

**Iraq Memorial to Life – Installation – Central Park, New York City March 14, 2010;
Washington D.C. Mall, March 20, 2010**

One, too many.

Secretary of State General Colin Powell is quoted as saying “We don’t count enemy dead.”

Nor should we.

Not enemy dead.
Not war dead.
Not allied dead.
Not civilian dead.

But we should name them.

By name they were known.
By name they are remembered.
By name they are honored

We ought not ask “how many?” One is too many.

We ought to ask who?

Who is this sister?
Who is this brother?
Who is this mother, father, son, daughter, aunt, uncle, cousin, friend?

One, too many.

And who was Samar Hussein? A thirteen year old girl. Perhaps the first in the attack on Iraq to have died and whose name we know, from March 20, 2003.

One, too many.

When one life is lost, a world is lost.

Each son and each daughter;
A world of descendants; a nation of peoples;
Will never be.

We can here thank a community of volunteers, be grateful for their work, appreciate their efforts, carry the burden and responsibility of the knowledge they share with us. The Iraq Body Count, perhaps ironically, they call themselves, for they have gathered into one record and shared these names. They offer six reasons for their effort. One might be enough.

One, too many.

1. “The human cost of war must be recorded.” [As it is in our sacred texts: in the Bhagavad Gita; in the Bible; in Homer and Vergil; in the Tibetan Book of Living and Dying; the Records of the Dead of the US Civil War; The Holocaust; The Vietnam Monument; the garden of memory in San Josecito D’Apartado; the Goldstone Report; the Iraq Memorial to Life.]

2. “Knowledge of war deaths must be available to all...a new human-centered understanding of conflict which places the security needs of ordinary people above the interests of regimes or state powers...”
3. “U.S. ... citizens bear particular responsibility for events in Iraq...electoral democracy in which voters and tax-payers share in the responsibility of our governments actions.”
4. Documenting violent civilian deaths, knowing that the nation does count and name its own dead, that the war will claim many more unnamed in the aftermath of the conflict, that the conflict has deepened a culture of violence in Iraq such as we have long experienced in the United States; that the cancer continues to spread without regard for borders or ideology or theology or romance, around the world.
5. The media reports mean we can name, and honor, these war dead.
6. That this data can bring us together in this way, to lament and mourn, to strengthen our resolve, to focus our attention and intention, to end all war knowing that

One, too many, is named here, again and again and again.

Mark C. Johnson, executive director, Fellowship of Reconciliation USA