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## Human Cost of War: Examining Atrocities and Human Rights Violations

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**Abstract:** War crimes not only cause immense suffering to individuals and communities but also undermine the very principles of humanity. The article provides an examination of some of the most heinous war crimes against humanity in recent history. The cases of the Holocaust, the Bosnian war, the Rwandan genocide, the Syrian war, the Palestine-Israel conflict, and the ongoing human rights violations in Kashmir are discussed in detail. These case studies highlight the devastating impact of war crimes on individuals, communities, and entire nations, and serve as a stark reminder of the importance of ensuring that the principles of international humanitarian law are upheld during the conflicts. By studying these case studies, the research gives an understanding of the complexities of war and how human rights violations can arise during times of conflict. Ultimately, this article serves as a call to action, urging all nations and individuals to work together to guard the rights of all people, regardless of their race, religion, or political beliefs.

**Key Words:** War, Human Rights Violation, Atrocities, Humanity, Communities

### Introduction

One of the most fundamental human rights that is frequently infringed upon during war crimes is the right to life. This right is often violated during war crimes through the indiscriminate killing of civilians, the excessive use of weapons that are prohibited, and the commission of atrocities such as genocide, mass rape, sexual violence, forced displacement, and enslavement. For example, during the Holocaust, the Nazis systematically murdered millions of Jews, Romani, homosexuals, and other minority groups.

Moreover, in 1992-1995 the Bosnian war has happened, Bosnian Serb forces killed thousands of Bosniak and Croat men and boys in the Srebrenica massacre and many more. Another human right that is frequently infringed upon during war crimes is torture. This right is protected under the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the ICCPR. War crimes such like rape and sexual slavery, forced displacement, and the use of human shields also violate this right.

The right to a fair trial is the important one that is being infringed upon during war crimes. This right is protected under the ICCPR and the Rome Statute of the

ICC. In many cases, individuals who have committed war crimes have not been held accountable for their actions and have instead been allowed to evade justice.

War crimes are a serious human rights concern, the international organizations must take responsibility to ensure that those who commit such crimes should be punished for their actions and to provide justice and reparations for the victims of these crimes. There are many examples of war crimes that have occurred throughout history, and the victims of these crimes have often struggled to achieve justice.

### Holocaust 1941-1945

The Holocaust occurred during World War II, specifically between 1941 and 1945. During this time, the Nazi regime in Germany led by Dictator Adolf Hitler targeted and murdered approximately six million Jews, as well as five million others including individuals with disabilities, political dissidents, and members of the LGBTQ community. The horrific scale of the Holocaust and the systematic extermination of entire groups of people represent a severe violation of human rights.

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It was a planned, government-sponsored operation and the killing of approximately six million Jews by the Nazis regime during WWII. Other groups targeted by the Nazis during the Holocaust included disabled individuals, homosexuals, Romani people, Jehovah's Witnesses, and others.

### Examples Include

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1. Forced labor and enslavement: Millions of Jews and other groups were forced to work in Nazi factories, mines, and other places of employment under inhumane conditions.
2. Segregation and isolation: Jews were segregated from the rest of society, forced to live in ghettos, and subjected to regular roundups and deportations.
3. Medical experimentation: Nazi doctors conducted brutal medical experiments on prisoners in concentration camps, including transplants, sterilization procedures, and other horrific experiments.
4. Genocide: The systematic extermination of six million Jews constituted genocide, a systematic attempt to destroy a racial or ethnic group.

### Rwandan Genocide 1994

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The Rwanda Genocide was a mass slaughter of the Tutsi ethnic minority and moderate Hutu population by the Hutu majority in Rwanda in 1994. It resulted in an estimated 800,000 to 1 million deaths, with widespread reports of mass killings, rape, and torture of the Tutsi and moderate Hutu population. The Rwandan Patriotic Front, led by Tutsi exiles, eventually took control of the country and ended the genocide.

### Examples of Human Rights Violations during the Rwanda Genocide Include

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- Mass killings: The systematic and widespread killing of Tutsi and moderate Hutu individuals, often with machetes, clubs, and other improvised weapons.
- Rape: Reports of mass rape against Tutsi women, often used as a tool of terror and control.
- Torture: Widespread reports of torture, including beatings and mutilation, of Tutsi and moderate Hutu individuals.
- Forced displacement: The forced displacement of Tutsi and moderate Hutu individuals from their homes, leading to mass death and suffering.

The Rwanda Genocide is widely considered to be an extreme example of violation. The United Nations and

other relevant international communities have been criticized for failing to take action to stop the genocide. Its aftermath resulted in the formation of the ICT for Rwanda for the punishment of those responsible during the genocide. However, many lower-level perpetrators were never brought to justice, and many have still not been brought to justice to date.

