

**SOCHUM**  
**Social, Cultural and Humanitarian**

**VANMUN 2023**

*“Evaluating the implementation of the International Bill of Human Rights in conflict-prone territories with special emphasis on the Donbas Region”*

**Dear delegates,**

Welcome to VANMUN 2023! Model United Nations is an opportunity for you to develop your debate and public speaking skills, but most importantly an opportunity to have fun. Your job, as a delegate, is to come to the conference prepared to take on challenging debates, and come up with creative and diplomatic solutions to the world's most vital problems.

Our committee will focus on the implementation of the International Bill of Human Rights, specifically, in conflict-prone territories.

This background guide will provide you with bedrock and direction for the rest of your research. We, however, urge that you continue research beyond this background guide to further understand your country's position. To guide this research, I have provided you with resources located at the bottom of this document.

Best wishes delegates!  
Sincerely,

Ashish Bayya,  
Guest Chairperson,  
[theofficial.bsashish@gmail.com](mailto:theofficial.bsashish@gmail.com)

Aryan Iyappan,  
Chairperson,  
[aryaniyappan2006@gmail.com](mailto:aryaniyappan2006@gmail.com)

Shwetha V,  
Vice Chairperson,  
[shwetha.viswesh@gmail.com](mailto:shwetha.viswesh@gmail.com)

## Vocabulary

**International Bill of Human Rights:** The combination of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) that together form the basis of international human rights law.

**Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR):** An international document adopted by the United Nations General Assembly that states basic rights and fundamental freedoms to which all individuals are entitled.

**International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR):** A multilateral treaty adopted by the United Nations General Assembly that commits its parties to respect the civil and political rights of individuals.

**International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR):** A multilateral treaty adopted by the United Nations General Assembly that commits its parties to work toward the granting of economic, social, and cultural rights (ESCR) to individuals.

**Human Rights Violation:** An action that contravenes the fundamental rights and freedoms entitled to every individual.

**Conflict-prone territories:** Regions that have a high propensity for violence or armed conflict, often resulting in human rights abuses and humanitarian crises.

**Donbas Region:** A contested territory straddling eastern Ukraine and southwestern Russia, currently in a state of conflict between the Ukrainian government and pro-Russian separatists.

**Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs):** Non-profit groups which operate independently of any government and typically aim to address a social or political issue.

**Sanctions:** Measures taken by countries or international bodies to pressure a country, organization, or individual into adhering to international law, usually by restricting trade or other economic activity.

**Ceasefire:** A temporary pause in fighting, typically via an agreement between the parties involved in the conflict.

**Humanitarian Aid:** Assistance designed to save lives, alleviate suffering, and maintain human dignity during and after man-made crises and disasters caused by natural hazards.

**Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs):** People who have been forced to leave their homes but remain within their country's borders.

**Self-determination:** The process by which a country determines its own statehood and forms its own government.

**Minsk Agreements:** Peace treaties signed by the leaders of Ukraine, Russia, France, and Germany to end the war in the Donbas region.

**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE):** An international organization dedicated to conflict prevention, crisis management, and post-conflict rehabilitation in Europe.

**Impunity:** The exemption from punishment or loss. In the context of international law, it often refers to the lack of accountability for human rights abuses or war crimes.

**Extrajudicial Killings:** The killing of individuals by governmental authorities without any judicial proceedings or legal process.

**United Nations General Assembly Resolutions:** Formal expressions of the opinion or will of the United Nations General Assembly.

**United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (HRMMU):** A special mission set up by the UN to monitor and report on the human rights situation in Ukraine.

**Sanctions:** Measures taken by countries or international bodies to pressure a country, organization, or individual into adhering to international law, usually by restricting trade or other economic activity.

**International Criminal Court (ICC):** An intergovernmental organization and international tribunal that sits in The Hague, Netherlands, with the power to prosecute individuals for the international crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and the crime of aggression.

**Rome Statute:** The treaty that established the International Criminal Court (ICC). It outlines the jurisdiction and functioning of the ICC and the crimes that fall within the ICC's jurisdiction.

**Humanitarian Aid:** Assistance designed to save lives, alleviate suffering, and maintain human dignity during and after man-made crises and disasters caused by natural hazards.

**Illegal Detention:** The act of confining a person without legal authority or justification, often seen in conflict zones.

