

Forum:	Disarmament & International Security Committee
Issue:	Civilian casualties in military conflict
Student Officer:	Peter Koutsis
Position:	Co-Chair

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear delegates,

My name is Peter Koutsis and it will be my honor to serve as the co chair for the Disarmament Committee of the 5th Platon School Model of United Nations. By the time of the 5th PSMUN I will have taken part in 9 conferences and will have served as a chair once.

I am an IB student at Costeas Geitonas School and I aspire to study abroad international law, which is the primary reason I am so interested to take part in MUN conferences.

As a Chair, part of my responsibilities is to assist the delegates of the committee, by answering their questions and help them understand the topics the disarmament committee is dealing with, which is the purpose of this study guide.

I sincerely hope that this study guide provides you with the knowledge you need to be able to debate and form resolutions on this topic. In any case, you should not rely on this study guide alone, but also research the topics on your own to form a personal opinion. With every military conflict civilians casualties are unavoidable, therefore each country has formed its own policies on the matter. I strongly urge you to contact me anytime if you need my support.

I am looking forward to meeting you at the conference.

Best Regards,

Peter Koutsis

INTRODUCING TOPIC

All military conflicts lead to the loss of lives. Nevertheless, the lives lost are not only of soldiers. In every conflict an amount of casualties are not only combatants, but also civilians. In other words non-combatant are always an unavoidable casualty of war. Taking this into account many countries have developed policies and changed their military doctrines, with the aim of minimizing civilian casualties and the loss of non-combatant's live in the event of war. There are several types of military conflicts that occur and all threat the lives of civilians and lead to civilian casualties.

Terrorism

In areas such as the Middle East, terrorism is a constant issue and a threat to the stability of the region. Although not as big in scale, armed conflicts against terrorists are the most destructive in terms of loss of civilian lives. Terrorists often use civilians in their attacks and even camouflage themselves as civilians, making it difficult for soldiers to differentiate between combatants and civilians in the heat of battle and resulting in great numbers of casualties. Often terrorists aim at the death of civilians, a usual weapon used by terrorists are improvised explosive devices. These artificial bombs are easy to construct and can be used in suicide attacks to cause a great amount of casualties. Such weapons are also used in times of conflict by insurgence, therefore it is of pivotal importance that such dangerous weapons are found and destroyed to prevent their use against non-combatants.

Urban combat

Densely urban areas are homes to many civilians. As the world becomes more modernized and the cities expand, their strategic importance increases as well. Seeing this increase in urban combat, many countries have equipped their armies to fight in such terrains and strategies and have created strategies that apply to cities in the past century the majority of conflicts have taken place in cities. This has increased the number of civilians killed and the amount of collateral damage. This has led many countries to create doctrines for fighting in urban areas aimed at reducing the amount of civilian casualties.

Genocide

Genocide as a term was coined in 1944 and refers to the target of a specific group based on one of its traits, for example religion, ethnical identity with the aim of completely exterminating it. It is a crime that leads to the death of hundreds of thousands of people and does not abide by the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Right of 1948. Famous examples of genocides are the Rwandan Genocide of 1994 and the Darfur War in Sudan, with the greatest being the holocaust of World War 2, essentially the genocide of all Jews.

DEFINITION OF KEY-TERMS

Casualties

Loss in numerical strength through any cause, as death, wounds, sickness, capture, or desertion.

Military casualty

A member of the armed forces lost to service through death, wounds, sickness, capture, or because his or her whereabouts or condition cannot be determined.

Civilian Casualty

The injury, death or imprisonment of a non-combatant by military personnel. Civilian casualties are usually citizens of the area under conflict.

For example, the loss of a life of a citizen of the area under conflict is reported as a civilian casualty.

Collateral damage

The loss and damage of items and property that is incidental to the intended target. It is a military term usually used to describe the destruction of property of non-combatants.



For example, the destruction of a house of civilians due to bombings is described as collateral damage.

Military doctrine

A doctrine is a policy of an army or an order issued by an army towards its soldiers. An example is the defensive fire order.

Defensive Fire

An order given to soldiers when moving through urban areas with a large number of civilians. Under this order soldiers are only to return fire if they are attacked by hostiles first, forbidding them from firing the first shot.

Total war

A war in which all countries involved use all their financial resources and all manpower is diverted towards the war effort. The combatants use every available weapon in their arsenal and develop new military technologies as the war progresses,

Examples of total war are the first and second world war, where all civilians able to fight were conscripted and sent to the front.

Civilian casualty ratio

The percentage of civilian casualties compared to the total number of casualties and the amount of military casualties.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The Second World War was the war with the greatest number of civilian casualties, with 30,497,000 out of the total 55,014,000 being civilians lost in the fighting. This unprecedented war and loss of human lives led to several changes to the world, one of which being the creation of the United Nations. Ever since the end of the war, as the world became more urbanized and civilians played a greater role in warfare, several organizations have come up with different ways to reduce the loss of civilian lives in case war broke out again.

