

# Security Council (SC)

## Topic B:

The question of ensuring the protection of all civilians in areas of conflict.



### I. Introduction of Topic

The question of ensuring the protection of all civilians in areas of conflict has been an ongoing and rising goal for the UN and has recently become a deeper and exceedingly concerning topic as a result of international conflicts between countries. During WW1, the Hague Peace Conference had the scope of revising the declaration regarding war laws that were elaborated in 1874 during the Conference of Brussels. The conference, however, did not take into account air warfare nor the living conditions and dangers faced by civilians living in enemy or occupied territories, causing an immense amount of tragedies during WW1.

After many years characterized by lack of protection in areas of conflict, some measures were taken. In 1931, General Doctor Georges Saint-Paul founded the "Association des Lieux de Genève", which became officially recognized by the French Chamber of Deputies in 1935. Its goal was to establish neutralized areas or open towns where certain segments of the civilian population, such as women, children, the physically disabled, and the elderly, may seek safety during conflict. This was later discussed as a main theme and issue alongside other legislations regarding the "rescue in the event of disaster or war" in the 5th International Civil Defence Conference, hosted in Geneva. Moreover, after the Association des Lieux de Genève became a

non-governmental organization known as the ICPO in 1958, new measures were implemented in relation to 3 new objectives: Establishing cooperation between national civil protection organizations, Undertaking as well as promoting research and studies on issues regarding population protection, and facilitating the exchange of efforts in regards to prevention, preparedness and response of disasters. Following these goals, the ICDO establish the International Center for Radioactivity alert, used to promote as well as coordinate the warning system for radioactivity on an international level.

Because of these improvements, others were determined to collaborate, which is why on June 8th 1977, The Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, Relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts, was adopted by the Diplomatic Conference (Protocol I). Consequently, in 1992, a new service was created with the scope of "protecting the integrity of life, property, settlements, and the environment from damage or the danger of damage resulting from natural disasters, catastrophes, and other calamitous events" (The National Service of Civil Protection). Then, finally, in 1994, the 10th World Conference on Civil Protection in Amman, Jordan, (3-5 April) adopted the Universal Declaration on Civil Protection.

## **II. Definition of Key Terms**

Areas of Conflict: Areas in which there is open warfare and opposition between two social entities.

Civil Defense: a group of individuals who are not in the military but are trained to defend and assist people in the event of a natural disaster or during armed conflict.

PAX: Protection of Civilians. A responsibility which includes the mission of peacekeeping through civilian, military and police functions. (See Major Countries and Organizations Involved)

DPO: Department of Peace Operations. (See Major Countries and Organizations Involved)

DOS: Department of Operational Support. (See Major Countries and Organizations Involved)

UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (See Major Countries and Organizations Involved)

ICRC: International Committee of Red Cross: (See Major Countries and Organizations Involved)

### **III. Background Information**

This issue, which mainly arose during WWI where the Hague Peace Conference revised the declaration regarding war laws that were elaborated in 1874 during the Conference of Brussels, has affected civilians worldwide, global interconnectedness and international stability. Because the conference did not take the living conditions and dangers faced by civilians living in enemy or occupied territories into account, immense amounts of tragedies occurred during WWI and the 1900's as a whole. Today, this issue is still in action and people all over the world are suffering daily. The war between Russia and Ukraine, or even the ongoing dangers in Afghanistan, Iran and Yemen, may be examples of how civilians are influenced today.

## **IV. Major Countries and Organisations Involved**

### Protection of Civilians (PAX)

The Human Security Survey (HSS) was created by PAX to provide civilians a voice during times of war. Local residents are questioned by researchers on security threats, personal safety requirements, opinions of security providers, and the likelihood of future conflict or peace. Currently, South Sudan and Iraq are both participating in the HSS. Other research projects concentrate on topics like the efficiency of foreign military missions and harm to civilians.

### Department of Peace Operations (DPO)

In order to carry out Security Council directives, DPO keeps in touch with the Security Council, troop and financial contributors, and parties to the conflict. DPO provides political and executive guidance to UN peacekeeping operations around the world. In the framework of peacekeeping operations, the Department strives to coordinate the actions of UN, governmental, and non-governmental groups. DPO also advises and helps other UN political and peacebuilding missions with regard to military, police, mine action, and other pertinent problems.

### Department of Operational Support (DOS)

Managers and business partners throughout the UN Secretariat can get support and consulting services in the area of human resources thanks to the Department of Operational Support. While the current administration and support capabilities of Secretariat entities will continue to provide immediate response for human resource requirements, DOS will offer support that focuses on short- to medium-term needs of

client entities in terms of human resources, including process development, advice on more complicated issues when necessary, and support for cross-Secretariat needs.