**Safety Zone:** An area recognized and treated as neutral in a war zone for the sheltering of non-combatants.

**Decentralization of Power:** The process of redistributing or dispersing functions, powers, people, or things away from a central location or authority.

**Houthi insurgents:** An armed political and religious movement emerging from northern Yemen in the 1990s, predominantly consisting of Zaidi Shia Muslims.

**Indiscriminate Attacks:** Attacks not directed at a specific military objective and can cause civilian casualties or damage to civilian objects.

**Blockades:** Restrictions or prohibitions on the movement of goods and services in and out of a specific area or country, usually enforced by military forces.

**Enforced Disappearances:** The arrest, detention, abduction, or any other form of deprivation of liberty committed by agents of the State or by persons or groups of persons acting with the authorization, support, or acquiescence of the State, followed by a refusal to acknowledge the deprivation of liberty or by concealment of the fate or whereabouts of the disappeared person.

**Child Soldiers:** Children under 18 years of age who are part of any kind of regular or irregular armed force or armed group in any capacity.

**Group of Eminent Experts on Yemen:** A group of independent experts mandated by the United Nations Human Rights Council to conduct a comprehensive examination of all alleged violations and abuses of international human rights in Yemen.

**Barrel Bombs:** Improvised, unguided bombs filled with explosives and shrapnel, dropped from aircraft. They are cheap to produce and are used to cause indiscriminate damage and casualties.

**Forced Displacement:** The forced movement of people from their locality or environment and occupational activities.

**Arbitrary Detention:** The act of detaining or arresting individuals by a state or state-sponsored actors without any legal or just basis.

**International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM):** A mechanism established by the United Nations General Assembly to assist in the investigation and prosecution of persons responsible for the most serious crimes under International Law committed in the Syrian Arab Republic.

**Evacuation Agreements:** Agreements often forced upon populations under siege in Syria, requiring them to relocate to other areas. Critics have described these as forced displacement.

**Extrajudicial Killings:** This refers to the killing of individuals by governmental authorities without any judicial proceedings or legal process.

**Indiscriminate Violence:** This term refers to acts of violence, typically in a conflict setting, that do not distinguish between military targets and civilians, leading to widespread harm to non-combatants.

**Child Soldiers:** Refers to the recruitment and use of children by armed groups in active combat roles.

**Secession:** The action of withdrawing formally from a federation or body, especially a political state. This term is relevant in the context of the Quebec sovereigntist movement.

**Language Rights:** The rights of individuals and communities to use their chosen language in a private or public atmosphere. This issue is central to the Quebec sovereignty debate.

**Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI):** A formal process leading to the establishment of a new state by the government of a territory that declares itself independent without an agreement with the state the territory formerly belonged to.

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## **Introduction of the committee**

The Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM), also known as the Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly, is one of the six main committees of the UN General Assembly as established by the UN Charter in 1945. As stated in Chapter IV, Article 10 of the Charter, the General Assembly can establish such subsidiary organs as it deems necessary for the performance of its functions, leading to the formation of the six main committees, including SOCHUM.

SOCHUM is responsible for addressing a range of social, humanitarian affairs, and human rights issues that affect people all around the world. It discusses questions relating to the advancement of women, the protection of children, indigenous issues, the treatment of refugees, the promotion of fundamental freedoms through the elimination of racism and racial discrimination, and the right to self-determination. Additionally, SOCHUM addresses important social development questions such as issues related to youth, family, aging, persons with disabilities, crime prevention, criminal justice, and international drug control.

The committee, composed of all 193 member states of the UN, operates by discussing and deliberating upon these topics and subsequently drafting resolutions pertaining to them, which are then passed on to the General Assembly Plenary for consideration. It may also collaborate with other UN bodies specialized in these areas, such as the Human Rights Council, and interact with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which often provide important insights and contributions.

SOCHUM serves as a key global platform for the discussion of issues directly related to the social, humanitarian, and cultural aspects of international affairs, and plays a vital role in fostering international cooperation for development, advocating for human rights, and laying down the foundations for a just and equitable world. This committee does not merely function to resolve existing problems, but to anticipate potential challenges, setting the global agenda and providing forward-looking policy recommendations.

At the same time, it's crucial to note that while SOCHUM plays an instrumental role in discussing and highlighting key issues, its resolutions are non-binding and reliant on the political will of member states for their



implementation, underscoring the importance of diplomatic negotiations and international cooperation in achieving its goals.

