GS-MUN 2023

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Research Guide

**United Nations
General Assembly**

AGENDA

Strengthening Regional and International Efforts to Protect Civilians and Vulnerable Groups in Armed Conflicts

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Dear Delegates,

The Executive Board of GS-MUN 2023, considers it an honour to host you all at a simulation of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), organized by Geethanjali College of Engineering and Technology. This Research Guide will provide you an insight into the agenda that drives the committee session. The Delegates are advised to refer to it and establish a thorough understanding on the major issues that are specified.

It is to be noted that this Research Guide is in no way exhaustive and is only meant to provide the Delegates with enough background information that will establish a foundation for the research. The Delegates are recommended to do extensive research on the wide spectrum of issues encompassing the agenda. In addition to this, the Delegates are expected to be aware of their country's foreign policies, trade relations and alliances so that their decisions and claims are realistic and implementable.

The Executive Board extends its best wishes to all the Delegates. If any delegate has any query, procedural or otherwise, please feel free to contact any member of the Executive Board and we will reach out to you at the earliest. The Executive Board wants the Delegates to know that their presence is highly solicited.

Looking forward to meeting you at the Conference!

Regards,

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ABSTRACT

Armed conflicts pose a significant threat to the lives and well-being of civilians and vulnerable groups, including women, children, and persons with disabilities. Despite the existence of international humanitarian law (IHL), which sets out rules for the protection of civilians during armed conflicts, civilians continue to be targeted, and their rights are violated. This paper examines the measures that regional and international actors have taken to protect civilians and vulnerable groups during armed conflicts. It argues that while there have been significant efforts in this area, there is still a need to strengthen these efforts and ensure that the protection of civilians is a priority for all parties to an armed conflict.

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) is an international organization that was established in 1945, as an effort to maintain international peace and security, promote human rights, and foster economic and social development. The UNGA is made up of 193 member states and meets annually to discuss and address global issues. The UNGA has six committees, including the First Committee, which deals with issues related to disarmament and international security. The First Committee is also known as the Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC).

DISEC is responsible for discussing and making recommendations on issues related to disarmament and international security. DISEC works to promote international cooperation in disarmament and arms control, and to address the security challenges facing the international community. The agenda for DISEC this year is "Strengthening Regional and International Efforts to Protect Civilians and Vulnerable Groups in Armed Conflict Zones". This topic addresses the importance of protecting civilians during armed conflicts and the need for regional and international cooperation to achieve this goal.

AGENDA

Armed conflicts have devastating consequences for civilians and vulnerable groups, including women, children, and persons with disabilities. The use of indiscriminate weapons, such as landmines, and the deliberate targeting of civilians are commonplace in many conflicts around the world. International humanitarian law (IHL) provides a framework for the protection of civilians during armed conflicts, including the obligation to distinguish between combatants and non-combatants, and the prohibition of attacks on civilians and civilian objects. However, despite the existence of IHL, civilians continue to be targeted, and their rights are violated. This paper examines the measures that regional and international actors have taken to protect civilians and vulnerable groups during armed conflicts and argues that there is a need to strengthen these efforts to ensure that the protection of civilians is a priority for all parties to an armed conflict.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

The protection of civilians during armed conflicts is a fundamental principle of international law. The laws of war, also known as international humanitarian law, provide guidelines for the conduct of armed conflict and aim to protect civilians and other non- combatants. However, despite these laws, civilians continue to be targeted or affected by armed conflicts, resulting in significant human suffering.

The United Nations has recognized the importance of protecting civilians during armed conflicts and has taken steps to address this issue. The UN Security Council has established peacekeeping missions in conflict zones to protect civilians, and has also authorized the use of force in certain situations to protect civilians from imminent harm. The UN also provides humanitarian aid to affected populations and advocates for the protection of civilians in international forums.

DEFINING KEY TERMS

- **International Humanitarian Law (IHL):**
  - A set of legal rules that seek to limit the effects of armed conflict by protecting persons who are not or are no longer participating in hostilities and by regulating the means and methods of warfare.

- **Protection of Civilians:**
  - Refers to the measures taken to safeguard the rights and well-being of individuals who are not directly participating in hostilities, including civilians, refugees, and internally displaced persons.

