

Civilians Killed & Wounded

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A woman walks past the scene of a bomb attack in Baghdad Jan. 29, 2007. A bomb in a small bus killed one civilian and wounded five others, police said. (REUTERS/Ceerwan Aziz)

The wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan have taken a tremendous human toll on those countries. As of March 2015, approximately 210,000 civilians have died violent deaths as a result of the wars. Civilian deaths have also resulted from the US military operations in Yemen that began in 2002.

People living in the war zones have been killed in their homes, in markets, and on roadways. They have been killed by bombs, bullets, fire, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and drones. Civilians die at checkpoints, as they are run off the road by military vehicles, when they step on a mine or cluster bomb, as they collect wood or tend to their fields, and when they are kidnapped and executed for purposes of revenge or intimidation. They are killed by the United States, by its allies, and by insurgents and sectarians in the civil wars spawned by the invasions.

Death can also happen weeks or months after a battle. Many times more Iraqis, Afghans, and Pakistanis have died as a result of battered infrastructure and poor health conditions arising from the wars than directly from its violence. For example, war refugees often lose access to a stable food supply or to their jobs, resulting in increased malnutrition and vulnerability to disease.

The Costs of War reports document the direct and indirect toll that war takes on civilians and their livelihoods, including the lingering effects of war death and injury on survivors and their families.

Key Findings

- Approximately 210,000 Afghan, Iraqi, and Pakistani civilians have died violent deaths as a direct result of the wars.
- War deaths from malnutrition, and a damaged health system and environment likely far outnumber deaths from combat.

Recommendations

- The US government should include civilian deaths and injuries in public reporting of war deaths, including a tally of children killed.

(Page updated as of March 2015)