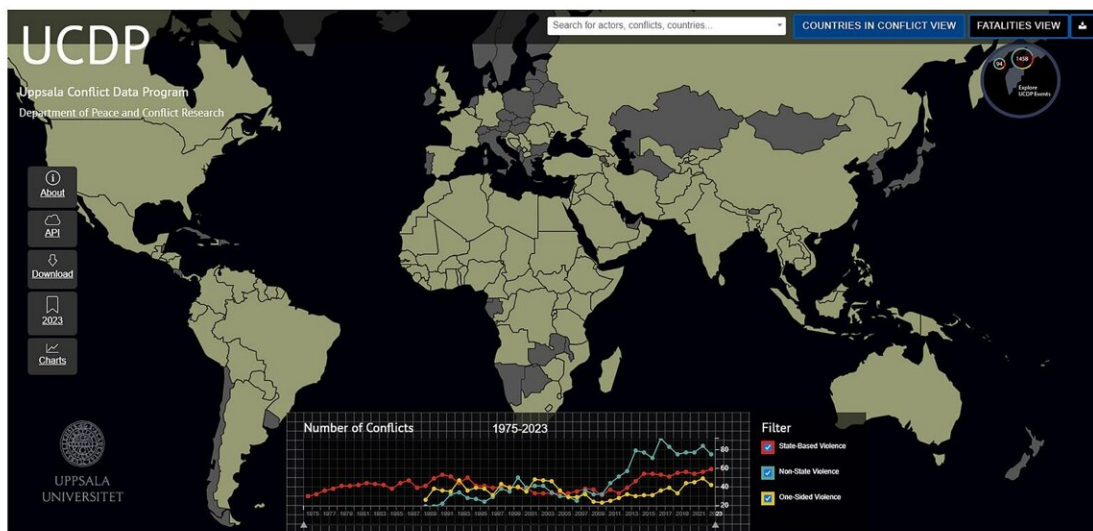


New data indicate record number of armed conflicts in the world

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Credit: Uppsala University

Never before have there been so many armed conflicts across the globe. This has been shown by new statistics from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program, UCDP, at Uppsala University. In 2023, the number of conflicts involving states totaled 59, the highest number ever since the data collection's starting point in 1946. Previous peaks were seen in 2020 and 2022, each with 56 conflicts.

At the same time, the number of deaths from conflict violence halved compared to the previous year, which was mainly due to the ending of the extremely bloody war in the Tigray region of Ethiopia at the end of 2022.

"However, we can still see several unusually deadly wars going on, such as the war in Ukraine with almost 71,000 deaths last year, and Israel's war against Hamas where UCDP recorded over 22,000 deaths in 2023," explains Shawn Davies, Senior Analyst at UCDP.

Although the total number of deaths from organized violence worldwide halved last year compared to the year before, from 310,000 to 154,000, 2023 was one of the bloodiest years since UCDP began collecting data on deaths in conflicts in 1989.

"Only three years have been more deadly than 2023. Aside from the 1994 Rwandan genocide, 2021 and 2022 make it onto that list," continues Davies.

There were nine wars in 2023 (conflicts with more than 1,000 deaths per year), one more than the year before and the highest figure since 2017. Most wars took place in Africa, with the civil war in Sudan that broke out in 2023 being the third deadliest conflict of the year, after the wars in Ukraine and Israel/Palestine.

In many conflicts, the [civilian population](#) is also targeted by the warring parties. Although the UCDP recorded a fall in the overall number of deaths in one-sided violence against civilians last year, thousands of civilians fell victim to this type of violence in conflicts in Sudan, Burkina Faso, Israel and Myanmar, among others. In total, just over 10,000 [civilian deaths](#) were recorded in this type of targeted violence, compared to 12,000 the year before.

"For the ninth consecutive year, IS, also known as Daesh, was the group that killed the most civilians in one-sided violence, although the total number fell sharply compared to the previous year. The group was active in 16 different countries where they carried out various acts such as shootings, beheadings and large coordinated suicide bombings," says Therese Pettersson, Senior Analyst and Project Manager at UCDP.

In conflicts between groups where the state is not involved, known as non-state conflicts, the UCDP noted a slight decline in 2023. A total of 20,900 deaths were recorded in 75 non-state conflicts.

"It's too early to call this is a break in the trend, however. The last ten years have been the ten most deadly when it comes to this type of violence, which in recent years has almost exclusively involved violent clashes between gangs and cartels," notes Pettersson.

The majority of non-state conflicts take place in Latin America, of which the bloodiest have been seen in Mexico and Brazil, where violence is concentrated in cities and along major drug trafficking routes.

"But this type of violence has also become more present in Europe, and in 2023, the first ever active gang conflict in Europe was recorded when two rival gangs in the French city of Marseille entered into a conflict. Many of the patterns that characterize gang violence in the UCDP statistics can also be observed in Sweden, such as waves of [violence](#) triggered by splits and alliances, and the occurrence of increasingly younger perpetrators," notes Garoun Engström, Senior Analyst at UCDP.

So far, however, the conflicts in Sweden do not reach the level of active conflict as defined by the UCDP. This definition, which has become standard in the field of peace and conflict research, includes conflicts between two specific parties that cause at least 25 battle-related deaths in a calendar year. The definition of war is conflict that results in at least

1,000 deaths in a year.

The 2023 statistics now published will be analyzed and presented in a report to be published in the *Journal of Peace Research* in July.

Provided by Uppsala University

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