Human Cost of Post-9/11 Wars:
Direct War Deaths in Major War Zones,

Neta C. Crawford and Catherine Lutz
September 1, 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Afghanistan</th>
<th>Pakistan</th>
<th>Iraq</th>
<th>Syria/ISIS</th>
<th>Yemen</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Military</td>
<td>2,324</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4,598</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>7,052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. DOD Civilian</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>3,650</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>511</td>
<td>8,189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Contractors</td>
<td>3,917</td>
<td>69,095</td>
<td>9,431</td>
<td>45,519</td>
<td>80,600</td>
<td>204,645-207,845</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Military and Police</td>
<td>69,095</td>
<td>9,431</td>
<td>45,519</td>
<td>80,600</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>204,645-207,845</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Allied Troops</td>
<td>1,144</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>13,407</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>14,874</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civilians</td>
<td>46,319</td>
<td>24,099</td>
<td>185,831-208,964</td>
<td>95,000</td>
<td>12,690</td>
<td>363,939-387,072</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opposition Fighters</td>
<td>52,893</td>
<td>32,838</td>
<td>34,806-39,881</td>
<td>77,000</td>
<td>99,321</td>
<td>296,858-301,933</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalists/ Media Workers</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanitarian/NGO Workers</td>
<td>446</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>892</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>176,206</td>
<td>66,650</td>
<td>275,087-306,495</td>
<td>266,325</td>
<td>112,092</td>
<td>897,150-928,558</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL (Rounded to Nearest 1,000)</td>
<td>176,000</td>
<td>67,000</td>
<td>275,000-306,000</td>
<td>266,000</td>
<td>112,000</td>
<td>897,000-929,000</td>
<td></td>
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This chart tallies reported deaths caused by direct war violence. It does not include indirect deaths, namely those caused by loss of access to food, water, and/or infrastructure, war-related disease, etc. The numbers included here are approximations based on the reporting of several original data sources. Not all original data sources are updated through mid-August 2021; dates are noted in the footnotes. The allocation of deaths into categories is often disputed because actors disagree on whether a person killed was a combatant or non-combatant. Sources tend to be conservative, only counting deaths which researchers have verified through two or more independent sources. As noted below, there are not consistent reports or estimates for most of the deaths in the smaller war zones in the Other category.

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2. Neta C. Crawford is Professor and Chair of the Department of Political Science at Boston University and a Co-Director of Costs of War (COW) Project. Catherine Lutz is Research Professor and a Co-Director of the Costs of War Project at Brown University’s Watson Institute.

3. The deaths of Afghan military and police are not hard numbers in the same way as the deaths of U.S. and allied military personnel. There are political incentives to inflate opposition deaths and undercount the deaths of one’s own side.

4. U.S. air strikes in Syria began on 23 September 2014. COW is tracking deaths from that point, which marks the beginning of U.S. involvement. The major fighting in that war began in March 2011 and the total number of deaths perpetrated by all parties to the conflict is much higher, at least 2,000,000 more than enumerated here.

5. The U.S. began drone strikes in Yemen in 2002 but the major fighting began when Saudi Arabia intervened in March 2015.


9. Counted as part of Operation Enduring Freedom and Freedom’s Sentinel, by the DOD. Included in Other figures here.


Rod Nordland, “The Death Toll for Afghan Forces is Secret. Here’s Why,” in U.S. Military Report,” Afghanistan began to classify these numbers in 2017 after previously releasing them. See Thomas Gibbons

October 31, 2019, President Ashraf Ghani said 28,529 Afghan security forces had been killed since 2015. Fahim Abed and Rod Nordland, “Afghan War Casualty Report: Nov. 9

25 January 2019, President Ashraf Ghani said 28,529 Afghan security forces had been killed since 2015. Fahim Abed and Rod Nordland, “Afghan War Casualty Report: Nov. 9

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Fahim Abed, “Afghan War Casualty Report