International Humanitarian Law

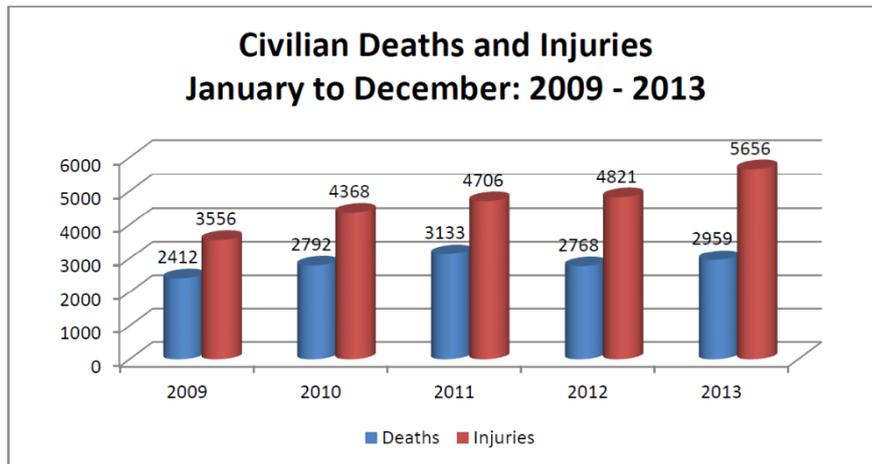
International Humanitarian Law is the body of international law applicable in cases of armed violence, intervening if they reach a critical point of armed conflict. The International Humanitarian Law can intervene both in cases of international and civilian conflicts. Although it does not define the word terrorism, the International Humanitarian Law has played a definitive role in the combat against acts of terrorism. The fundamental principal of the International Humanitarian Law is that in armed conflict soldiers must always distinct between civilians and combatants. The International Humanitarian Law also prohibits the capture of civilians and their use as hostages or as human shields.

Center for civilians in conflict

The center for civilians in conflict is a non-governmental organization that aims at protecting civilians during conflicts. They advocate for increased responsibility of warring parties towards civilians in order to assure their safety. The organization attempts to evacuate civilians from areas before or during conflicts and assure their safety in times of military conflict. The organization works in collaboration with individual countries and also with the United Nations and assist with the creation of new policies that prioritize the safety of civilians above all else in case of armed conflict.

United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

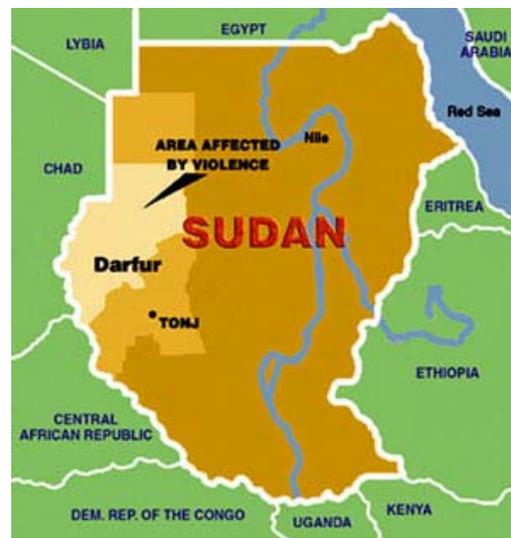
The United Nations has made its opinion on the question of civilian casualties more than once. Taking as an example the United Nations Assistance Mission (UNAMA) in Afghanistan. At the request of the Afghanistan Government, the United Nations have sent the UNAMA in order to the people of Afghanistan and lay the foundation for sustainable development of the country. The mission has been quite successful in bringing prosperity to the country, nevertheless it has been under attack by insurgents more than one. Every time the mission was unable to prevent the loss of civilian lives.



Casualties sustained by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

War in Darfur

The war in Darfur is one of the latest military conflicts that resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands civilians. This major armed military conflict occurred in Sudan between the years 2003 - 2010 and was initiated by rebel groups that took up arms against the government of Sudan. Specifically the Sudan Liberation Movement and the Justice and Equality movement stood against the government, accusing it of opposing the non - Arab people of Darfur. Attacks were organized by the groups against the government. The response was immediate, the Sudanese government initiated an ethnic cleansing that aimed at the elimination of Darfur's non- Arab citizens. This resulted in an estimated 150,000 civilian deaths. Sudan's president at the time Omar al - Bashir was convicted for this act by the International Criminal Court.



The Rwandan Genocide

The Rwandan genocide occurred in 1994 and led to the death of 500,000 to 1,000,000 Rwandans. It was the massacre and extinction of the more privileged Tutsi but the Hutu majority. The genocide happened in the context of the Rwandan civilian war that started in 1990 and was the military conflict between the Hutu-Lead government and the Rwandan patriotic front.

