

Forum: SPC 1

Issue: Strengthening the protection of civilians affected by armed conflicts

Student Officer: Aisha Sangau

Position: Deputy President



Introduction

The fate of people caught in the crossfire of today's complicated armed conflicts continues to be a major international issue. There is no denying the terrible toll that armed wars have on civilian populations; many lives are destroyed, families are uprooted, and communities are destroyed. Acknowledging the pressing need to tackle this humanitarian emergency, global endeavors have been concentrating more on fortifying the safeguarding of people impacted by armed conflict.

A fundamental principle of international humanitarian law is the protection of civilians during times of conflict; nonetheless, the harsh reality frequently exposes weaknesses and obstacles in its efficient application. A renewed commitment to strengthening civilian protection is required due to the change in conflict dynamics, which includes the emergence of non-state actors, asymmetric warfare, and the blurring of frontlines.

A variety of issues are covered by this complex problem, including the recruiting of child soldiers, the use of explosive weaponry in crowded settings, random attacks on civilian populations, and relocation. In order to effectively address these issues, governments, international organizations, the military, and civil society must work together in a holistic manner.

Through scrutiny of the changing nature of conflicts, current legal frameworks, and creative tactics needed to lessen damage and protect the rights and dignity of those caught in the middle of war, we will dive into the crucial elements of improving the protection of civilians in armed conflict in this talk. Now that this critical dialogue has reached its one-year mark, it is critical to evaluate the gains that have been made, recognize the ongoing difficulties, and map out a future that puts civilian safety and well-being first in the midst of hardship.

Definition of Key Terms

Civilian

A civilian is a person who does not belong to any armed forces, including the military. The majority of civilians do not participate in military operations and are non-combatants. As members of the general public, they can work in a variety of non-military fields like commerce, education, healthcare, and

other non-military positions. Civilians are entitled to certain rights under international humanitarian law and are frequently seen as separate from military troops during times of conflict.

Protection

Protection is the act of protecting, defending, or guaranteeing the safety and well-being of people, organizations, property, or interests against injury, danger, or undesirable consequences. It entails taking steps and employing tactics to reduce or eliminate dangers, hazards, or unfavorable effects.

Protection from Violence

Civilians should be shielded from direct and indiscriminate attacks, including intentional targeting, as well as from the effects of military operations.

Human Rights

Respect for the core human rights of civilians, such as the right to life, liberty, and security, is a critical component of civilian protection.

Access to Essential Services

Providing basic essentials such as food, water, healthcare, and shelter to civilians even in battle zones or crisis situations.

Preventing Displacement

Efforts to avoid the forced relocation of people and, when forced displacement happens, to provide aid to guarantee their safety and well-being.

Preventing Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

Strategies to stop and address gender-based and sexual violence, which disproportionately impacts civilians in war zones, especially women and children.

Humanitarian Assistance

Increasing the distribution of humanitarian help to needy citizens, such as medical care, food, and shelter.

Background Information

International attempts to improve protections and lessen the effects of battle on non-combatants are prompted by the urgent worldwide concern about the protection of civilians in armed conflicts. A pillar that emphasizes ideas like difference, moderation, and precautions is international humanitarian law

(IHL). UN initiatives such as Security Council resolutions which are essential in determining how best to protect people. UNSC Resolution 2286, for example, mandates that medical personnel and facilities be protected during hostilities. As seen by the international reactions to the crises in Libya and Côte d'Ivoire, the Responsibility to safeguard (R2P) philosophy emphasizes the need for the entire world to step in when nations fail to safeguard their citizens.

Humanitarian groups such as the International Committee of the Red Cross and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) make major contributions by providing crucial services in crisis zones. The purposeful targeting of people, displacement, and sexual assault remain major problems. The problem extends to the employment of explosive weapons in inhabited areas. Accountability must be achieved through international and hybrid criminal tribunals; the International Criminal Court's investigations into situations such as Darfur and the Democratic Republic of the Congo are examples of such attempts. As combat changes, changing strategy becomes critical, taking into account issues such as non-state armed organizations and technology improvements. Strengthening civilian protection demands continuing coordination, reflecting governments', international organizations, and civil society's common commitment to defend humanitarian values and reduce the human cost of war.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

The United Nations

The United Nations (UN) has taken several measures and developed procedures to safeguard people harmed by violent conflicts. Here are some significant features of the UN's activities in this regard:

International Humanitarian Law (IHL)

The United Nations advocates the implementation of international humanitarian law, which contains concepts and norms aimed at safeguarding people during armed conflicts. This body of legislation, sometimes known as the rules of war, establishes norms for the conduct of parties participating in armed conflicts while also attempting to reduce the impact of hostilities on civilians.