## **Introduction to the problem**

The issue of evaluating the implementation of the International Bill of Human Rights in conflict-prone territories has emerged as a pressing concern within the global community. This emphasis has come in light of the realization that areas engrossed in conflict often witness severe human rights violations, with the civilian population bearing the brunt of the strife. The Donbas Region, a contentious area straddling Ukraine and Russia, stands as a prime example of such territories. The escalation of conflict in the Donbas Region since 2014 has led to devastating humanitarian consequences, including but not limited to the displacement of people, loss of life and livelihood, and gross violations of human rights. The application and enforcement of the International Bill of Human Rights, composed of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, is intended to safeguard individuals in such conflict-ridden regions. However, evaluating the effective implementation of these principles in the Donbas region poses a complex challenge, necessitating urgent and comprehensive discourse. The current situation underscores the urgent need to ensure the protection of basic human rights in conflict-prone territories, thereby warranting a thorough evaluation of the implementation and enforcement mechanisms of the International Bill of Human Rights.

## **Historical Background**

The International Bill of Human Rights forms the foundation of international human rights law. Its creation was a direct response to the atrocities of World War II and the Holocaust. The first component, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 10, 1948. It set forth a broad range of fundamental human rights and freedoms to which all individuals are entitled.

In order to give the principles of the UDHR the force of law, two binding covenants were subsequently adopted: The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). The ICCPR focuses on rights such as freedom of speech, religion, and the right to a fair trial, while the ICESCR focuses on rights such as the right to social security, the right to work, and the right to education. Both Covenants were adopted by the General Assembly in 1966, and along with the UDHR, form the International Bill of Human Rights.

In parallel, the conflict in the Donbas region, straddling eastern Ukraine and southwestern Russia, has historical roots that extend deep into the past, but its most recent phase of conflict ignited in 2014. Following Ukraine's political shift towards the West, pro-Russian separatist movements in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions declared independence from Ukraine, leading to the formation of the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics. This resulted in an armed conflict between the Ukrainian government and the separatists, supported by Russian unofficial military assistance.

This conflict has caused severe human rights violations, with both sides accused of committing war crimes including indiscriminate shelling, torture, extrajudicial killings, and forced disappearances. The civilian population in these areas have been subject to violence, displacement, and have had their access to fundamental human rights severely disrupted. This has raised critical questions about the efficacy of the implementation of the International Bill of Human Rights in such conflict-prone territories.

## **Current Situation**

As of mid-2023, the conflict in the Donbas region continues, although its intensity has fluctuated over time. Despite numerous ceasefires and attempts at negotiation, including the Minsk agreements mediated by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the peace process has stagnated, and sporadic violence continues to disrupt the lives of those in the region.

Serious human rights abuses have been reported on both sides of the conflict. These include physical abuse, illegal detention, torture, lack of freedom of movement, and even extrajudicial killings. Civilian infrastructure, such as housing, schools, and hospitals, has been severely affected by the fighting,

creating a humanitarian crisis in terms of both physical security and access to basic necessities like food, water, and healthcare. The COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated these issues, placing additional pressure on an already strained healthcare system.

The implementation of the International Bill of Human Rights in the Donbas region is currently inadequate. The constant conflict and lack of effective governance have led to systemic violation of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights. Despite the efforts of international organizations and non-governmental entities to provide aid and support, the volatility of the situation has rendered effective, comprehensive human rights protection challenging.

Furthermore, allegations of human rights abuses are often difficult to investigate due to restrictions on access to conflict zones, and impunity is a significant problem. Even when abuses are documented, few perpetrators are held accountable, leading to a cycle of ongoing violence and rights violations.

In this context, the role of the international community, including bodies like SOCHUM, is pivotal. There is a pressing need for effective conflict resolution measures and mechanisms that ensure adherence to the International Bill of Human Rights in order to safeguard the fundamental rights of the affected populations in the Donbas region.

