

The United Nations Security Council: Topic A Primary Sources

The Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict

Here are the primary sources that your moderator or legal chair thought would be helpful in gaining an understanding of the topic. These are by no means all of the sources available, just sources we wanted to highlight.

Primary Source #1: Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949

This document, the Fourth Geneva Convention, was created after World War II and the creation of the United Nations. It defines the basic rights of wartime prisoners including civilians and military personnel, established protections for the sick and wounded, and created protections for the civilians in and around the warzone. This was important because it was the first Geneva Convention to deal with the protection of civilians rather than combatants.

https://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/Military_Law/pdf/GC_1949-IV.pdf

Primary Source #2: The Definition of Armed Conflict

This website provides an almost universally accepted definition of *armed conflict*. The university separates the definition of Armed Conflict into different metrics: the use of armed force, i.e weapons; a minimum of 25 battle related deaths; parties in conflict; the state; and incompatibility as determined by the parties engaged in the conflict.

http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/definitions/definition_of_armed_conflict/

Primary Source #3: Out of Sight, Out of Mind: Deaths in Detention in the Syrian Arab Republic

This Human Rights Council report discusses the massive and systematized violence taking place within Syria and examines the killing of detainees from 2010 to 2015. Investigators with the Human Rights Council conducted 621 interviews and talked to over 500 survivors of detention centers in Syria. Overall, they reported that in Syrian prisons, there is widespread torture and inhuman prison conditions. For example, prisoners were fed infrequently, forced to drink wastewater, and suffered bodily mutilation

http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/CoISyria/A-HRC-31-CRP1_en.pdf

Primary Source #4: United Nations Security Council Report Resolution 2286 (2016)

This resolution was unanimously adopted by the United Nations Security Council to address the issue of protecting civilians in armed conflict. It condemns acts of violence against the wounded and sick, medical personnel, hospitals, and other groups directly involved in the health care of civilians during conflict. The resolution also demands all parties to armed conflict to fully comply with their obligations to international law and international human rights law. This source will be an important reference for delegates as it directly relates to the issue being discussed.

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2016/sc12347.doc.htm>

Primary Source #5: Briefing to the Security Council Debate on Protection of Civilians: Healthcare in Armed Conflict

This source, a briefing by Ban Ki-moon to the Security Council, compared the atrocities in Aleppo, Syria to a slaughterhouse and the former UN Secretary General even states that “even a

slaughterhouse is more humane.” He acknowledges the staggeringly high percent of medical personnel who were in Aleppo before the war that have fled, been detained, or killed. Ki-moon points out that the war against health care workers—a war crime itself—extends beyond Syria and into other nations like Yemen and Pakistan. He finishes off his briefing by giving his recommendations to the issue and highlighting the importance of taking steps to protect health care facilities and personnel during conflict.

<https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2016-09-28/briefing-security-council-debate-protection-civilians-healthcare>

Primary Source #6: United Nations Must Abandon Old Ideas about War, Overhaul Outdated Peacebuilding Architecture, Speaker Says at Commission’s Annual Session

This source is a press release of the first meeting of the Peacebuilding Commission’s 2016 annual session. The keynote speaker of the session called for the UN to “abandon old ideas about war and overhaul its outdated peacebuilding architecture” in order to effectively address modern warfare and its challenges. This source highlights the need to reevaluate norms and standards to deal with new war technologies like drones, terrorist attacks, cyberattacks, and extensive surveillance. Also, during the session the need for close coordination between UN peacebuilding interventions and international agencies, and strengthened integration to ensure countries successful transition out of crisis.

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2016/psc114.doc.htm>