

Essay Mark

Topic: Human rights are the first casualty in any conflict

Outline

1. Introduction

Thesis statement: Violent conflict, of any kind, comes with a plethora of negative impacts. Conflict induced human rights violations are at the forefront of these impacts, making ~~them~~ human rights the first casualty in a conflict. However, with the help of corrective action, conflict induced human rights violations can be prevented to make way for a peaceful and prosperous society.

2. Human rights violations in conflicts

3. How human rights are the first to be affected in conflict

- Conflict takes away the right to govern freely
- Religious freedom is negatively impacted
- Loss of the right to live as a result of killing
- Media blockades impact right to information
- ~~Sieges~~ Sieges impact access to food and water
- Gender based crime and violence is increased

4. Impact of conflict induced human rights violations

- Damage to governance systems
- Collapse of the democratic value system
- Economic instability in conflict ridden regions
- Formation of resistance movements
- External influence on vulnerable populations
- Decrease in technological access
- Induces poor law and order conditions

5. Preventing conflict induced human rights violations: Lesson for humanity

- Promotion of dialogue and negotiation between hostile nations
- Establishment of arbitrary groups of countries
- Promotion of human rights protection organizations
- Increased role of the ICJ

6. Conclusion

"Today's human rights violations are the causes of tomorrow's conflicts." — Mary Robinson. These lines by former Irish President Mary Robinson epitomize a vicious cycle that exists in the world of today. This cycle is caused by and ends with conflict but does not seem to exist, because of one crucial factor — human rights violations. Throughout history, conflicts have been a source of human rights violations such as the right to live, right to govern, and right to practice religion. It also impedes access to information along with important utilities such as food and water. In addition, the rise in gender based crimes due to conflicts is also a key human rights violation in conflicts. These conflict induced human rights violations come with a number of impacts that we see in the world of today. These include the loss of governance systems, damage to democratic values, induced economic instability, the formation of resistance movements, the external influence on vulnerable populations, decrease in technological transfer to conflict ridden regions, along with deterioration of the law and order situation. Despite this, the world possesses the capability to tackle and prevent conflict induced human rights violations. This can be done by the promotion of dialogue and negotiation between hostile parties, the establishment of arbitrary groups of countries, promotion of human rights protection organizations, and an enhanced role by the International Court of Justice (ICJ). Violent conflict, of any kind, comes with a plethora of negative impacts. Conflict induced human rights violations are at the forefront of these impacts, making human rights the first casualty in a conflict. However, with the help of corrective action, conflict induced human rights violations can be prevented to make way for a peaceful and prosperous society.

No matter the cause of conflict or the forces involved, the results are often the same. These results include the devastating loss of civilian life among other human rights violations. In today's world warfare is constantly evolving along with the challenges it poses. Among the affected civilians, children are the most affected due to their needs and reliance on

adults. According to Amnesty International, in 2021, more than 19,000 children were abducted, killed or maimed in armed conflicts. Furthermore, Amnesty has also raised concern on crimes pertaining to women and girls such as rape and killings by the Ethiopian troops and Eritrean soldiers (Amnesty Int, Armed Conflict, 2022). This shows the abysmal human rights conditions brought about by conflict.

Human rights are the first to be affected when a conflict starts, which can be seen when the right to govern freely is taken from people. Opposing parties in a conflict may be motivated to topple a certain government. This greatly threatens the governance systems and disallows an acting government or leader to govern their people freely. In the case of civil wars, internal parties aim to overthrow a sitting government with violent means. Elected through a democratic process, this leader's right to govern is challenged. For example, this was seen in Sudan where a paramilitary force, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), launched a coup against the sitting president and violently challenged his right to govern freely, engulfing the whole country in violent conflict in 2021. This shows how conflict takes away the right to govern freely.

Just as conflict affects the right to govern, it also imparts the right to practice religion. This is because members of a certain religion or sect face threats in a hostile environment. These threats induce fear through violent means and prevent individuals from practicing their religion freely in public. Religious violence or sectarian conflict tends to strip the public from their religious rights as minorities are often overpowered by dominating parties. For example, in survey conducted in Balochistan, it was concluded that there have been a large number of incidents involving sectarian conflict, which has prevented religious freedom in some areas. In addition, interviews with clerics showed that

since they were widely unknown, they could not stop or influence these clashes (USIP, sectarian tolerance in Pakistan, 2014). This highlights how religious freedom dies with the start of a sectarian conflict.

