



Aid Worker Security Report Figures at a glance

2021

484 aid workers were victims of major attacks in 2020

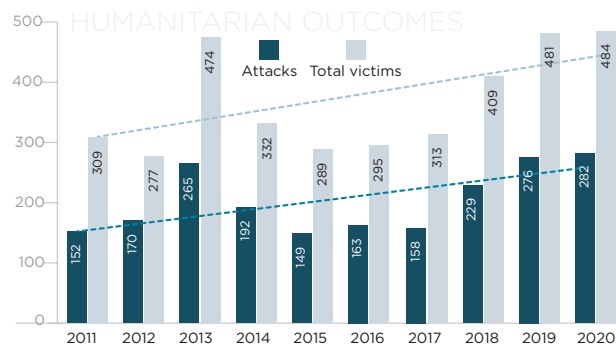
117 killed

242 wounded

125 kidnapped

Aid worker casualties remained at an all-time high in 2020, with 283 major attacks reported. The 484 aid workers attacked in 2020 included 117 who were killed, 242 seriously injured and 125 kidnapped.

Major security incidents affecting aid workers, 2011-2020



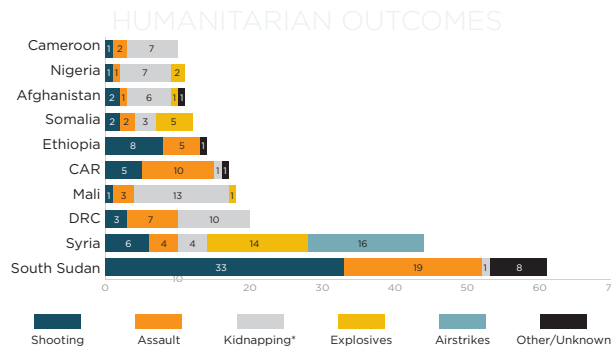
The high toll continued despite Covid-related constraints on operations, which some predicted would result in fewer incidents overall. Travel and movement restrictions for international staff, however, may partly explain why the proportion of national aid worker victims in 2020 was even higher than usual (95%).

Fortunately, overall fatalities continued to trend downward since a high point in 2017.

Major attacks affecting aid workers occurred in 41 countries, but most of the violence took place in South Sudan, Syria, and DRC. Other high incident contexts included Central African Republic and Mali, where incidents more than doubled since 2018.

Last year also marked the first time since the start of its 20-year conflict that Afghanistan was not one of the top five most violent contexts for aid workers. This appears to be a short-lived development, however, since the first six months of 2021 saw aid worker attacks on the rise again due to Taliban move to recapture more territory as US troops withdraw.

Highest incident contexts with types of attack, 2020

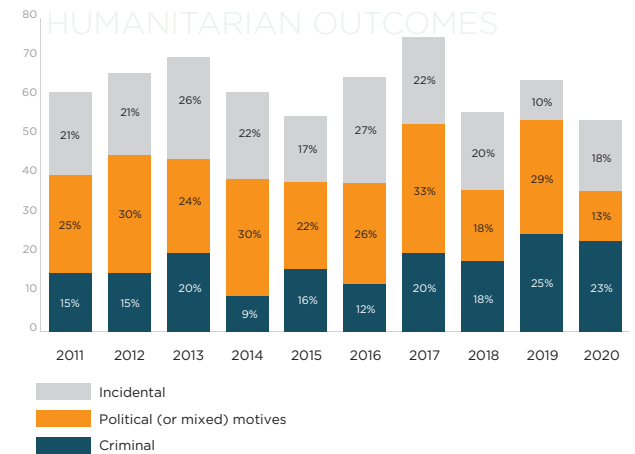


South Sudan [experienced a surge in new attacks](#) after a brief dip in 2019, despite the formal end to its civil war in September 2018. As departing UN peacekeeping forces handed over to government authorities, An increase in intergroup tensions, militarised cattle raiding, and proliferating youth gangs drove the spike in incidents.

Shooting as a means of violence rose dramatically, and attacks occurring outside of the original conflict areas speak to a growing atmosphere of lawlessness and the spread of opportunistic violent crime, fuelled by abundant firearms.

Finally, although not at the same level as these other violent contexts, the rise in attacks against aid workers in [Tigray, Ethiopia](#) during 2020 presaged a wave of violence that has worsened further in 2021, including the recent ambush and killing of three INGO staff.

Motives behind attacks (where possible to determine)



The forthcoming Aid Worker Security Report for 2020 looks at the humanitarian crisis contexts where low-level, fragmented conflict has blurred with common criminality in environments of state fragility and impunity. In many insecure operational settings, economic criminality (as opposed to attacks by conflict actors or collateral damage) accounts for a third or more of serious incidents against aid workers and often involves disproportionately high levels of violence. Data from the AWSD show this type of attack has increased in recent years.

Analysing the risks of crime, particularly organised crime, is often more difficult for aid organisations, and the outreach and negotiated access approaches that can sometimes work with armed actors don't apply as readily to criminal groups. As a result, many organisations lack the skill sets and strategic tools to effectively mitigate against violent crime risk.

This is an update of an earlier version published in July 2021, with figures amended to include previously unreported attacks in Tigray, Ethiopia.