- **Human Rights Violations:**
  - Refers to actions by individuals, groups or states that contravene the principles of human rights, including acts of violence, discrimination, andoppression.

- **Vulnerable Groups:**
  - Refers to individuals or groups who are at higher risk of harm or discrimination, such as women, children, persons with disabilities, minorities.

- **Conflict Zones:**
  - Areas where there is ongoing conflict, including war or civil unrest, andwhere civilians and other non-combatants are at risk of harm.

- **Humanitarian Assistance:**
  - Aid provided to individuals or communities affected by conflict or disaster, including food, shelter, medical care, and other essential services.

- **Peace Keeping Missions:**
  - Refers to the deployment of international military and civilian personnel to support the implementation of a peace agreement or to help maintain peace and security in a conflict-affected area.

- **Early Warning Systems:**
  - Refers Refers to the collection and analysis of information to identify potential threats to civilians and vulnerable groups in conflict zones.

- **Regional Frameworks:**
    - Refers to development of regional policies, norms, and institutions to promote the protection of civilians.

- **Gender Based Violence:**
    - Gross Refers to act of violence committed against individuals based on their gender, including sexual and domestic violence.

- **Children and Armed Conflict:**
    - Gross Refers to impact of armed conflict on children, including their recruitment as child soldiers, exposure to violence and trauma, and disruption of their education and other essential services.

Conducting Research

To conduct research on this topic, it is important to consider a range of sources, including academic articles, reports from international organizations, and news sources.Some potential areas of focus for research include:

- The effectiveness of existing measures to protect civilians during armed conflicts

- The role of regional organizations in protecting civilians

- The impact of armed conflict on vulnerable groups

- The challenges and opportunities for international cooperation in protecting civilians

Challenges of Protecting Civilians and Vulnerable Groups

Protecting civilians and vulnerable groups during armed conflicts is a complex and challenging task. There are many obstacles to effective protection, including:

- The lack of political will among warring parties to respect international humanitarianlaw

- The lack of resources and capacity to provide effective protection and assistance toaffected populations

- The difficulty of accessing conflict zones and providing assistance in insecure environments

- The threat of violence against humanitarian workers and peacekeepers

Despite these challenges, it is essential that regional and international actors continueto work to protect civilians and vulnerable groups during armed conflicts

REGIONAL EFFORTS TO PROTECT CIVILIANS AND VULNERABLE GROUPS

Regional organizations have played a crucial role in protecting civilians and vulnerable groups during armed conflicts. The African Union (AU), for example, has developed a comprehensive framework for the protection of civilians during armed conflicts, including the development of a database of violations and the establishment of an early warning system to detect and respond to threats to civilians. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has also developed a regional strategy for the protection of civilians, which includes the deployment of peacekeeping missions and the establishment of a regional mechanism for reporting and monitoring violations.

In the Middle East, the League of Arab States (LAS) has taken steps to protect civilians during armed conflicts, including the adoption of a resolution on the protection of civilians in Syria and the establishment of a high-level group to address the humanitarian situation in Yemen. The Organization of American States (OAS) has also played a role in protecting civilians during armed conflicts in the Americas, including through the deployment of peacekeeping missions and the establishment of a mechanism for the investigation of human rights violations.

INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS TO PROTECT CIVILIANS AND VULNERABLE GROUPS

At the international level, the United Nations (UN) has been at the forefront of efforts to protect civilians and vulnerable groups during armed conflicts. The UN Security Council has adopted several resolutions that address the protection of civilians, including

Resolution 1265, which calls for the prevention of armed conflicts and the protection ofcivilians. The UN has also established a number of mechanisms to protect civilians, including the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary- General for Children and Armed Conflict, which works to prevent the recruitment of children and to ensure that children affected by armed conflicts are protected.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has also played a critical role in protecting civilians during armed conflicts, including through the provision of humanitarian assistance and the promotion of IHL. The ICRC has developed a number of tools and resources to promote respect for IHL, including the Practical Guide on the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas, which provides guidance on the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

CHALLENGES AND THE WAY FORWARD

Despite the significant efforts made by regional and international actors to protect civilians and vulnerable groups during armed conflicts, there are still significant challenges that need to be addressed.