UN Peacekeeping Operations

To assist in preserving or reestablishing peace and security, the UN sends peacekeeping forces to conflict areas. These operations frequently involve monitoring and reporting on human rights violations, facilitating humanitarian aid, and protecting people. It is required of peacekeepers to behave in a way that respects human rights and international humanitarian law.

UN Security Council Resolutions

The UN Security Council has the authority to pass resolutions that address particular crises and demand actions to protect civilians since it is the principal body in charge of upholding international peace and security. Sanctions, arms embargoes, or the creation of peacekeeping operations are a few examples of these resolutions.

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

In order to effectively coordinate humanitarian relief operations in conflict areas, OCHA is essential. It seeks to guarantee the safety of people, the efficient distribution of humanitarian aid, and the cooperation of different humanitarian actors, such as governments, non-governmental organizations, and UN agencies.

Special Representatives of the Secretary-General (SRSG)

The UN designates Special Representatives of the Secretary-General (SRSG) in certain conflict areas, and their job is to supervise and coordinate UN operations, including measures to safeguard civilians.

UNICEF and Child Protection

UNICEF is a non-governmental organization that works exclusively to safeguard children who are impacted by violent situations. In addition to offering emotional assistance and addressing concerns like education and healthcare for impacted children, efforts are made to advocate for the release of child soldiers.

UN Security Council Sanctions

The Security Council has the authority to impose specific sanctions on people or organizations that damage civilians or fuel hostilities. Travel restrictions, asset freezes, and arms embargoes are a few examples of these penalties.

Even though the UN has taken significant action to safeguard civilians, difficulties still exist, and the success of these initiatives varies based on the particulars of each war. To further increase its effectiveness in defending people impacted by violent conflicts, the UN frequently collaborates with local actors, NGOs, and other international organizations.

Timeline of Events

Date (start - end)	Name	Description

1864-1949	Geneva Conventions	The Geneva Conventions and its Additional Protocols are a collection of international treaties that define the humanitarian standards of war. They seek to safeguard civilians and noncombatants during armed situations by detailing the rights and protections granted to people who are not engaged in hostilities.
1863	Establishment of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)	The ICRC is an independent humanitarian organization that assists and protects victims of violent situations. It aims to guarantee that the standards of international humanitarian law are followed and campaigns for civilian rights.
1943-1947	United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA)	During World War II, the UNRRA was founded to give humanitarian aid to citizens afflicted by the battle. It helped with the repatriation and resettlement of refugees, as well as the rehabilitation of war-torn areas.
1950	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)	UNHCR was established to meet the needs of refugees and displaced people, especially those impacted by armed conflicts. It aims to give safety, housing, and aid to individuals who have been forced to escape their homes due to violence and war.
1948	Adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights	All people, especially those impacted by armed conflicts, should have their fundamental human rights upheld, according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It acts as the cornerstone of international human rights legislation.

1956	Creation of Peacekeeping Missions	The goal of the UN's several peacekeeping operations in conflict areas is to preserve or restore the status quo. Monitoring human rights, facilitating humanitarian aid, and protecting people are frequently part of these operations.
2005	Adoption of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P)	According to the notion of the Responsibility to Protect, it is the duty of the international community to defend populations against crimes against humanity, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and genocide. In situations where nations are unable to safeguard their citizens, R2P offers a framework for involvement.
1997	Landmine Ban Treaty	An international agreement known as the Mine Ban Treaty, or Ottawa Treaty, seeks to outlaw the manufacture, distribution, and use of anti-personnel landmines. Even when hostilities cease, landmines continue to cause long-term harm to populations.
2014	Global Summit on Ending Sexual Violence in Conflict	The meeting, co-hosted by the United Kingdom and the United Nations, focused on addressing and preventing sexual assault in war zones. Its goals were to increase awareness, promote accountability, and help survivors.

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

Geneva Conventions (1949) and Additional Protocols (1977):

The Geneva Conventions are crucial in defining humanitarian norms of war and protecting civilians and noncombatants during armed wars. The 1977 Additional Protocols expand on these safeguards and handle new issues in contemporary warfare.

Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (1989):

Children impacted by armed conflicts have their rights protected under the CRC. It emphasizes the

unique care and support owed to children during times of conflict and lays forth specific rules for protecting them against violence, exploitation, and other damages.

United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (1998):

When it comes to internally displaced people (IDPs) and armed situations, these guidelines are essential. The obligation of nations and the international community to guarantee the well-being of internally displaced people is emphasized as they set rules for their rights and support.

