casualties of armed violence, wherever they occur. To do this, we work with civil society, states, and intergovernmental organisations globally. We strive to ensure that every death from armed conflict is recognised as an individual human tragedy, not just a statistic. Our work spans both current and historic contexts of armed conflict and gross human rights violations.

The rapid developments in information technology and news media over the past decade have had a substantial impact on this field. Both the potential and the need to record accurate, verifiable information on casualties is greater than ever before.

We are not affiliated with any political organisation or movement.

What we do

1

Raise awareness amongst policymakers of the importance of casualty recording, including its benefits, and how it may be improved.

2

Provide training, advice and support to casualty recording practitioners to help them maximise the accuracy and impact of their work.

3

Work with states, UN bodies, and other international agencies, to strengthen and expand support for casualty recording in policy and practice.

4

Collaborate with practitioners and end users of casualty information to develop and implement internationally recognised standards for the field.

The need for casualty recording

The global death rate from armed conflicts is increasing, almost tripling from 105,000 in 2020 to over 311,000 in 2022.¹ In some contexts, over 90 per cent of fatalities are civilians. Despite the growing numbers, there is still a dire lack of support for recording and identifying those who have died. Casualty recording is considered too hard, too controversial, or not a priority.

However, casualty records are essential for tens of thousands of families and communities to know the fate of their loved ones and spare them from decades of uncertainty. Survivors need documentary evidence to seek justice, receive compensation, claim inheritance rights, and claim custody of children, among other needs. Independent, transparent records are vital for countering the misinformation and propaganda which lead to revenge violence and hinder peace and reconciliation efforts. An accurate understanding of civilian casualty patterns are also crucial for military forces seeking to reduce unintended civilian harm.

“EVERY PERSON WHO DIED HAS THE RIGHT TO BE REMEMBERED, AND THEIR FAMILIES DESERVE JUST SATISFACTION. IF THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THEIR DEATHS ARE WITHHELD, THEY DIE TWICE – BOTH PHYSICALLY AND ON PAPER.”

Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union

What is casualty recording?

Casualty recorders aim to systematically investigate and document the individual details of each death or fatal incident in a given context. They typically document the name, age, sex, and other relevant demographic details of every casualty. They also record details of the incident in which they died, including date, location, the means of violence used, and who killed them. Casualty recorders gather and verify information on fatalities through a variety of sources including news media, interviews with survivors, hospital records, and satellite imaging.

1. Uppsala Conflict Data Program (Date of retrieval: 14/01/2025) <https://ucdp.uu.se/exploratory>

Our history

2014

The Every Casualty Programme, of the Oxford Research Group, becomes an independent organisation, Every Casualty Worldwide.

Every Casualty works with casualty recording organisations, as well as representatives of various UN agencies, the International Criminal Court, the Sphere Project and the International Committee of the Red Cross, to develop global Standards for Casualty Recording.

2016

The Standards for Casualty Recording are published and launched at the International Committee of the Red Cross headquarters in Geneva.

Every Casualty Worldwide receives registered charity status with the Charity Commission of England and Wales.

2021

Every Casualty Worldwide becomes known as Every Casualty Counts and receives Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

2022

Every Casualty Counts works with a core group of diplomats to secure the first ever resolution on the importance of casualty recording at the UN Human Rights Council.

2024

The Casualty Recorders Network welcomes its 60th member.

A message from our Director

“In the ten years since Every Casualty was established, the field of casualty recording has developed enormously. The importance of this work—once barely understood as a concept—is now widely recognised internationally. New technologies constantly provide additional sources of information about what is happening in even the most hard-to-access conflict zones. The ability to share and verify information rapidly is greater than ever before. The number of organisations participating in the Casualty Recorders Network has more than doubled.

But there are also new challenges. The same technology which enables casualty recorders to document the dead also allows malevolent parties to spread misinformation. Whilst the number of casualty recording organisations has grown, so has the annual death toll from armed conflict. The number of casualties is constantly outpacing the resources available to identify them.

Throughout these ten years, the team at Every Casualty has conducted ground-breaking research, lobbied governments and international agencies, advised commissions of inquiry and briefed military experts. We have provided guidance, training, funding and professional support to casualty recorders across the globe. We have worked ceaselessly to realise a world in which every person killed in armed conflict is acknowledged. The impact of this work has been recognised by the highest international bodies, and by the individuals who contact us seeking news of a loved one.