Furthermore, conflict takes away the right to live from civilians. This is because of the evolution of warfare and the methods involved in it. Today, warfare has become a display of the most advanced and sophisticated technology in the world — seen in the form of intelligent munitions. Precision guided missiles have the capability to strike targets with extreme precision, but when used to target civilian infrastructure, it can bring about great loss of life. This was seen in 2022, during the Russia-Ukraine war, when Ukrainian forces launched a 'Tochka-U' short ranged ballistic missile at the Kramatorsk train station, killing dozens. It was later concluded by CNN that the missile was indeed Ukrainian and was used to target civilians. This highlights how the right to live is snatched during conflict.

Another right violation is the immediate blockade of media access when a conflict starts. This is because the aggressor chooses to silence the oppressed, and prevent the outside world to be informed of the ground realities. This in turn aids the narrative building process of the aggressor, and prevents other civilians to access information. Communication restrictions aid in these violations. This was witnessed in India in 2019, when the Modi government stripped Article 370 of the Indian constitution, and put Indian occupied Kashmir under curfew. The communication and media blockades experienced by the people of Indian occupied Kashmir have been the longest in history of any democracy (Bilal Ahmad, Communication blackout and media gag, 2020). This shows how the right to information is taken due to media blackouts.

Just as access to information is an important human right, the right to access food and water is also crucial and is badly hit during conflicts. This is because of the physical destruction that disrupts supply chains of such vital products. These disruptions can be caused by the destruction of supply lines, manufacturers, or by threatening border crossings. Hence, civilians are unable to access food and water and resort to unclean sources in an effort to satisfy their needs. A key example of this is the siege of Gaza by the ~~Israeli~~ Israeli Defence Forces (IDF). The IDF blocked access of food, water and medicine for the civilians of Gaza, and bombed the Rafah Crossing to prevent aid from entering through Egypt in the Israel-Palestine war of 2023. This action also amounts to a war crime according to international law (Maham Naweed, International Courts and the Israel-Palestine conflict, 2023). This shows how conflict affects the right to access to clean food and water.

Furthermore, conflicts also affect women and girls in the form of gender based violence. This is because in a conflict ridden region, women and girls become a vulnerable population, and are susceptible to gender based crimes such as killings, rape, kidnappings and trafficking. Since a large number of people are displaced during conflicts, women lose their homes and are often exposed to parties with malicious intent. According to Amnesty International, during the Yemeni civil war, a large number of women and disabled individuals struggled to get aid and were subjected to gender based violence such as rape (Amnesty International, Armed Conflict, 2022). This shows the plight of the rights of women during a conflict.

These human rights violations bring a plethora of negative impacts, one of which is the damage to governance systems. This is because

When conflict challenges the governance and state apparatus, it weakens administrative capabilities of the state. In the case of a coup, a sitting government seizes to govern its people resulting in a weak hold over the bureaucracy, healthcare sector and security architecture. For example, the Orange Revolution of 2001 saw the fall of a pro-Russian leader in Ukraine, and his replacement by Viktor Yushchenko, who is considered a pro-west individual due to his rhetoric regarding the west. This replacement caused governance in the country to seize for a significant amount of time. This shows how the loss of right to govern destroys the governance system of a country.

In addition to the damage of governance systems, the democratic systems are also damaged. This is because during conflict, the fraction of population opposing the conflict are often suppressed. This is done due to many reasons, which include to keep soldier morale up, prevent counter narratives from being made, and to influence public opinion. For example, after the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, a large number of protestors gathered in Moscow to ask the President to stop the war. However, they were suppressed, arrested and dispersed. This shows how conflict and human rights violations erode the democratic bedrock of a country.

The destruction of governance and democratic systems lead to economic stability in conflict ridden areas. This is because without a proper governance system and a lack of democratic values, the economy of a region is greatly disturbed. Trade, regional connectivity, and economic cooperation are tainted as the rights to live, govern, move freely and access information are targeted. For example, due to the presence of violent non-state actors in the region, Pakistan is facing hurdles in becoming economically stable, and in

its efforts to connect the region economically through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Frequent attacks on CPEC related installations impede the rights of the local population and induce economic instability. This shows how human rights violations negatively impact economic stability.

Furthermore, conflict induced human rights violations give birth to resistance movements. This is because of the constant oppression of certain groups along with killing and other harm, that causes fractions in a population to pick up arms and fight against the oppressor in search of vengeance and/or freedom. These resistance groups aim to get rid of an oppressor to end human rights violations with the help of violent means. For example, due to Israel's constant human rights violations in Palestine along with violations of UN resolutions, the Hamas resistance movement was formed, and won elections in Gaza in 2006 to fight the land, naval and air blockade of Gaza by Israel (Furgan Khan, Dynamics of Israel-Palestine Conflict, 2023). This shows how human rights violations give birth to resistance groups.

