



Security Council: Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict

I. Background

The importance of protecting civilians in armed conflict began after alarming genocides in the Balkans and Africa brought to light the vulnerability of unarmed civilians. Some of the most well-known violations of civilian protections are the Holocaust, Rwandan Genocide, and ISIS. In these conflicts, human rights violations are extremely high. Some of these atrocities include using humans as a shield, torture, and moral coercion. When these human rights are violated it is difficult to reverse because there is a lack of peace during a time of war. In addition, people in warring areas, such as land under ISIS control, are subject to drone bombings, torture, and abduction for slavery. Civilians are sometimes harmed for political gain. These civilians are also often times blocked from necessities like food, water, and proper shelter. Unfortunately, when people are deprived of their basic supplies it is extremely difficult for NGOs and relief agencies to bring supplies to areas with conflict without becoming injured themselves. The United Nations considers the issue of protection of civilians in armed conflict one of its top priorities because of the excess of human rights violations when armed conflict breaks out.

II. UN Involvement

The Security Council has set important precedents for civilian protection through its statements, resolutions, and perhaps most importantly, the mandates of UN peace operations. The first of these landmark resolutions was in 1999, when the Security Council voted in favor of Resolution 1265, which addressed the Council's inclination to take "appropriate measures" in response to situations where civilians are being targeted or humanitarian assistance is deliberately circumvented. The resolution also called on states to hold leaders accountable for acts of genocide, crimes against humanity and other serious violations of international humanitarian law. The most important precedent resulting from the resolution was a willingness to consider expanding the peacekeeping mandate to better protect civilian populations. Shortly afterward, it became unofficial UN policy that when peacekeepers saw violence perpetrated against civilians, they should be "presumed to be authorized to stop it, within their means." In 2006, the Security Council passed Resolution 1674, committing it to take action to protect civilians in armed conflict.

Other UN organs and agencies, in particular the General Assembly Special Committee on Peacekeeping, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, have included the topic of civilian protection in their agendas and enhanced their efforts to protect endangered civilian populations. For example, the General Assembly recently released a report requesting UN peace operations to design specific and comprehensive strategies for civilian protection.



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III. Possible Solutions

Issues that need to be addressed include getting aid to civilians in armed conflict when peacekeepers cannot be put on the ground to deliver them and how to end human rights violations during an armed conflict. A possible solution is air dropping supplies to recently affected areas. Also, it is an option to try to hold countries and rebel groups to a higher standard of war. Instead of attacking innocent civilians war should be kept off of streets and away from unarmed and unprotected people. Organizations such as the Red Cross, Doctors without Borders, UN Peacekeepers, and other third party groups should be a part of bringing aid to civilians in conflict. However, it is important to keep in mind that the sovereignty of nations has to be adhered to.

IV. Works Cited

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