#### United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

The UNHCR works to guarantee that everyone has the right to ask for asylum and find safety in another country, with the choice to afterwards go back home, integrate, or relocate. In times of displacement, they offer vital emergency help in the form of housing, blankets, household goods, clean water, sanitary conditions, and healthcare, as well as clean water, sanitation, and food. For individuals who go home again, they also put up transportation and support packages, and for those who relocate, they set up projects that will generate money.

#### International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC)

The ICRC provides prompt and effective assistance to anyone impacted by armed conflict. They also react to calamities in war zones because they have a greater impact on a nation that is already at war. Seen as emergencies can happen at any time, having a rapid deployment capacity is crucial.

### **V. Timeline of Events**

1931: "Association des Lieux de Genève" was founded in Paris. Its goal is to establish neutralized areas or open towns where certain segments of the civilian population, such as women, children, the physically disabled, and the elderly, may seek safety during conflict.

1958: The International Association of Geneva Zones (IAGZ) has new status as the International Civil Defence Organisation (ICDO), a non-governmental organization

1963: Geneva's Fifth International Civil Defense Conference (27 May-1 June).

1977 June 8: The Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, Relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts, is adopted by the Diplomatic Conference on June 8 in Geneva (Protocol I).

1992 February: The National Service of Civil Protection was created to "protect the integrity of life, property, settlements, and the environment from damage or the danger of damage resulting from natural disasters, catastrophes, and other calamitous events."

1994: The 10th World Conference on Civil Protection in Amman, Jordan, (3-5 April) adopted the Universal Declaration on Civil Protection.

## **VI. Relevant UN Treaties and Events**

**Geneva conventions (August 12th 1949)**: Declared that violence towards an individual and overall life endangering scenarios shall be prohibited at all times. Taking hostages, outrages or degrading actions towards others, and mistreatment of wounded and sick individuals may be avoided at all times as well.

**UNAMSIL (United Nations Mission in Sierra Leon)**: Mission created by the UN security council which lasted from 1999 to 2006, with the mission of to implement the

Lomé Peace Accord, an agreement created to end the civil war in Sierra Leon within the mentioned time period.

## **VII. Main Issues**

In areas of conflict, grave violations of human rights are common due to the constant changes of warfare tactics. The types of violations depend on the circumstances, but in extreme cases they can include war crimes, crimes against humanity and even genocide.

In particular, conflicts and situations of instability can aggravate pre-existing discrimination against women, posing higher risks of human rights violations to the female population. Gender-based violence is also frequently used as a war tactic, including sexual violence, forced marriages, torture and random killings.

Issues also remain in post-conflict zones, as a general break-down of law causes humanitarian crises such as trafficking, lack of essential goods or services and obstacles on important systems such as education and healthcare, especially for women in these scenarios. In addition, children victims of conflict face the most severe PTSD and require deep psychological and physical recovery to be reintegrated in society. However children's development is significantly impacted by their lives in refugee camps and many times they aren't granted the rights stated by international law.

Furthermore, armed conflict commonly results in immense numbers of Internally Displaced People (IDPs) within the country. These groups of people are extremely vulnerable as they are often forced to move to areas with almost no access to humanitarian resources. According to the UNHCR, by the end of 2021 "53.2 million

people were internally displaced due to armed conflict, generalized violence or human rights violations”.

The type of warfare also greatly influences the violations of human rights, such as urban warfare, in which cities are the primary battlegrounds for fighting. This not only poses extreme risks to civilians, even with some access to humanitarian corridors, but it destroys livelihoods and forces more and more people to become internally displaced. Urban fighting also disrupts delivery of essential services, such as electricity, water, sanitation, health and education.

### **VIII. Previous Attempts to solve the Issue**

**UNAMSIL (United Nations Mission in Sierra Leon):** Mission created by the UN security council which lasted from 1999 to 2006, with the mission of to implement the Lomé Peace Accord, an agreement created to end the civil war in Sierra Leon within the mentioned time period.

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## **IX. Possible Solutions**

- 1) Urge parties of conflict to avoid the use of weapons of mass destruction in populated areas by:
  - a) calling the UN secretary general to ban the use of explosive weapons in inhabited areas;
  - b) set a protected zone for which civilians can refuge;
- 2) Ensure that all civilians can access medical care and humanitarian assistance by:
  - a) providing health workers to work safely in such environments;
  - b) enforcing the need for medical or aid workers in accordance with humanitarian law;
  - c) urging all countries to follow recommendations on measures to ensure medical care;
- 3) Calling upon states to condition their arms exports with respect to international humanitarian law and human rights law by:
  - a) working in accordance with legislative measures conditioning the export of arms.

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