These achievements were only possible thanks to the commitment of our partners and funders. Without your steadfast support, we would not be where we are today. We warmly invite you to continue the journey with us into the future.”

Rachel Taylor - Executive Director

Looking back over the last decade

BROJ ŽRTAVA
GENOCIDA PREMA
POJEDINIM OPĆINAMA
KOJI NIJE KONAČAN

BRATUNAC
BIJELJINA
FOČA
HAN PIJESAK
ROGATICA
SARAJEVO
SOKOLAC
SREBRENICA
SREBRENİK
UGLJEVIK
VIŠEGRAD
VLASENICA
ZVORNIK

8372...

UKUPAN BROJ ŽRTAVA
KOJI NIJE KONAČAN

A memorial for the victims of the Srebrenica Genocide at
the Potočari Memorial Centre. Copyright © Hira Aftab 2022

Casualty Recorders Network

The origins of the Casualty Recorders Network

Established in 2009, when Every Casualty was still a programme within the Oxford Research Group, the Casualty Recorders Network (CRN) is a collaborative global network established to share and develop best practices in casualty recording. The network now has 63 members working worldwide in various conflict and post-conflict contexts.

Every Casualty Counts works with these organisations to make their casualty recording processes as reliable and comprehensive as possible, maximising the impact and benefits of their work. We bring CRN members together to share their knowledge and experience through bilateral and multilateral exchanges, webinars, and other forms of peer support.

The CRN provides a platform for casualty recorders to learn from and support each other, share the latest developments in the field, and collaborate on joint research and advocacy projects. Network members benefit from access to specialist resources, peer-to-peer training programmes, ad-hoc advice, and webinars from external experts on the issues they identify as priorities.

The need for the Casualty Recorders Network

One of the primary aims of the CRN is to increase the quality and impact of casualty recording initiatives worldwide by encouraging the use of shared methods of documenting and verifying casualty data. Through these efforts, the CRN is helping to improve public access to transparent, trustworthy sources of information on conflict deaths.

As well as the benefits it provides for individual members, the CRN has helped develop the field of casualty recording globally. The CRN was the driving force behind the development of the Standards for Casualty Recording (2016), which have influenced the practice of civil society organisations, international agencies, and military actors worldwide. The network has also played a crucial role in contributing to global research on casualty recording, including various United Nations studies.

Projects in partnership with CRN members

Over the last decade, we have implemented numerous activities and projects in collaboration with members of the network on topics identified by them as priorities. These include:

Capacity-building in Ethiopia

Researchers from Ghent University's Department of Geography, led by Professor Nyssen, had been working on agricultural development in northeast Ethiopia for decades when violence erupted in the Tigray region in November 2020. They realised they could utilise their extensive network of contacts in the region to try to document what was happening.

Their work filled a critical information gap, in a region where access for external observers and media was highly restricted. ECC assisted this project with funding, technical expertise, and support from experienced casualty recording organisations.

Supporting casualty recorders in Ukraine

We are currently working with CRN members the Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union and the Ukraine Memorial Platform, to support the documentation of casualties of the armed conflict in Ukraine. Together, we are designing a capacity-building programme that will include international advocacy activities, to bring their work to the attention of the global community, as well as the design of trauma-risk management policies and other essential measures to ensure the safety and well-being of casualty recorders in active conflict-zones. We are also helping to fund research visits to hard-to-reach areas, to ensure no casualty goes undocumented.

As with our other projects, this programme builds on and shares the expertise of members across the CRN, and will provide benefits for the whole network.

Humanising statistics - Anya Fihurna's story

15 YEARS OLD

PLACE OF DEATH: DNIPRO

DATE OF DEATH: 14.01.2023

Hi, everyone! You are now looking at my smiling face. Let's get to know each other better. My name is Anya, I am 15 years old, I lived in Dnipro all my short life. That is also where I was killed. On January 14, 2023, the enemy struck a building in the Peremoha housing estate with a missile. My whole family gathered there in our apartment: my mother, father, grandparents, aunt, her husband, and I. Grandma was the only one to survive...

Growing up, I was my parents' little princess. Mom and Dad did everything to make me happy.

Friendly, open, sincere, smiling, eager to help – that's what everyone in my family and friends could say about me. I enjoyed school, participated in subject competitions, quickly memorized poems, and during school pageants, I liked to play a main role.

In the future, I really wanted to become a psychologist, I liked to listen to my friends and help them with advice. I also willingly took on the duties of a manager.