## **Past International Actions**

The international community has been actively involved in trying to mitigate the conflict in the Donbas region and ensure the enforcement of the International Bill of Human Rights. Key actions taken include:

**The Minsk Agreements:** These are perhaps the most notable international attempts to halt the conflict in Donbas. Signed under the auspices of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the agreements proposed an immediate bilateral ceasefire, an exchange of prisoners, and the establishment of a safety zone. However, due to continuous violations, an expanded package of measures was introduced, which introduced stipulations on constitutional reforms and decentralization of power in Ukraine. Despite

these agreements, the ceasefire has been repeatedly broken, and the peace process remains stalled.

**United Nations General Assembly Resolutions:** The UN General Assembly has passed several resolutions concerning Ukraine, which have affirmed the territorial integrity of Ukraine, underscored the invalidity of the 2014 Crimean referendum, and called upon all states to desist from actions worsening the situation. Other resolutions have addressed the human rights situation in Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine, and provided for the humanitarian needs in eastern Ukraine.

**United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (HRMMU):** Established in 2014, the HRMMU has been crucial in documenting human rights abuses in Ukraine, including the Donbas region. The mission monitors human rights throughout Ukraine and provides regular public reports to the international community.

**Sanctions:** Various countries and international organizations have imposed sanctions on Russia due to its involvement in the conflict. These measures, which include travel bans and asset freezes, aim to pressure Russia into respecting Ukraine's sovereignty and halting its support for separatists in the Donbas region.

**Humanitarian Aid:** International organizations and countries have provided substantial humanitarian aid to the people affected by the conflict. The United Nations, European Union, and non-governmental organizations such as the Red Cross have been instrumental in providing food, shelter, medical aid, and other forms of assistance to displaced persons and those residing in conflict-affected areas.

**International Criminal Court (ICC) Preliminary Examination:** The ICC opened a preliminary examination into the situation in Ukraine following allegations of serious crimes committed amid the conflict. This examination aims to determine whether the criteria for opening an investigation under the Rome Statute are met.

Despite these efforts, the situation in the Donbas region remains critical, with ongoing violence and human rights abuses. This highlights the need for a continued and concerted international response to enforce the International Bill of Human Rights effectively in conflict-prone territories.

## **Case Studies**

## Case Study: Yemen Crisis



The Yemeni Crisis began in 2014, when Houthi insurgents, a Zaidi Shia group from the north of Yemen, rebelled against the internationally recognized government led by President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi. The escalation of this internal conflict into a full-blown war was marked by the military intervention in 2015 of a Saudi-led coalition of Arab states, aimed at restoring Hadi's government.

The war in Yemen has resulted in one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. According to the United Nations, over 24 million people - approximately 80% of Yemen's population - are in need of humanitarian assistance, including more than 12 million children.

### ***Human Rights Violations:***

The Yemeni crisis has been characterized by widespread and severe violations of human rights. Both the Houthi insurgents and the Saudi-led coalition have been implicated in actions that contravene the International Bill of Human Rights.

**Indiscriminate Attacks and Use of Landmines:** Both sides have been accused of indiscriminate attacks on civilian areas, including homes, markets, hospitals, and schools. This includes airstrikes by the Saudi-led coalition resulting in a

significant number of civilian casualties. The Houthi forces have been accused of widespread use of landmines, leading to hundreds of civilian deaths and injuries.

**Blockades and Denial of Humanitarian Access:** The Saudi-led coalition has imposed a naval and air blockade on Yemen, under the justification of preventing arms shipments to the Houthi forces. However, this has had a severe impact on the civilian population, restricting the flow of food, fuel, and medical supplies, and exacerbating the humanitarian crisis. On the other side, Houthi forces have been accused of delaying and diverting aid deliveries within the territory they control.

**Detention, Torture, and Enforced Disappearances:** Both Houthi forces and the Yemeni government, along with their respective allies, have been implicated in arbitrary detention, torture, and forced disappearances. Many of these instances appear to target political opponents or are enacted as measures of intimidation.

**Child Soldiers:** The recruitment and use of child soldiers, particularly by Houthi forces, is another major concern. According to the UN, thousands of children have been recruited and used in the conflict, a clear violation of their rights as outlined in the International Bill of Human Rights.

**Impediments to Freedom of Expression:** Journalists, activists, and ordinary citizens who have spoken out against any of the warring parties have faced threats, intimidation, violence, and legal prosecution, infringing upon their freedom of expression.

### ***International Response:***

Despite the scale of the humanitarian crisis and violations of human rights in Yemen, the international response has been criticized as inadequate. While several UN Security Council resolutions have been passed regarding the conflict in Yemen, these have largely failed to bring about a political solution or halt the human rights abuses.

