**45th Session of the Human Rights Council**

**Joint Statement on Casualty Recording (Main Version)**

**Item 3 – General Debate**

**22 September 2020**

Thank you, Madam President.

I have the honour to deliver this joint statement on behalf of [xxx] countries.

Every day, an estimated 100 civilians are killed in armed conflict. Respect for the dignity of the dead is one of mankind’s most universal values, shared across cultures, religions and time. Although our customs vary, the personal, societal and legal need to acknowledge an individual’s death is common worldwide.

Casualty recording in situations of armed violence and conflict upholds this fundamental human value by endeavouring to produce a comprehensive and detailed record of every person killed and the circumstances of their death.

Furthermore, casualty recording can and should be used to support the effective realisation of many fundamental human rights which are regularly addressed by the Council, while it does not create new rights but refers to a variety of existing human rights. In armed violence and conflicts, the evidence base generated from casualty recording also contributes to better protect civilians and prevent violations of international law.

First among these is the **Right to Life,** which is non-derogable in all circumstances. Casualty recording can also directly complement efforts to account for **missing persons** in armed violence and conflict, many of whom usually have died. Furthermore, we would like to recall the importance of casualty records in commemoration and tribute to victims of human rights violations and abuses, including the victims of terrorism.

Casualty records are an integral component of upholding the **Right to Know the Truth** about the circumstances of loss of life and the **Right to an Effective Remedy**, including through ensuring access to relevant information. They can also provide valuable evidence in all forms of **accountability, transitional justice,** and **reconciliation** processes.

Casualty records support realisation of survivors’ economic, social and cultural rights, including the **Right to Own Property**, the **Right to Health** as well as **the Right to Education**. Women and girls in particular may need evidence of a male relative’s death to access inheritance rights, war pensions and similar financial support.

By aiding location and identification of the dead, casualty recording allows survivors to ensure their loved ones receive a dignified burial. Disposal of remains in accordance with one’s religious beliefs and family wishes is fundamental to upholding the **Freedom of Religion or Belief** and the **Right to Marry and Found a Family**.

We are aware that the deliberate misuse of figures regarding casualties can lead to a distorted picture of the situation on the ground. This is even more a reason to highlight the importance of casualty recording carried out in an impartial, correct and comprehensive way.

While we acknowledge OHCHR’s on-going and systematic casualty recording work and encourage the use of this information by all relevant stakeholders in decision-making and engagement, we invite the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms, including the mandates of special procedures, commissions of inquiry, and fact-finding missions wherever relevant, to pay due attention to casualty recording within the scope of their respective mandates.

By increasing support for effective casualty recording we will be better able to uphold our commitments to implement a range of rights, leave no one behind, and preserve respect for one of the most fundamental principles of our shared humanity.

I thank you.

On behalf of (50):

Afghanistan, Albania, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, Fiji, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malta, Marshall Islands, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Panama, Peru, Portugal, Qatar, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Slovakia, Slovenia, State of Palestine, Sweden, Switzerland, Uruguay,