I spent a lot of time together with my Mom and Dad. We went camping, hiking outside of the city, and celebrated all the special occasions gathering with our extended family.

My Auntie often joked that at 15 I had turned from a small bald baby into a long-legged beauty with a thin waist and thick hair. Dad and Mom always smiled at these words. They were so proud of their daughter.

We were always together throughout our lives and we died together.

That Russian missile that struck the building in Peremoha Street on the afternoon of January 14 destroyed my family. There is no more me, my optimistic father, my caring mother, my grandfather, my aunt, or her husband. And instead of my family's cozy apartment, all that was left is just a huge hole in the building.



Image and story courtesy of Ukraine Memorial Platform

Capacity-building programmes for casualty recorders in East Africa

In 2024, ECC began a two-year capacity-building and support programme for 21 casualty recording organisations in East Africa. The East Africa project aims to support members of the CRN who are recording fatalities of armed conflict in Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, South Sudan and, Sudan. The project will focus on developing their capacity in key areas relating to methodology, information management, data and staff security, and advocacy.

Online and in-person exchanges, workshops and training, as well as peer-to-peer support, will be key elements of this project. Over the next two years we aim to extend this intensive training pilot project to other high priority regions.

Webinar series: Casualty Recording in Practice

The Casualty Recording in Practice webinar series was set up as part of various activities promoting, supporting, and developing best practices in casualty recording.



The series offered:

- A safe space for practitioners, mainly members of the CRN, to share their experiences and discuss key issues related to challenges in casualty recording through case studies, lessons learnt and practical examples. The topics highlighted in these webinars were data documentation, forensics, mental health, advocacy, misinformation, and fundraising.

Webinar series: Casualty Recording in Africa

In 2024, ECC organised four webinars with the Royal Holloway Centre for International Security, the Royal Holloway Centre for Global Politics and Development, and members of the CRN to inform policymakers about state-of-the-art practices and grassroots initiatives to record conflict-related deaths in Africa. The series looked at examples from Sudan, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic, Somalia and Nigeria.

The series provided exposure to:

- The meticulous and continuous work that casualty recorders conduct worldwide, particularly in Africa, where many projects are underfunded. The series considered the vicious circle whereby neglected conflicts receive fewer resources for documentation, resulting in less evidence of the impact of conflict, and perpetuation of international political neglect.
- It also provided a forum for examining the challenges and possible solutions to the current status quo, offering a safe place for practitioners and academics to discuss the way ahead and potential future collaborations.

The series involved expert discussions on geopolitical trends arising from how the Ukraine and Israel-Gaza wars shape conflict patterns and the infrastructure for casualty recording on the African continent.



The future of the Casualty Recorders Network

“ —

We hope that the CRN will continue to grow as a community of practitioners and act as a platform that helps them amplify their voice and their impact so that no life lost to armed conflict or violence goes unnoticed or unreported. We also aim to provide our network members with all the necessary tools to record casualties rigorously, comprehensively and consistently, and provide a safe space to exchange knowledge about best practices and current challenges.

The CRN would also like to continue to call upon States and all parties to a conflict to comply with their casualty recording obligations in line with the international Standards for Casualty Recording. Additionally, the CRN would also like them to respect and facilitate the role of civil society casualty recorders. Casualty recording should be used systematically to prevent civilian deaths and unidentified human remains, in all situations of violence.”

Federica Riccardi - Network Development Lead

—”



IMAGE: Anja Niedringhaus/AP.

Standards for Casualty Recording

The origins and purpose of the Standards

The need and the will to harmonise casualty recording practices first emerged at the global conference of the Casualty Recorders Network, hosted by the Every Casualty Programme of the Oxford Research Group in London in 2011. Casualty-recording practitioners and other stakeholders agreed that standards could promote improved data quality and more effective use of casualty recorders' work. The Standards for Casualty Recording established an agreed-upon baseline for casualty recording, enabling more actors to access, trust, use, and share the data produced by casualty recorders.

The Standards aim to harmonise practices worldwide, encouraging casualty recorders to consider key aspects of good practice and how these can be applied to their casualty-recording projects. They establish standard practices that can be applied across the field, while respecting its diversity of actors, methods and approaches. They are intended for use by anyone involved in casualty recording, or who uses casualty recording data produced by others.

The Standards remain the definitive guide to casualty recording best practices in all areas of the casualty recording process.