The Responsibility to Protect (R2P) (2005):

R2P is a worldwide political initiative that emphasizes the duty of the international community to stop and deal with crimes against humanity, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and genocide. R2P emphasizes the necessity of protecting people when nations fail to do so. It is not a treaty, but it has evolved into a guiding concept in international relations.

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

Geneva Conventions (1864-1949):

International humanitarian law has been established largely thanks to the Geneva Conventions, which were first ratified in 1864 and have since undergone several amendments. To lessen the suffering of non-combatants, they lay forth standards for the treatment of civilians and prisoners of war during armed conflicts.

Hague Conventions (1899 and 1907):

The Hague Conventions set forth norms and guidelines for conducting war, such as safeguards for people and the outlawing of specific weaponry. The foundation for eventual advancements in humanitarian law was established by these early international agreements.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948):

The preservation of essential human rights, such as the right to life, liberty, and security, is emphasized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted by the UN General Assembly. All people are subject to these principles during armed conflicts, regardless of their circumstances or status.

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC):

Since its founding in 1863, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has been instrumental in protecting and assisting civilian victims of armed conflict. The group fights for victims'

rights and makes sure that international humanitarian law is followed.

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) (1950):

UNRWA was founded to shield and aid Palestinian refugees uprooted by the Arab-Israeli conflict. It is still in operation today, providing social, medical, and educational services to Palestinian refugees

Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (1989):

The CRC covers children's rights and well-being, particularly those affected by armed conflicts. It forbids the recruiting of juvenile soldiers and highlights the importance of providing specific protection and care for children in war zones.

Resolution 2417 (Protection of Civilians):

Resolution 2417 calls on all governments to preserve international humanitarian law in times of conflict and bring those responsible for mass atrocities accountable.

Possible Solutions

People affected by armed conflict have many complicated difficulties, and addressing these issues needs an all-encompassing and multifaceted strategy. To provide support and identify long-term solutions, a variety of stakeholders, including governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and local communities are crucial. Here are some possible solutions:

- **Peace Negotiations:** Encourage the use of diplomacy to settle disputes via talks and discussions.
- **Mediation:** To help parties with differences negotiate, and use peacekeeping efforts and international mediators.
- **Conflict Prevention:** To find possible disputes and resolve them before they get out of hand, invest in early warning systems and conflict prevention techniques.
- **Humanitarian Aid:** Help afflicted communities with food, drink, shelter, and medical attention to fulfill their urgent needs. This aid should be increased and continued.
- **Refugee and IDP Support:** Fund projects that provide economic, protection, and relocation services to refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs).
- **Strengthen International Law:** To safeguard people and reduce injury during wars, promote the observance and implementation of international humanitarian law.
- **Peacekeeping Missions:** Encourage and enhance UN peacekeeping efforts to safeguard civilians, observe human rights, and ease the distribution of humanitarian supplies.

- **Combat Sexual and Gender-Based Violence:** Put policies in place to stop and address gender-based and sexual assault, protecting everyone's safety and wellbeing.
- **Trauma Counseling:** Create and promote initiatives that offer counseling and psychological assistance to victims of trauma.
- **Arms Reduction:** Promote international agreements that will limit the spread of weapons and control the transfer of weapons to areas of conflict.
- **Reconciliation and Justice:** Working to negotiate peaceful arrangements between conflicting parties and/or bringing justice to the wronged party

Establishing and carrying out safety measures

Effective protection strategies require a thorough understanding of violations, their rationale, effects, and social and legal framework. Problem analysis is the first step, followed by determining minimum conditions for protection responses. Organizations must set clear priorities to guide their protection work, considering their mandate and available resources. This process ensures coordination and avoids duplication, ensuring a minimum level of coordination and effective protection

Activities to minimize and eliminate violence

The International Criminal Court (ICC) undertakes various protection activities to address two issues: the treatment of people by authorities and the use of force in hostilities and law enforcement. These activities focus on making authorities aware of their responsibilities and reducing the vulnerability of people at risk. The ICC's protection action includes representations, promotion of international law, domestic law development, and coping mechanisms.

Creating standards and regulations

Protection action should aim to prevent further violations and create an environment conducive to the protection of persons not participating in armed conflict or other violent situations. This includes developing international laws and standards, reminding central authorities of applicable legal norms, promoting knowledge of IHL, offering technical expertise for incorporating IHL in national legislation, teaching and training programs, and introducing IHL to those responsible for implementation. Structural support for the implementation of the law contributes to the ICC's efforts to prevent violations and create an environment conducive to the protection of persons not participating in armed conflicts or other violent situations. These activities require clear political will, no risk of misunderstanding, sufficient cohesion and structural capacity among authorities, coherence with the ICC's global strategy, and complementarity between the ICC's activities and other actors.

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