

Box 2.2 Sharing the Front Lines: Aid Workers Under the Gun

Between 1997 and 2005, nearly as many humanitarian aid workers lost their lives to violence as did uniformed peacekeepers. All told, 947 civilian aid workers were killed, kidnapped, or seriously injured by armed attacks during the nine-year period. These are among the findings of a joint study by the Center on International Cooperation (CIC) and the Humanitarian Policy Group/Overseas Development Institute (ODI): *Providing Aid in Insecure Environments: Trends in Policy and Operations* (see <http://www.cic.nyu.edu> or <http://www.odi.org.uk/hpg>).

Drawing on the most comprehensive global dataset to date of reported major incidents of violence against aid workers, the study found that the absolute number of attacks on aid workers each year has nearly doubled since 1997. The proliferating numbers of violent incidents have contributed to the widespread perception that aid workers are

increasingly targeted, and that the risk of violence against them is higher today than ever before. The study's statistical analysis, however, reveals that the situation is not as dire as it appears. By calculating yearly estimates of the population of aid workers in the field (a population that increased roughly 77 percent from 1997 to 2005), the study demonstrates that the global incidence of violence against aid workers rose only slightly over 1997–2005.

The analysis also shows that, with the exception of Iraq in 2003–2004, Somalia was the most dangerous environment for aid workers, followed by Sudan, Afghanistan, Iraq, North Caucasus, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Sudan in particular has had an upswing in violence recently, as aid workers increasingly fall victim to violence in Darfur. From the start of 2005 to the third quarter of 2006, Sudan led

the field, with the highest number of attacks committed against aid workers (thirty-seven incidents involving ninety-four victims). In these contexts, however, local aid workers, relative to their numbers in the field, are suffering increasing casualties, while their international colleagues are becoming relatively less at-risk.

Perceptions of increased risk have led to greater reliance on local actors and national staff to deliver aid. So-called remote management programming allows operations to continue, but often results in less effective and less strategic programming. The study argues that humanitarian organizations have failed to fully consider the impact and ethics of remote management. Recommendations are offered for strengthening operational security and aid management in insecure environments, including through development of local capacity.

Violent Incidents Against Aid Workers by Year

Year	Total	Total Aid	UN	ICRC	IFRC	NGO	Donor/Other	Killed	Wounded	Kidnapped	Nat'l	Int'l
	Incidents	Worker Victims										
1997	34	77	26	9	10	31	1	39	8	32	43	34
1998	26	69	24	26	5	14	0	36	15	18	54	15
1999	31	66	16	8	4	38	0	29	15	20	41	25
2000	41	94	31	10	0	51	2	58	25	11	74	20
2001	29	94	28	11	3	52	0	27	20	47	66	28
2002	47	88	17	7	5	58	1	38	23	25	73	15
2003	62	145	31	8	20	86	0	86	49	8	118	27
2004	66	140	18	0	11	107	4	60	55	24	109	31
2005	72	174	24	4	5	139	2	61	95	17	159	15
Totals	408	947*	215	83	63	576	10	434	305	202	737	210

*The figure of 947 includes those killed in the bombing of the UN's Baghdad headquarters in August 2003, but not the estimated 150 people injured in that incident. Records are insufficient to determine the number and affiliation of the injured.