Countries involved in the issue

United States of America

The United States of America have actively participated from many years in the war against terrorism. In the past years and ever since its involvement in the Middle East,

USA has adapted its strategies to fight the urbanized terrain of the Middle East. Seeing the increased amount of fighting in densely built areas and the involvement of civilians, the USA has redrafted several of its strategies to fit fighting in such conditions and prioritize the safety of civilians in such cases of conflicts in areas with a great number of civilians, such as cities.

Russian Federation

Although not currently involved in any military conflicts, the Russian Federation has revised part of its strategies. It has taken new counter terrorism measures to prevent the loss of civilian lives due to terrorist attacks and has also revised its strategies, prioritizing civilians and prohibiting their use for military purposes.

France

Having experienced problems with terrorism and lived through wars that lead to great amount of civilian deaths, France always prioritized the safety of civilians. It has taken strict measures to prevent any possible terrorist attacks that could lead to civilian casualties. It has also strict policies in cases of war, prohibiting the use of civilians and prioritizing their evacuation and safety.

Britain

The United Kingdom has taken several steps towards disarmament in general, believing that the best ways to avoid both civilian and military casualties is to avoid conflict as a whole. It has reformed its policies to assure the safety of civilians and has taken many preventative measures against possible terrorist attacks in order to prevent the loss of human lives.

Afghanistan

Afghanistan has been plagued by terrorist activity in the past years. Several nations have intervened including the United Nations Assistance mission in Afghanistan, at the demand of the Afghanistan government. The main aim of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan is to eliminate terrorists groups in the area and halt their activities. Another primary aim of the mission is assuring the safety of civilians in the area and an appropriate standard of living for them.

Israel

In the past years, Israel has assumed a great role in the war against terrorism, launching operations against terrorist groups with the view of assuring the safety of civilians in areas under conflict.

Timeline of events

The following is a list of military conflicts and terrorist attacks of the past years including the number of casualties they lead to, both civilian and military.

Name	Country	Year	Casualties
World War 2	Worldwide	1939- 1945	55,014,000
Nigerian Civil War	Nigeria	1967	2,500,000
Cambodian Genocide	Cambodia	1975	2,654,000
Al-Anfal campaign	Iraq	1986-1989	200,000
Rwandan Genocide	Rwanda	1994	756,000
Srebrenica Massacre	Bosnia	1995	10,000
Darfur Conflict	Sudan	2003-2010	357,000

Possible Solutions

Move weapons and soldiers away from built up areas

In the past armies have taken over cities and used them for their strategic importance. In order to prevent the destruction of entire cities during conflicts, countries should create doctrines that prevent them from fighting in densely built or urban areas, such as cities.



Evacuate civilians from areas under conflict

If an area is under conflict or is of military importance all civilians should be evacuated from the area before any military operation takes place that could put at risk the lives of the noncombatants or civilians.

Avoid the use of civilian buildings for military purposes

During military operations many times civilian buildings will be destroyed, occasionally the reason is that they are serving as military encampments or are being used for a military purpose. An example of this is the Operation Protective Eagle, a military operation of Israel against a territory under Hamas control, in which Israel struck and damaged several civilian structures, including mosques, homes, and even UN facilities.

According to Israeli authorities, most of these structures were hit because they served as military facilities, or because military activity was occurring in close proximity to them. This is why it should be avoided, militarizing civilian buildings and using them as command posts, weapons storage facilities, fighting positions, and rocket launch sites.

Extensive use of drones and unmanned military systems

As previously mentioned drones have been extensively used in the past years with great effect. They are able to accomplish their task with the least amount of civilian casualties. Drones use very precise weapons and also, given they are unmanned do not lead to the loss of soldiers either if they are brought down or destroyed.

Avoid armed conflicts

At the end of the day there is no guaranteed way to assure no civilian casualties. Both military and civilian casualties are an unavoidable part of war and the best way to avoid it is to reduce the amount of armed conflicts.

All nations should review and their military strategies

All nations have strategies which they inform in case of a military conflict. It would be advised that all nations review their strategies and collaborate to draft new ones with the aim of prioritizing the security of civilians in situations of armed conflict.

Previous resolutions of the United Nations

This is the list of resolutions drafted by the United Nations in the past that are relevant to terrorism and the prevention of loss of civilian lives.

A/RES/68/119 This resolution was drafted by the United Nations in the 16th of December 2013. It included measures to deal with and eliminate international terrorism.

A/RES/66/171 Drafted on the 19th of December 2011 this resolution focused on the protection of human rights in the context of countering terrorism.

A/RES/66/50 Focusing on measures to prevent the acquisition of Weapons of Mass Destruction by terrorists, this resolution was drafted in the 2nd of December 2011.

A/RES/62/272 This resolution was drafted on the 15th of December 2008 and focused on creating a Global United Nations strategy against terrorism with the aims of eliminating terrorism on an international level.

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