One of the biggest challenges is the lack of compliance with IHL by parties to an armed conflict. Many armed groups and states continue to violate IHL, including by targeting civilians and using indiscriminate weapons. The lack of accountability for these violations further exacerbates the problem, as it sends a message that such violations will not be punished. This highlights the need for greater efforts to ensure compliance with IHL, including through the establishment of effective monitoring and reporting mechanisms and the prosecution of those responsible for violations.

Another challenge is the difficulty in ensuring access to civilians in conflict zones.

Humanitarian actors often face significant obstacles in accessing conflict zones, which can hinder their ability to provide essential services and protection to civilians. This problem is particularly acute in situations where armed groups control territory and restrict access to humanitarian actors. Efforts are needed to strengthen the protection of humanitarian actors and to ensure that they are able to access conflict zones and provide assistance to civilians in need.

There is also a need for greater attention to the specific needs and vulnerabilities of different groups, including women, children, and persons with disabilities. Women and children are particularly vulnerable during armed conflicts, as they are often subject to sexual violence and exploitation. Persons with disabilities may also face

significant barriers to accessing essential services and protection. Efforts are needed to ensure that the specific needs of these groups are taken into account in all aspects of humanitarian response.

Protecting civilians and vulnerable groups during armed conflicts is a critical priority forregional and international actors. While there have been significant efforts in this area, there is still a need to strengthen these efforts and to ensure that the protection of civilians is a priority for all parties to an armed conflict. This requires a multifaceted approach that includes strengthening compliance with IHL, ensuring access to civilians in conflict zones, and addressing the specific needs and vulnerabilities of different groups. Only through sustained and coordinated efforts can we hope to ensure that civilians and vulnerable groups are protected during armed conflicts.

EVENTS THAT LED TO STRENGTHENING REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS

There have been several major events where large numbers of people were killed in armed conflicts, which have led to efforts to strengthen regional and international effortsto protect civilians and vulnerable groups. Here are a few examples:

Rwandan Genocide (1994):

The genocide in Rwanda resulted in the deaths of an estimated 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus. The failure of the international community to intervene and protect civilians led to a renewed focus on the responsibility of states to protect their citizens, and the development of the concept of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) by the UnitedNations.

Kosovo War (1998 - 1999):

The genocide in Rwanda resulted in the deaths of an estimated 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus. The failure of the international community to protect civilians led to a renewed focus on the responsibility of states to protect their citizens, and the development of the concept of the Responsibility to Protect by the UnitedNations.

Darfur Conflict (2003 - Present):

The ongoing conflict in Darfur, Sudan, has resulted in the displacement of an estimated 2.7 million people and the deaths of hundreds of thousands. The international community has responded with peacekeeping missions, humanitarian aid, and efforts to hold those responsible for human rights violations accountable.

Syrian Civil War (2015 - Present):

The conflict in Syria has resulted in the displacement of more than 13 million people and the deaths of hundreds of thousands, many of them civilians. The conflict has led to increased attention on the need for protection of civilians, including the development of the UN's Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and efforts to ensure accountability for human rights violations.

Yemeni Civil War (2011 - Present):

The ongoing conflict in Yemen has resulted in the displacement of more than 4 million people and the deaths of tens of thousands, many of them civilians. The conflict has led to calls for increased humanitarian aid and efforts to protect civilians, including through the establishment of a UN-led ceasefire monitoring mechanism.

Myanmar Rohingya Crisis (2017 - Present):

The persecution of the Rohingya Muslim minority in Myanmar has resulted in the displacement of an estimated 1 million people and the deaths of thousands. The crisis has led to increased international attention on the need for protection of minority groups and efforts to hold those responsible for human rights violations accountable.

Tigray Conflict (2020 - Present):

The persecution of the Rohingya Muslim minority in Myanmar has resulted in the displacement of an estimated 1 million people and the deaths of thousands. The crisis has led to increased international attention on the need for protection of minority groups and hold those responsible for human rights violations accountable.

Srebrenica Massacre, Bosina and Herzegovina (1995):

The Srebrenica massacre was the killing of more than 8,000 Bosniak men and boys by Bosnian Serb forces in and around the town of Srebrenica during the Bosnian War. The massacre led to the establishment of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) to prosecute war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during the conflict.

Chechen Wars, Russia (1994-2009):

The two Chechen Wars resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands of civilians, and led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands. The wars raised concerns about the use of excessive force by Russian forces, and the need to ensure the protection of civilians in conflict zones.