The road to developing the Standards

The Standards are the result of a two-year consultative phase initiated in 2013, and a review phase initiated in 2016. The first consultative phase brought together a core group of practitioners and end users in a plenary meeting in Bogotá, co-hosted by Every Casualty and the Conflict Analysis Resource Center (CERAC). Here, participants decided to form smaller working groups in which specialists would discuss the content of the standards on a thematic basis. These working groups met between 2013 and 2015.

Every Casualty managed and facilitated the consultative and drafting process. Building on the discussions and outputs of the working groups, a first draft of this document was reviewed by the original core group at a plenary meeting in September 2015 co-hosted by Every Casualty and Iraq Body Count in London. The review phase involved consultation with a wider range of stakeholders, selected for their expertise or particular interest in casualty recording. Members of the CRN and expert representatives of the ICRC and UN agencies worked closely with us to develop the Standards. This review was designed to verify the extent to which the common perspectives reflected in these standards commanded broad support among relevant actors in the international arena. The final version of the Standards was published in November 2016, with a launch event at the Geneva headquarters of the ICRC.

How the Standards are structured

The Standards are divided into five chapters which address specific areas of casualty recording activities. Each chapter is further divided into thematic sections. The document comprises 58 numbered standards. In addition to these standards, the first section of each chapter presents how the overarching principles of casualty recording apply specifically to each area. The Standards include guidance concerning:



The Standards are available in Arabic, English, French, Spanish, and Turkish. The Ukrainian and Somali versions are due to be published in 2025. Summarised editions, intended as a simplified practical tool, are available in multiple additional languages.

Impact of the Standards

“

The Standards have been an essential touchstone in our work when coordinating partners and advocating for greater protections for civilians. From speaking directly with militaries about the importance of casualty recording, to providing our documentation to civil society organisations and journalists, having the Standards adds legitimacy to our work and provides a framework for others trying to understand how we do the work we do.

Alongside this critical external function, the Standards continue to be crucial for us as we develop and grow Airwars: whenever we expand our methodology or start working on a new conflict, we make sure we are abiding by the principles of transparency, replicability and digital safety and security, for example, as well as continuing to incorporate the practices outlined in the Standards.

Airwars is proud to be a member of the Casualty Recorders Network and hold the Standards in high esteem – the main question going forward is not if these Standards are helpful or impactful, but more about how we can support in getting the Standards to more organisations, more grassroots movements, and more states who should be doing this work themselves, as well as supporting this work through independent third parties. What we have seen in the last ten years may just be a small glimpse into the scale and intensity of the future of war - having these Standards can help organisations think logically and carefully about how to scale and adapt.

”

Emily Tripp - Director of Airwars (CRN member)

The future

ECC is constantly developing new tools, templates and training materials to help support and strengthen the effective implementation of the Standards. These will assist casualty recorders to develop and refine their practices to ensure they remain as effective and accurate as possible in an ever-changing world.

Advocacy

Over the past decade, ECC has engaged with diplomats, parliamentarians, and international agencies to build support for casualty recording worldwide. Global understanding of the importance of casualty recording, and political commitment to ensure it is conducted effectively in all situations of armed violence, is essential to ensure every life lost is acknowledged.

ECC's advocacy work began with a focus on the importance of casualty recording for international efforts to protect civilians from the impacts of armed conflict. In 2014, we ensured this link was made explicit in the annual Security Council 'Protection of Civilians' debate, where multiple states spoke in support of the need for casualty recording. In 2019, the value and impact of casualty recording were endorsed in the UN's 'Protection of Civilians' 20th anniversary report. Our advocacy had practical impacts, too – we ensured casualty recording and the Standards for Casualty Recording were referenced in the NATO Allied Command 'Protection of Civilians Handbook' (2019) and the UN Department of Peace Operations 'Protection of Civilians in UN Peacekeeping Handbook' (2020).

In 2016, the same year that the Standards for Casualty Recording were launched at ICRC headquarters in Geneva, ECC contributed to the ICRC's revised Commentaries on the 1949 Geneva Conventions. The revised Commentaries make clear the obligations of all parties to armed conflict to ensure that casualties are recorded.

In recent years, we have focused our international advocacy efforts on the essential role of casualty recording in upholding fundamental human rights. Working closely with diplomats and UN representatives, in 2020 we secured references to casualty recording for the first time in three resolutions at the Human Rights Council in Geneva. This was coupled with a statement recognising the importance of casualty recording, endorsed by 50 states. In the same year, the UN's global Sustainable Development Goals report incorporated casualty recording data for the first time.