### Bosnian War 1992-1995

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In the Bosnian War of 1992-1995, Bosnian Serb forces violated human rights by committing war crimes, and the Srebrenica massacre in which around 8,000 Bosniak men were killed. The ICT for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) was formed in 1993 to punish the culprits in the former Yugoslavia. Many high-ranking leaders of political parties and military officials of Bosnia such as Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic, both of them were sentenced to life imprisonment. However, many lower-level perpetrators were never brought to justice.

Some individuals responsible for war crimes have been brought to justice through international criminal tribunals, but there are many examples of war crimes in which the victims have not seen justice. This is due to a variety of reasons, such as the lack of political will to prosecute, the difficulty of collecting evidence, and the inability to arrest and bring suspects to trial.

### Syrian War

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One of the most recent examples of war crimes is the ongoing conflict in Syria. All parties to the conflict, including the Syrian government, armed opposition organizations, and non-state actors like ISIS, have engaged in extensive war crimes and human rights abuses since 2011. The Syrian government and its allies have been charged with using chemical weapons, bombing civilian areas without targeting them, torturing detainees, and carrying out arbitrary executions in detention centres, among other crimes against humanity.

1. Houla Massacre, May 2012: A mass killing of 108 people, including 49 children, in the Houla region of Syria. The United Nations reported that the massacre was likely committed by government forces and affiliated militias.
2. Chemical Weapons Attack in Ghouta, August 2013: The excessive use of chemical weapons in Damascus, resulting in the deaths of over 1,000 people. The United Nations and several Western countries held the Syrian government responsible for the attack.
3. Siege of Eastern Ghouta, February 2018: A months-long siege by government forces on the rebel-held suburb of Eastern Ghouta, led to widespread starvation and the deaths of over 1,500 people.

4. Idlib Offensive, December 2019 – present: A military offensive by the Syrian government and its allies on the rebel-held province of Idlib, led to widespread displacement and the deaths of thousands of civilians.
5. According to a report by the Syrian Network for Human Rights, between March 2011 and December 2019, at least 128,609 individuals were subjected to arbitrary detention, including more than 14,000 women and children.
6. In a report by Amnesty International, the Syrian government and its allied forces were found to have used chemical weapons against civilians, including in the towns of Khan Sheikhoun in April 2017.
7. Douma in April 2018 and a report by the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights found that more than 511,000 individuals have been killed in the conflict as of December 2019.

It has been alleged that non-state actors like ISIS have committed war crimes and crimes against humanity, including the sex slavery of women and girls as well as the targeting and massacre of civilians. The international community has condemned these abuses in Syria. However, the situation in Syria remains dire and the victims of these crimes have not yet seen justice.

Due to a lack of cooperation between the government and opposition organizations, the UNSC has been unable to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court (ICC). The UN General Assembly established the International, Impartial, and Independent Mechanism (IIIM) in 2016 to aid in the investigation and punishment of these crimes, but the situation is still difficult.

The Syrian Commission on the inquiry of the United Nations documented widespread abuse against humanity, including the targeting of medical facilities and personnel, the use of siege tactics, and the bombing of civilian infrastructure.

### **Palestine-Israel**

The conflict between Israel and Palestine has had a complicated background, since the 20th century. After the years, the conflict has resulted in numerous human rights violations against Palestinians by the Israeli military, including the forced displacement of communities, restriction of movement and access, utilizing excessive force, and mistreatment of prisoners. The ongoing occupation of the West Bank and the blockade of the Gaza Strip have also resulted in severe humanitarian consequences, including widespread poverty, food insecurity, and limited access to basic services such as healthcare and education. International human rights law has been violated by these measures, which have been roundly denounced by human rights organizations, the

international community, and the UN. The conflict between Israel and Palestine has resulted in numerous human rights violations. Here are a few examples:

1. Demolition of Homes: Israeli military forces have demolished thousands of Palestinian homes in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, displacing hundreds of families. This violates the right to adequate housing and creates a humanitarian crisis for the affected individuals.
2. Use of Excessive Force: Israel has been criticized for brutally treating Palestinians even with rubber-coated steel bullets and ammunition. This has resulted in numerous deaths and serious injuries, violating the Palestinian's right to life and their right to security.
3. Restrictions on Freedom of Movement: Palestinians are subjected to numerous restrictions on such as on checkpoints, roadblocks, and the separation barrier which violates their freedom of movement. This makes it difficult for Palestinians to access essential services, such as healthcare and education, and limits their ability in the participation in the economic and social life of their communities.
4. Arbitrary Detention: Israeli authorities arbitrarily jail thousands of Palestinians, including children, without indictment or trial. Their right to a fair trial and due process of law has been violated.
5. Forced Displacement: Israeli settlements in the West Bank have forced displacement of Palestinians violating their right to property.

These examples illustrate the ongoing human rights violations in the conflict between Israel and Palestine. The international community has a responsibility to hold both sides accountable for their actions and to work toward a resolution that respects the human rights of all individuals.