Moreover, international aid provided to alleviate the humanitarian crisis has been insufficient and often impeded by the warring parties. The UN's Human Rights Council has established a Group of Eminent Experts on Yemen to

investigate human rights abuses, and while their work is crucial, it is yet to lead to significant accountability measures.

Overall, the Yemeni crisis presents a glaring example of the challenges faced in implementing the International Bill of Human Rights in conflict-prone territories, and emphasizes the need for robust, proactive, and sustained international action.

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## Case Study: Syrian Crisis



The Syrian crisis, often referred to as the Syrian Civil War, commenced in March 2011. Initially, it was a series of large-scale protests demanding political reforms, democratic representation, and the end of Bashar al-Assad's government. The government's brutal crackdown on these peaceful demonstrations ignited an armed conflict that eventually transformed into a multifaceted civil war involving numerous Syrian factions and foreign interventions.

### ***Human Rights Violations:***

The Syrian crisis is notorious for its severe and extensive human rights abuses. The violations have been committed by virtually all parties involved, including the Syrian government, various opposition groups, and terrorist organizations such as ISIS.

**Use of Chemical Weapons and Indiscriminate Bombing:** The Syrian government has been repeatedly accused of using chemical weapons against its own citizens, a clear violation of international law and human rights. Indiscriminate bombing, including the use of barrel bombs, has led to mass civilian casualties and widespread destruction of infrastructure.

**Forced Displacement:** Forced displacement has been a major feature of the Syrian crisis. Government forces and other factions have systematically forced populations to move through siege warfare and "evacuation agreements". Syria now accounts for the largest number of displaced people globally, with over 6 million internally displaced and over 5 million refugees.

**Arbitrary Detention, Torture, and Enforced Disappearances:** The Syrian government has conducted widespread campaigns of arbitrary detention, often followed by torture or execution. Detainees include political activists, humanitarian aid workers, and journalists. Enforced disappearances are widespread, with families often having no information about their loved ones' whereabouts or condition.

**Violations by Extremist Groups:** Extremist groups such as ISIS and Al-Nusra Front have committed severe human rights abuses, including mass killings, sexual slavery, systematic rape, and the use of child soldiers.

**Denial of Humanitarian Access:** The Syrian government has consistently restricted access to besieged areas, preventing humanitarian aid from reaching civilians. This has led to severe food and medicine shortages in many parts of the country.

### ***International Response:***

The international community's response to the Syrian crisis has been marked by division and inaction. While several resolutions have been proposed in the UN Security Council, key players like Russia and China have used their veto power to prevent actions that might undermine the Assad government.

The International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM) was established in 2016 by the UN General Assembly to assist in investigating and prosecuting those responsible for the most serious crimes under international law committed in Syria. However, meaningful accountability and justice remain elusive.

Humanitarian aid to Syria is ongoing, but it is not enough to meet the vast needs and is frequently obstructed by the government and other warring factions.

In sum, the Syrian crisis underscores the pressing need for effective measures to enforce the International Bill of Human Rights in conflict-prone territories and hold perpetrators of human rights abuses accountable.

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## Case Study: Somali Civil War



The Somali civil war is an armed conflict that has been ongoing in Somalia since 1991. The conflict has its roots in the resistance movements against the military junta led by Siad Barre during the 1980s. Following Barre's overthrow in 1991, a power vacuum was created, leading to a protracted conflict involving various warlords, clans, and Islamist groups like Al-Shabaab. Foreign interventions, such as the US-led UN mission in the early 1990s and the ongoing African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), have added another layer of complexity to the conflict.

### ***Human Rights Violations:***

The Somali civil war has seen a wide array of human rights violations by all sides involved in the conflict.

**Targeted and Indiscriminate Violence Against Civilians:** All parties to the conflict, including the federal government, regional forces, African Union troops, and Al-Shabaab, have been implicated in targeted and indiscriminate attacks against civilians. This includes extrajudicial killings, sexual violence, and indiscriminate bombings.

**Child Soldiers:** The recruitment and use of child soldiers by armed groups, particularly Al-Shabaab, is a major issue. Children are often abducted and forced to fight, or used as human shields. The Somali government's armed forces have also been accused of using child soldiers.