The importance of our work was recognised when we were granted Special Consultative Status by the UN in 2021. Since then, we have participated in fifteen sessions of the Human Rights Council, held two side events, and made more than 25 interventions - most of them in partnership with CRN members.

The 50th regular session of the Human Rights Council in 2022 was a milestone for our advocacy, as it resulted in the adoption of a resolution specifically focused on

the impact of casualty recording. The resolution was a major step forward in international political recognition of casualty recording as a field. It explicitly recognised the direct relevance of casualty recording to various internationally recognised human rights. This led to a global study by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, published in 2023, reaffirming the crucial role of casualty recording in upholding fundamental human rights.

These are just some of the highlights of a decade of groundbreaking advocacy. Thanks to these efforts, international recognition of the value of casualty recording has grown dramatically from a little-known concept to a mainstream concern across the security, human rights, humanitarian, and development fields. Our focus for the next ten years will be on developing this recognition into effective global action.



Publications

Over the last decade, we have published reports on various issues relevant to casualty recording. These range from the role of casualty recording in transitional justice in Tunisia to an analysis of the obstacles to, and impact of, casualty recording in Nigeria, Guatemala, the Central African Republic, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. We have contributed analysis to multiple UN reports and investigations, including on missing persons in Syria and the weaponisation of collective memory. We have provided input to research by international NGOs and think tanks, and published comprehensive papers on international law.

Key publication highlights

The role of casualty recording in transitional justice: Responses to the 2010-2011 Tunisia uprising

In September 2015, we released a report examining the relevance of casualty recording in transitional justice by analysing the work conducted by Tunisia's National Fact-Finding Commission ('the Bouderbala Commission'). The Bouderbala Commission was established to comprehensively and systematically record the deaths and injuries related to the 2011 protests. Fact-finding commissions are often part of the transitional justice process but the Bouderbala Commission's work is noteworthy because its mandate involved recording all victims of the violence rather than representative cases. The Commission demonstrated that casualty recording can contribute to transitional justice in a systematic and comprehensive way.



ECC's report highlighted that casualty recording can form the basis on which to attribute compensation and provide useful starting points for further investigations, including those that can lead to criminal prosecutions. It also showed that casualty records are important in supporting efforts towards reconciliation and the creation of a common societal narrative that is inclusive of all victims.

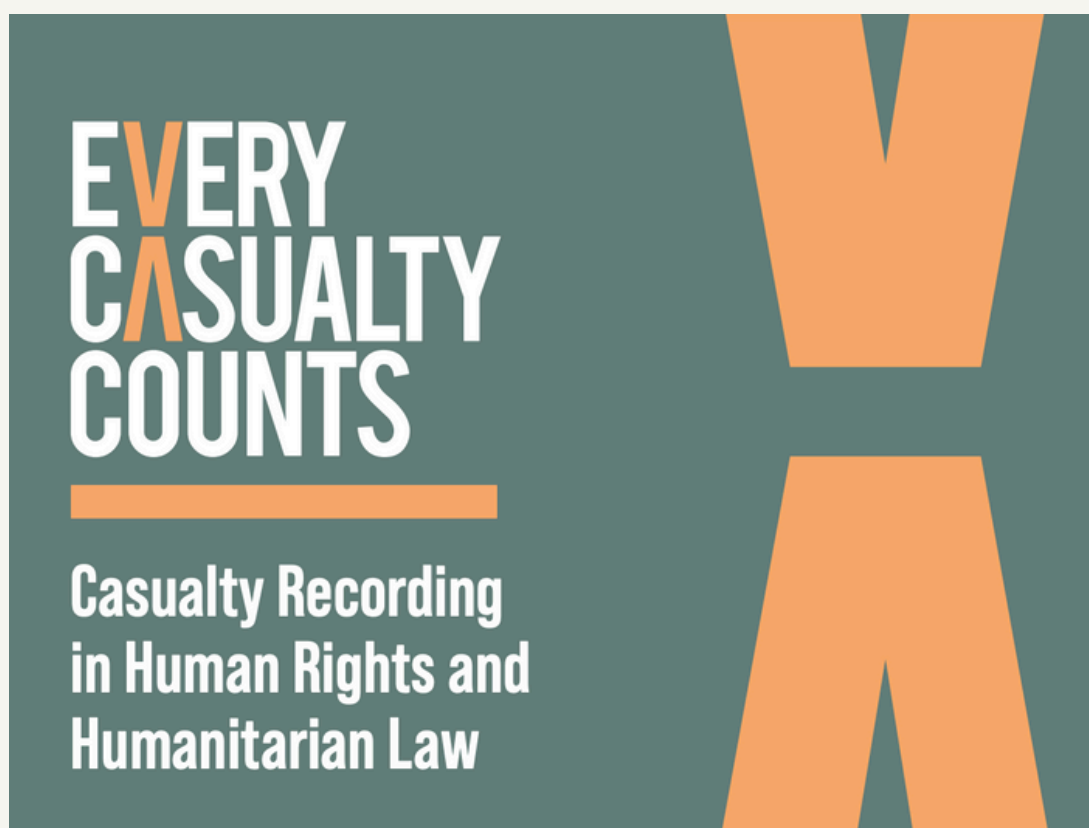
Casualty Recording in Human Rights and Humanitarian Law