There are troops from about 20 different state and non-state actors engaged in this war. Nearly 12,926 members of the Syrian Democratic Forces, allied with the US were killed, including about 11,000 Kurdish allies of the US have been killed since 2015. As of March 2021, the Russian Ministry of Defense acknowledged 112 servicemembers killed in Syrian Civil War. “Russia Covered up Soldier’s Death in Syria, Media Reports,” The Moscow Times, January 9, 2019. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights estimates 264 total Russian soldiers and mercenaries killed since the beginning of the War. SOHR (2021). “Over 606,000 People Killed Across Syria Since the Beginning of the ‘Syrian Revolution’ Including 495,000 Russian soldiers from 2011 through May 2021; of these about 77,441 occurred from 2011 through 2020. And for 2021, South Asia Terrorism Portal, records an additional 117 security forces deaths: https://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/database/casualties.htm. However, the government numbers are assessed by Iraq Body Count to be a significant undercount.

Pro-Government Forces. From Reports by the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, http://www.syriahr.com/en/. SOHR documents 158,026 Pro-Government forces deaths from 2011-2021; of these about 77,441 occurred from 2011 through 2014. Thus, about 80,600 occurred from 2015 through May 2021. https://www.syriahr.com/en/217360/?_cf_chl_ischl_tk_=pmd_flkCQZqxFQ7V79rUZZPrdGgVwh7_NQE30gJCBjFS_XzA-1629466394-0-ggNiZGzNAeWjcNbszQlR. Not including all other non-Syrian militia who were loyal to the Assad regime.

Included in opposition fighters total below.

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26 Through 2020, Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) annual Pakistan Security Reports. Retrieved from http://pakpips.com/. This data is mostly consistent with South Asia Terrorism Portal, Fatalities in Terrorist Violence in Pakistan 2003-2021. Retrieved from https://www.satp.org/datasheet-terrorist-attack/fatalities/pakistanSI. The counts of the dead (and wounded) are complicated not only by the difficulty of access to war zones for investigators, but also because some actors have incentives to either exaggerate or to minimize the number of civilians killed, or to identify civilians as militants.

27 Iraq Body Count tally through July 2021. IBC has verified their count through February 2017 and have provisionally verified their count through September 2019. IBC says that a complete analysis of Wikileaks data may add as many as 10,000 deaths. Source: Iraq Body Count, https://www.iraqbodycount.org/.


30 The data on civilians killed in insurgency and counterinsurgency and by terrorism and counterterrorism in the Philippines, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Jordan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Seychelles, Sudan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Uzbekistan are unknown and disputed. For example, thousands of people have been killed in terrorist and counterterrorism in the Philippines. For a discussion see ACLED data and Ashley L. Rhoades and Todd Helmus. 2020. Countering Violent Extremism in the Philippines: A Snapshot of Current Challenges and Responses. (Santa Monica, RAND).


36 There are few estimates of the number of militants killed in the smaller war zones. These likely number many thousands. For example, IISS estimated that 900 militants were killed in Marawai, Philippines in May 2017. International Institute for Strategic Studies, (June 2018). *Asia-Pacific Regional Security Assessment 2018*, Washington, D.C.

37 Journalist and media worker deaths for war years through 21 August 2021. Source: Committee to Protect Journalists, Journalist Motive Confirmed and Media Workers Motive Confirmed and Unconfirmed, retrieved from https://cpj.org/. Other includes 28 Journalists killed in the Philippines since 2014.

38 129 Journalists killed in the Philippines since October 2002.


40 Aid workers killed in the Philippines (7) and Libya (1).

41 For reasons noted above, this total is a substantial undercount since it does not include most people killed in terrorism and counterterrorism operations in the Philippines, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Burkina Faso, Jordan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Seychelles, Sudan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Uzbekistan, and other areas where the U.S. has or is currently conducted counterterror operations with local allies.