**Restrictions on Freedom of Expression:** Journalists and media workers in Somalia face significant threats, including targeted killings, arbitrary detention, and intimidation. Al-Shabaab has targeted media outlets and journalists who are critical of their actions. The Somali government has also been implicated in violations of press freedom, including arbitrary arrests and intimidation of journalists.

**Denial of Humanitarian Access:** Warring parties have frequently blocked access to or diverted aid destined for civilians. This has led to widespread food insecurity and has exacerbated the impact of periodic droughts and famines.

**Displacement:** The conflict, combined with recurrent natural disasters, has resulted in one of the world's largest populations of internally displaced persons (IDPs), with over 2.6 million IDPs reported in 2020. These individuals often live in dire conditions with limited access to basic services and are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.

### ***International Response:***

International response to the Somali conflict and its resultant human rights violations has been mixed. AMISOM has been operational since 2007, contributing to some stabilization, but has also been implicated in human rights abuses. The UN has implemented several initiatives aimed at improving the situation, but progress has been limited.

In terms of human rights accountability, the International Criminal Court (ICC) has held preliminary examinations into the situation in Somalia but has yet to open a formal investigation. The Human Rights Council has a mandate to monitor the situation but there have been few concrete actions to hold violators accountable.

Humanitarian aid remains critical for millions of Somalis, but delivery is hampered by access restrictions and insecurity.

The ongoing crisis in Somalia underscores the challenges in implementing the International Bill of Human Rights in conflict-prone areas, including issues related to state capacity, political will, security concerns, and the complex dynamics of internal conflict and foreign intervention.

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## Case Study: Nigerian Insurgency Crisis



The Nigerian insurgency, primarily carried out by the Islamist extremist group Boko Haram, has led to a protracted conflict mainly in the northeastern regions of Nigeria since 2009. Boko Haram's violent campaign aims to establish an Islamic state in Nigeria and has involved attacks on civilian and military targets alike. The conflict has spread to neighboring countries like Chad, Niger, and Cameroon, resulting in the displacement of millions and severe humanitarian crises.

### ***Human Rights Violations:***

Both Boko Haram and the Nigerian security forces have been implicated in severe human rights violations:

**Violence Against Civilians:** Boko Haram has been responsible for numerous bombings, mass shootings, and kidnappings, with a notably horrific incident being the 2014 abduction of 276 schoolgirls from Chibok. Markets, mosques, churches, schools, and other public spaces have been targeted, resulting in heavy civilian casualties.

**Use of Child Soldiers and Forced Marriages:** Boko Haram has abducted children to serve as soldiers or "wives" for their fighters. The use of girls as suicide bombers has also been a particularly troubling trend.

**Extrajudicial Killings and Torture:** The Nigerian military, particularly the Joint Task Force, has been accused of extrajudicial killings, torture, and other



ill-treatment of detainees, often justified as part of the "war on terror". These actions have largely targeted young men in the northeast suspected of supporting Boko Haram.

**Displacement:** The violence has displaced millions of people, both internally in Nigeria and as refugees in neighboring countries. Displaced populations face difficult living conditions, with access to food, water, shelter, and healthcare often severely limited.

**Sexual Violence:** Both Boko Haram and the Nigerian security forces have been implicated in sexual violence. Boko Haram has kidnapped women and girls, subjecting them to sexual and gender-based violence, including forced marriages. There have also been reports of sexual exploitation and abuse by security forces, particularly in displacement camps.

### ***International Response:***

The international response to the Nigerian insurgency has been relatively limited. Although the United Nations and the African Union have condemned Boko Haram's actions and called for measures to protect civilians, concrete international action on the ground has been minimal.

Humanitarian efforts are ongoing, but access remains difficult due to ongoing violence and resistance from Boko Haram. The International Criminal Court (ICC) has conducted preliminary examinations into the situation, but it has not yet launched a formal investigation.

The Nigerian government's approach has mainly focused on military operations to combat Boko Haram, with less emphasis on addressing root causes of the conflict such as poverty, corruption, and weak governance.

The situation in Nigeria demonstrates the complexities and challenges of protecting human rights in conflict-prone areas and the need for comprehensive strategies that not only address immediate security threats but also tackle underlying socio-economic issues.