In March 2023, we launched our Casualty Recording in Human Rights and Humanitarian Law report at a side event at the Human Rights Council 52nd session in Geneva. This comprehensive report provided oversight of the principles and provisions of international human rights and humanitarian law with relevance to casualty recording.

Some of these obligations are explicitly stated in international law, whilst others arise implicitly from a corresponding human right.

Despite the extensive requirements regarding states' duties to account for the dead and missing in armed conflict and other situations of gross human rights violations, in practice they are frequently neglected or inadequately fulfilled. This is due to several factors, including a lack of awareness and understanding of the relevant requirements, and their basis in international law.

This report emphasises the clear legally binding obligations, whilst also highlighting the requirements of non-binding but widely accepted protocols and guidelines. The report aims to ensure all policymakers, diplomats, military leaders and other relevant actors are fully aware of and understand states' duties to account for the dead.



CASUALTY RECORDING IS FOUNDATIONAL TO THE PROTECTION OF UNIVERSAL HUMAN RIGHTS, JUSTICE, AND ACCOUNTABILITY. IN THE CONTEXT OF ARMED CONFLICT, THE SEVERITY AND SCALE OF VIOLENCE CAN BE OVERWHELMING FOR AFFECTED COMMUNITIES. DOCUMENTING CASUALTIES ENSURES THAT EVENTS ARE NOT ONLY RECORDED BUT THAT VICTIMS ARE HUMANISED, ENSURING THAT THEIR STORIES ARE REMEMBERED AND THAT THE TRAGEDIES THEY ENDURED ARE NOT FORGOTTEN. THIS PROCESS SERVES AS AN EDUCATIONAL TOOL FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS, HELPING SOCIETY LEARN FROM THE PAST TO PREVENT SIMILAR ATROCITIES.

Amhara Association of North America

What's next?

We have achieved notable success over the last ten years through the dedicated efforts of our staff, CRN members, stakeholders and our generous funders. As conflicts and instances of mass human rights violations continue to take their toll on human lives, we will continue to advocate for sound casualty recording practices, equipping our members with the best tools and techniques to succeed in casualty recording within their unique contexts. We will keep challenging stakeholders who overlook the importance of casualty recording and neglect their responsibilities to identify and document the dead.

Inspired by the dedicated work of casualty recorders worldwide, we will make every effort to ensure no life lost due to conflict or gross human rights violations goes unrecognised.

We also extend thanks to our Trustees, and our funders for their committed support.

Trustees

Professor Michael Spagat, PhD
Ms Janet Anderson
Dr Iain Overton
Mr Oran Finegan
Professor Benjamin Valentino

Our funders

The Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust
National Endowment for Democracy
Chalk Cliff Trust
The Government of Luxembourg
Royal Holloway University
CB and HH Taylor Trust
Edith M Ellis 1985 Charitable Trust
And other donors who prefer to remain anonymous

Ensuring every life lost to
armed violence is promptly
recorded, correctly identified,
and publicly acknowledged.

Every Casualty Counts,
86 - 90 Paul Street,
London, United
Kingdom, EC21 4NE.

www.everycasualty.org



@everycasualty



Every Casualty Counts

Donate here



Every Casualty Counts is a trading name of Every Casualty Worldwide, a charity registered with the Charity Commission of England and Wales, No. 1166974 and a UK-registered company limited by guarantee no. 09082055. Qualified for IRC 501(c)(3) equivalency status in the USA. ECW has Special Consultative Status with ECOSOC (United Nations).