Israeli – Palestinian Conflict (Ongoing):

The ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict has resulted in the deaths of thousands of civilians, and has led to the displacement of millions. The conflict has highlighted the need for stronger efforts to protect civilians in conflict zones, and has led to the establishment of various UN-led initiatives aimed at promoting peace and stability in the region.

Sri Lankan Civil War (1983 - 2009):

The Sri Lankan Civil War resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands of civilians, and the displacement of hundreds of thousands. The conflict raised concerns about the targeting of civilians by both government forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), and led to calls for stronger international efforts to protect civilians in conflict zones.

Afghanistan War (2001 - Present):

The ongoing war in Afghanistan has resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands of civilians, and the displacement of millions. The conflict has highlighted the need for stronger efforts to protect civilians in conflict zones, and has led to the establishment of various UN-led initiatives aimed at promoting peace and stability in the region.

India – Pakistan Conflict (Ongoing):

The conflict between India and Pakistan over the disputed territory of Kashmir has resulted in the deaths of thousands of people over the past several decades, with many civilians being targeted and killed. The conflict has led to calls for a peaceful resolution to the dispute and for greater protection of civilians caught in the crossfire.

China's Xinjiang Conflict (Ongoing):

The conflict in Xinjiang between the Chinese government and the Uighur ethnic minority has resulted in the detention of over one million Uighurs in so-called "re-education" camps. The conflict has raised concerns about human rights abuses, including torture and forced labor, and has led to international condemnation and calls for China to respect the rights of its minority populations.

MAJOR PARTIES INVOLVED:

There are various parties, countries, and government organizations that are involved in strengthening regional and international efforts to protect civilians and vulnerable groups in armed conflicts. Some of the key actors include:

United Nations (UN):

The UN is at the forefront of efforts to protect civilians and vulnerable groups in armed conflicts. The UN Security Council has adopted several resolutions on the protection of civilians, and the UN has established a number of mechanisms to protect civilians, including the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Childrenand Armed Conflict.

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC):

The ICRC plays a critical role in protecting civilians during armed conflicts, including through the provision of humanitarian assistance and the promotion of international humanitarian law (IHL).

African Union (AU):

The AU has developed a comprehensive framework for the protection of civilians duringarmed conflicts, including the development of a database of violations and the establishment of an early warning system to detect and respond to threats to civilians.

European Union (EU):

The EU has played a role in protecting civilians during armed conflicts through the deployment of peacekeeping missions and the provision of humanitarian assistance.

Organization of American States (OAS):

The OAS has played a role in protecting civilians during armed conflicts in the Americas, including through the deployment of peacekeeping missions and the establishment of a mechanism for the investigation of human rights violations.

Governments:

Many governments around the world have taken steps to protect civilians during armed conflicts, including through the development of national policies and the deployment of military and police forces to protect civilians.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs):

NGOs play a critical role in protecting civilians during armed conflicts, including through the provision of humanitarian assistance, advocacy, and monitoring and reporting on human rights violations.

Overall, the protection of civilians and vulnerable groups in armed conflicts requires a coordinated and sustained effort by multiple actors at the regional and international levels.

CONCLUSION

The agenda of "Strengthening Regional and International Efforts to Protect Civilians and Vulnerable Groups in Armed Conflict Zones" is a critical topic that requires urgent attention from the international community. The protection of civilians and vulnerable groups in conflict zones is a fundamental responsibility of the international community, and it is crucial to strengthen regional and international cooperation to address this issue effectively.

The discussions and recommendations made in the DISEC committee will play a crucial role in promoting international cooperation and identifying effective measures to mitigate the suffering of civilians and vulnerable groups in conflict zones. It is essential to adopt new measures and strengthen existing measures to protect civilians and vulnerable groups from violence, human rights abuses, and displacement.

Furthermore, accountability for those who commit human rights abuses in conflict zones is essential. Prosecuting those responsible for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other violations of international humanitarian law is critical to ensuring justice for the victims and deterring future abuses.

Lastly, improving the humanitarian response in conflict zones is also critical. The provision of humanitarian assistance to those affected by conflict, as well as the protection of humanitarian workers and infrastructure, is essential to addressing the needs of the affected population.