Moreover, conflict induced human rights violations also lead to external influence on vulnerable populations. In such cases, where certain groups are oppressed and decide to pick up arms against their oppressor, certain state actors decide to capitalize on this opportunity to intervene and influence these resistance groups, for political motivations mainly. For example, the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) has been blamed by counterparts of supplying and funding Hamas for its political ambitions. This leads to an increase in arms supplies, money, intelligence and diplomatic support for resistance groups. This highlights how such groups are susceptible to external influence during conflicts.

The lack of right of accessing information, ~~one to~~ strips away the technological access of civilians during conflict. This is because of sanctions of or blockades of regions with the aim to stop the inflow of technological elements into a region. This impedes technological development and innovation, causing other problems such as economic stagnation, and lack of development of human resource. An example of this is the blockade of internet to the Gaza strip by the IDF, which prevented the Palestinians ~~so~~ from earning through online businesses. In addition, sanctions placed by Israel on ~~the~~ the strip also prevent any helpful products and equipment, such as healthcare equipment from entering the strip. This shows how conflict induced human rights violations affect technological access and development in a region.

Conflict induced human rights violations also create a poor law and order situation in a conflict ridden region. This is because in a region where governance, democracy, religious freedom, access to information, and food supplies is limited, the state would be unable to firstly provide people with the aforementioned elements, and secondly, would be unable to prevent ~~crimes~~ crimes using crimes. With a lack of checks and balances, along with scarcity of food and water, people are more likely to resort to crime to satisfy their needs. ~~The~~ For example, due to the countless human rights violations of the people of Afghanistan, there are many areas which are now safe haven for terrorist organizations as well as drug and human trafficking syndicates. This shows how human rights violations induce a weak law and order situation.

Despite having negative impacts on the global human rights protection effort, conflict induced human rights violations can be prevented by in several ways, one of which is the

promotion of dialogue and negotiation between hostile states. Dialogue would enable conflicting parties to address their concerns and would allow them to reach a peaceful solution. In addition, this would allow those parties to address existing human rights violations, and devise ways to prevent them along with the prevention of further conflict. This can be applied to the case of Israel, who currently refuses to end the ~~indiscriminate~~ indiscriminatory bombing of the Gaza Strip, and give Palestinians their own state. Dialogue and negotiations can help achieve peace and a cessation of human rights violations.

Furthermore, arbitrary groups of countries can be formed to tackle conflict and human rights violations. These groups of countries would belong to certain regions of the world where they have a certain amount of influence and cordial relations with neighbouring states to help reach a peaceful solution. These groups would be able to bring conflicting parties to the table to help end human rights violations. Learning from the example of China and its successful Saudi-Iran rapprochement, regional countries can form groups to tackle conflicts and existing flashpoints to prevent human rights violations. This is how arbitrary groups can help tackle human rights violations and conflict.

In addition, human rights protection organizations should be promoted in every country. This would enable the establishment of a transparent system where such organizations would be allowed to monitor human rights conditions freely. This would in turn increase accountability of countries across the globe, as well as provide oppressed populations a voice. In 2020, Amnesty International was forced to



halt its operations in India after its continuous calls to the Indian government to provide rights to the Kashmiri people. This double standard should be addressed across the globe, and this is how the promotion of such organizations would help curb human rights violations.

Furthermore, the International Court of Justice should play an increased role in countering human rights violations. This is because it is the top ruling body of the United Nations and holds weight in the global community. Moreover, it ~~was~~ would also serve to raise awareness regarding such issues and give a voice to oppressed people across the globe. For example the ICJ verdict regarding Israel's warcrimes ~~is~~ passed in January 2024 serves as a glimmer of hope in this regard. Currently the ICJ caters to cases pertaining to states, however it should also include in its jurisdiction requests by established international human rights protection organizations. This shows how the ICJ can play a pivotal role in addressing conflict induced human rights violations.

~~The world we~~ To conclude, the world we live in today is engulfed in conflict. With this conflict, a number of negative impacts have surfaced, primarily human rights violations. These violations have been caused by the taking of the right to govern freely, practice religion, live, access food and water and with the increase in media gag and gender base crimes. The impacts of these violations have been the weakening of governance and democratic systems, which leads to economic instability and the formation of resistance groups. This in turn, exposes these groups to external influence, along with the general lack of access to technology and poor law and order. Despite this such violations can be prevented by the promotion of dialogue between

conflicting countries, the establishment of arbitrary groups of countries, protection and promotion of human rights organizations and an increased role played by the ICJ. Although conflict induced human rights violations have devoured the social, moral, and economic fabric of global societies, by acting out the suggested remedies, such violations can be prevented to make way for a peaceful and prosperous global village.