### **Kashmir**

The ongoing situation in Kashmir has resulted in widespread human rights violations and potential war crimes committed by both Indian security forces and armed separatist groups.

Modi's aggressive policies violated the human rights of the people of Kashmir, the immense use of force, the arbitrary detention of individuals, and the use of torture and extrajudicial killings. There have also been reports of enforced disappearances, and the use of pellet guns which have caused severe injuries and blindness to protesters and bystanders. These actions by Indian security forces have been widely reported by human rights organizations and international bodies and have been condemned by the international community.

1. Extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances: Reports indicate that the Indian security forces have committed numerous extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances in the region, particularly since the 1990s.
2. Restricted Freedom of Expression: Authorities in Kashmir have imposed strict curbs on freedom of expression and assembly, frequently resorting to censorship, communication blackouts, and other forms of restriction on the media and civil society.
3. Torture: Human rights organizations have documented reports of rampant torture and other forms of ill-treatment in detention facilities controlled by the Indian security forces in Kashmir.
4. Arbitrary detention and mass arrests: Indian security forces have frequently engaged in arbitrary detention and mass arrests of Kashmiri civilians, often without charge or trial, and in many cases, without due process.
5. Discrimination and exclusion: The rights of women and marginalized communities in Kashmir, such as Dalits and minority groups, are often violated, including through discrimination and exclusion from political, economic, and social opportunities.

Armed separatist groups have also been accused of committing vulnerable crimes against humanity including the targeted killing of civilians and the use of child soldiers. The situation in Kashmir constitutes a complex conflict with many parties involved, and the human rights situation has been deteriorating over the years, with the Indian government imposing strict curfews, communication, and internet shutdowns, and the use of pellet guns as a form of crowd control. The UN has also called on the Indian government to respect the Kashmiris and protect their right to self-determination.

*The Indian Armed Forces "Operation All Out" (2017):*

It is widely reported that Indian armed forces conducted raids in the Valley resulting in extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detentions, and restrictions on movement.

*The Indian government's revocation of Article 370 (2019):*  
On August 5, 2019, Modi revoked the constitutional provision granting special autonomous status to Jammu and Kashmir, leading to widespread protests, restrictions on movement and communications, and arbitrary detentions.

### Protecting Human Rights, Efforts by the International Community

International communities have made efforts to protect human rights through a variety of means and strategies, here are some examples of those efforts.

### International Laws and Conventions

The Geneva Conventions, adopted in 1949, are a set of international laws that provide a framework for protecting human rights during conflicts. These regulations set guidelines for the care of POWs, the safety of civilians, and the outlawing of particular weaponry. The Geneva Conventions, for instance, forbid the employment of chemical and biological weapons as well as the deliberate targeting of civilians during armed conflict.

### International Criminal Court (ICC)

The ICC serves as a deterrent to human rights abuses and can help to provide justice. The ICC has investigated and prosecuted individuals for war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity. For example, the ICC has been investigating the situation in Darfur, Sudan, since 2005 and has issued arrest warrants for many personalities, Omar al-Bashir who was the president of Sudan was one of them.

### UN Peacekeeping Forces

UN peacekeeping forces are deployed to protect civilians during conflicts, they keep strong eyes on these issues by monitoring and reporting on human rights abuses. For example, the UN peacekeeping force in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC) has been credited with reducing human rights abuses and protecting civilians during the country's civil war.

### International Sanctions

Economic and diplomatic sanctions can be used to pressure governments and non-state actors to stop human rights violations and refrain from committing human rights abuses. For example, the UN imposed sanctions on the Taliban government in Afghanistan in order to pressure the Taliban to respect human rights and hand over Osama bin Laden.

### Humanitarian Aid

Providing humanitarian aid to war-affected populations is crucial in preventing human rights violations and addressing their consequences. For example, the UN and other international organizations have provided humanitarian aid to the people of Syria to help them survive the ongoing civil war and address the humanitarian crisis caused by the conflict.

### Independent Human Rights Monitoring

Independent human rights monitors can document human rights abuses and provide evidence to ensure justice. Likewise, UNHRC has established various mechanisms to monitor human rights abuses, including special rapporteurs,

working groups, and fact-finding missions, for this devastating issue.

### **Media Coverage**

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Media coverage and reporting on human rights abuses can bring attention to the issue and help to build international pressure to address the violations. For example, the coverage of the Syrian conflict by international media has brought attention to the human rights abuses being committed by both the government and non-state armed groups and has helped to build international pressure to address the situation.

In conclusion, giving safety and protection to the people is a crucial aspect of any society and is the responsibility of both governments and the international community. Despite numerous international treaties and agreements aimed at ensuring human rights for all, violations continue to occur. These violations must be recognized to provide a standard of living with dignity and access to justice. The international community must take a proactive role over these concerns, through diplomatic efforts, advocacy, and holding states accountable for their actions. Ultimately, it is only through a concerted effort by all actors that human rights can be fully respected and upheld.

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