

A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE EXAGGERATED CIVILIAN CASUALTY FIGURES IN THE TIGRAY CONFLICT

Worku Aberra

Determining the number of civilian war casualties in armed conflicts is difficult because various factors complicate accurate counting. Many deaths go unrecorded, and injuries sustained in conflict can result in delayed fatalities. The true scope of civilian deaths, compounded by indirect deaths resulting from famine, starvation, disruptions to healthcare services, and psychological trauma, is nearly impossible to gauge. Since direct counting is unfeasible in most cases, statistical methods can be employed to estimate civilian casualties, but different data collection methods, survey methodologies, sample sizes, and time frames produce varying estimates. Political motivations can also substantially influence the number of civilian casualties reported, since warring parties and their allies manipulate figures to further their political agendas.

This article examines the widely cited figure of 600,000 civilian casualties in Ethiopia's Tigray war from November 2020 to November 2022 as reported by Jan Nyssen. Despite methodological problems, an absence of transparent data, and a lack of research objectivity, Nyssen's number has been widely accepted by the mainstream media as a legitimate statistical estimate of civilian war casualties in Tigray. Sensationalism, reporters'