

Syrian Victims: When Truth Is the First Casualty of War

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Global Research, March 27, 2012

27 March 2012

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

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The Western mainstream media continuously beat the war drums for Libya-like treatment of Syria, using body count statistics to attempt to paint the year-old Syrian conflict as a humanitarian disaster crying out for NATO and its allies to bomb the government's military forces into submission. Ironically, under the guise of "responsibility to protect", the NATO powers and their Gulf Arab proxies are supplying weapons, training and logistical support to the armed "opposition" forces.

And the United Nations obliges by publishing estimated body counts, as forwarded from various shadowy opposition organizations, which of course raises suspicions that the counts are being manipulated (generally increased) to support the humanitarian disaster portrait.

The current casualty count from the UN (opposition estimates) seems to be about 8000-10,000, with the corporate media often leaving the impression that these are the civilian death counts, when in fact, they appear to be the total of both civilians and combatants on both sides.

Another oft-presented false impression is that most of the opposition combatants are Syrian citizens that have "risen up" against their government in some kind of "Arab Spring" democracy movement, taking up arms only because they have been attacked by their own government forces (both military and security/police). This has been demonstrated by many independent journalists not to be the case. [1] Most of the opposition combatants are imported mercenaries, particularly Libyans, armed and supported by a coalition of other countries.

Thus, the true picture is one of a reasonably well-sourced government responding with force to meet force, commonly known as "war" and in war, civilians and direct combatants are killed. But we haven't been presented with any kind of a good breakdown of the claimed deaths.

Let us first presume that the Iraq war is a reasonable facsimile of the Syrian conflict i.e. a superior military force going against an inferior, non-uniformed (after the initial onslaught) force, operating primarily within an urban battleground, where the non-uniformed opposition cannot be easily distinguished from non-combatant civilians, other than by their armed actions. Iraqis also were a mixture of sects (Shia, Sunni, Christian, non-sectarian) as is Syria. This is important to understand, in that there is often no great love lost between members of these different sects, which increases the potential for civilian killings by invading mercenaries of a different sect, the largest risk falling upon non-Sunnis as the mercenaries are likely mostly Sunni. The point being that civilian deaths can and do occur by the

combatants, whichever side they are on, purposely or accidentally (known as “collateral damage”).

Other complicating factors in casualty counts include the fact that opposition forces try to take their dead with them or secretly bury them quickly (per Islamic tradition) so as to not reveal negative impacts on their forces or their mercenary (non-Syrian) identities. Also noted is the fact that good medical help is not generally available to opposition combatants and often, civilians. This has the effect of creating greater fatality numbers, from those initially wounded but not killed. Government forces have better access to medical facilities.

Now, a well-equipped military generally operates on the basis of accepting losses as long as the “kill ratio” (enemy combatants killed/military killed) is substantially in their favor. The US tends to target a minimum “acceptable” ratio of about 10:1, though in the Iraq war, it was only about 6.2:1. A lesser-equipped and lesser-trained Syrian military/security force might operate with a reduced kill ratio of, say, 2:1. It has been stated that Syrian forces have incurred about 3,000 losses to date, which at the 2:1 ratio would mean about 6,000 opposing combatant casualties. This number seems reasonable in that it has been estimated that at least 15,000 armed/trained mercenaries have entered Syria [2] and, with the recent greatly increased Syrian military actions, 40 per cent depletion in enemy combatant numbers does not seem unreasonable.

Thus, accepting the total UN casualty figure of 10,000 implies that the number of civilian non-combatant deaths numbers only about 1,000, a regrettable yet relatively small number, certainly not qualifying for “humanitarian disaster” classification and mainstream media mania. The UN estimates that there has been an average three-to-one ratio of civilian to combatant deaths in such conflicts worldwide; [3] in the Iraq war, the ratio was near 4:1. [4] Here, the ratio is only 0.11:1 (1,000/9,000), a very small number indeed, independent of how many were killed purposely by one side or the other and how many were “collateral damage”.

A more typical worldwide average ratio of 3:1 would have resulted in about 27,000 civilian deaths, compared with the estimated 9,000 combatant fatalities. This is a huge difference. If in fact 10,000 is the real number and a 3:1 ratio held, then the actual number of combatant fatalities (both sides) would only be about 2,500, resulting in civilian deaths of 7,500.

Thus, either there is no civilian “humanitarian disaster” at all, or the combatant fatalities are well over-stated i.e. closer to 2,500 and not about 9,000, which with 7,500 civilian casualties would still be “only typical” per UN historical statistics. Or perhaps the entire body count estimate of about 10,000 is highly inflated. Take your pick.

In any case, the Syrian government should consider quickly establishing a Casualty Count and Characterization Commission, comprised of credible, independent observers, to sort out truthful numbers, rather than the entire world relying on “opposition estimates”. The Commission should also be charged with forensic investigations of the growing number of terrorist bombings in an attempt to identify the perpetrators.

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Notes

[1] <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=29876>

[2]

<http://siteground243.com/~hram155/2012/03/10/russia-calls-out-nato-their-mercenaries-russia-says-15000-foreign-terrorists-in-syria/>

[3] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civilian_casualty_ratio

[4] <http://www.iraqbodycount.org/analysis/numbers/2011/>

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