## Case Study: Separatist movements in Canada



The sovereigntist movement in Quebec, Canada, is a political and social phenomenon rooted in the distinct linguistic and cultural identity of the province. As the majority of Quebec's population are French-speaking Québécois, there has been an ongoing debate over Quebec's place within Canada's predominantly English-speaking framework since the country's inception.

### ***Background and Human Rights Implications:***

The sovereigntist movement has mainly taken a peaceful and political form, with calls for independence being sought through democratic means. It emerged significantly in the 1960s during the Quiet Revolution, a period of intense socio-political and socio-cultural change in Quebec, characterized by the secularization of government, the creation of a welfare state (état-providence), and realignment of politics into federalist and sovereignist factions.

**Language Rights:** A key issue within the Quebec sovereigntist movement is the protection of the French language. Quebec has implemented laws, such as Bill 101, to safeguard the use of French in public spaces and workplaces. While the law is aimed at protecting a cultural minority's linguistic rights, it has faced

criticism for potentially infringing on the rights of English speakers within Quebec. Balancing these rights has been a recurring challenge in the region.

**Indigenous Rights:** Indigenous groups in Quebec, such as the Cree and Inuit, have raised concerns about their rights and territories should Quebec secede. These communities have generally opposed separation, asserting their inherent rights to self-determination, which would not necessarily align with a sovereign Quebec.

**Democratic Rights:** Quebec has held two referendums on sovereignty, in 1980 and 1995, both of which ended in a vote against independence. These democratic exercises were significant in allowing citizens to express their will. However, they have also been sources of tension, particularly surrounding the questions of what constitutes a clear majority and what would be the terms of any subsequent separation.

### ***International Response:***

The issue of Quebec sovereignty is viewed as a domestic issue and has thus seen little international involvement. The Supreme Court of Canada, in its 1998 reference on Quebec's secession, asserted that a unilateral declaration of independence would not be legal under either Canadian or international law, but also suggested that successful negotiations for secession could occur if a clear majority of Quebecers supported such a move.

From a human rights perspective, the Quebec sovereigntist movement provides a case study of how linguistic, cultural, and democratic rights interact within a peaceful, democratic context. It showcases the challenges of preserving cultural identity and minority rights within a broader national framework. It's worth noting, however, that the Quebec case, given its peaceful and political nature, represents a markedly different context than other regions embroiled in violent conflict or severe human rights crises.

## Questions to Consider

1. What are the primary obstacles to the full implementation of the International Bill of Human Rights in conflict-prone territories?
2. How can international cooperation be improved to ensure the protection of human rights in areas of conflict, especially in the Donbas region?
3. How can UN bodies, including SOCHUM, more effectively monitor and report on human rights abuses in conflict-prone areas?
4. What steps can be taken to ensure that women, children, and other vulnerable groups are specifically protected in conflict situations?
5. How can the international community more effectively hold those responsible for human rights violations in conflict zones accountable?
6. What role can regional organizations play in mitigating human rights abuses and in implementing the International Bill of Human Rights in conflict-prone territories?
7. What measures can be put in place to ensure that humanitarian aid reaches conflict-affected regions, and that the rights of displaced persons are protected?
8. What strategies could be adopted to prevent the escalation of conflicts and thus prevent the violation of human rights?
9. How can the UN work with non-state actors in conflict-prone areas to ensure the upholding of human rights?
10. How can reconciliation and peacebuilding processes in post-conflict zones incorporate human rights considerations effectively?
11. How might the international community address the issue of internally displaced persons and refugees while ensuring respect for their human rights?

12. How can countries balance their national security interests with their obligation to protect human rights during conflicts?
13. What lessons can be learned from the previous international responses to human rights violations in conflict zones, such as in Syria, Yemen, Nigeria, and Somalia?
14. How can nations strengthen their domestic institutions to better uphold the International Bill of Human Rights, especially in conflict-prone territories?
15. How can SOCHUM work in collaboration with other UN bodies, NGOs, and civil society to uphold human rights norms in areas experiencing conflict?

## References for Further Research

- <https://research.un.org/en/docs/humanrights>
- <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/Compilation1.1en.pdf>
- <https://www.hrw.org/>
- <https://www.amnesty.org/en/>
- <https://www.icrc.org/>
- <https://www.crisisgroup.org/>

Remember, good preparation involves not only understanding the specific agenda item but also being aware of your country's position, policies, and actions related to the issue at hand! All the best!