



Peacebuilding
Sustaining Peace

Background Paper

Committee: The Peace and Security Department

Topic B: The Humanitarian Impact of Urban Warfare

Chairs: Victoria Nevarez Karam and Fernanda Galindo Ortiz

Every year, thousands of civilians' lives are forced to end because of urban warfare. Urban warfare represents a deadlier threat for civilians than any other combat. Civilians should be able to walk around their city without it turning into a battlefield. It is our obligation, as the world's leading peacekeeping non-governmental organization, to find the adequate solution for this problem, otherwise, millions could end up left for death, while the survivors become scarred for life with the images of their loved ones dying in their arms.

The first examples of Urban Warfare can be remoted to World War 1; though it was not common, if civilians went against the armies' wishes to enter their city, fighting could take place there. In 1949, the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, also called the Fourth Geneva Convention, was established as an attempt to control Urban Warfare. In 1993, the United Nations Security Council decided that the Geneva Conventions conformed part of the International Customary Laws. Past solutions are not enough to neutralize this problem. Innocents still die in the hand of war, in the territory that is recognized as their home. "Previous studies have reported a civilian casualty rate of 65 to 70% of the total casualties in a war" (Amir Khorram-Manesh).

Urban Warfare covers a wide spectrum, from gang violence to military combat, but it is generally described as combat in an urban area, surrounded by a built environment and civilians. The complexity of it all makes it a more difficult battlefield. The opponents have to take into account a variety of significant factors such as the infrastructure of the region, the civilians, what kind of attacks and weapons they can use without violating the laws of war. Since urban warfare takes place in an already set urban environment, the number of strategies available becomes limited with the established infrastructure becoming their main obstacle. The infrastructure makes it harder for each side to obtain the locations of their enemies and soldiers accurately, for leaders to instruct their armies and for each side to avoid the aim of their enemies. These are part of the reasons why urban warfare is always considered a last option; the main and most important reason is the civilians and their security.

Though it is considered the least popular option for armed conflicts, urban warfare still prevails in our society, with its lasting effects included. All types of conflicts have significant effects on their victims, mainly psychological, mental, and physical trauma. “Death, injury, sexual violence, malnutrition, illness, and disability are some of the most threatening physical consequences of war, while post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety are some of the emotional effects” (Amrita Rathi). Citizens become the victims of their own homes, losing their families, ending up with a damaged home, injuries, and the scars on their minds of the mass murder that they witnessed. All of these effects will follow them for the rest of their lives, bringing them sleepless nights, with the memory of how they lost everything.

Our organization can't eliminate urban warfare, but it can reduce it and help its victims. Delegates should consider all the main factors, including how delicate urban warfare can be because of alliances and trading, but focusing on the protection of civilians and the rehabilitation of mental and psychological trauma that may have prevailed as one of the long-lasting effects of war. Solutions should be effective, determined, and specific, offering a variety of resources for victims to land into. Solutions should include both security protocols and victim support, with security protocols centering on the protection of civilians during the conflict, shelter, and evacuation routes; while, victim support should offer the helping aid needed for injured victims, rehabilitation programs, and the turning of war victims into functioning members of society. Delegates should offer versatile solutions considering the laws of armed conflicts (LOAC). Other factors that should be considered are warfare training, the planning of the urban operations, and commandments that reduce most if not all of the civilian harm. The topic may shift its focus from the security of civilians to the aid of war victims, both subtopics have the same value when it comes to solving this issue.

The debate should be centered on the protection of civilians during urban warfare and all combats located in urban areas, as well as, helping aid for all war victims including veterans. Delegates should be prepared to discuss battle strategies in urban areas, civilian and military training in case of emergency, war-induced trauma, and the reincorporation of war victims into society. War conflict will persevere as long as humanity exists, but it is our duty, as a peace-keeping organization, to decrease the number of victims and help those who need it.

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