



THE LAWWAY WITH LAWYERS JOURNAL

VOLUME:-18 ISSUE NO:- 18 , DECEMBER 5, 2024

ISSN (ONLINE):- 2584-1106

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Human Rights in Conflict Zones:

The Unseen Toll on Civilians

Justice, the bedrock of a peaceful and equitable society, demands the full realization of human rights for all. It ensures fairness and equality, safeguarding fundamental rights such as the right to life, liberty, freedom from discrimination, and access to education, healthcare, and justice itself. When justice prevails, individuals feel valued and secure, fostering trust and cooperation within communities. This creates a stable and harmonious society where everyone can thrive and reach their full potential. Conversely, the absence of justice breeds inequality, marginalization, and conflict, undermining any attempts at peaceful coexistence. Violations of human rights, such as arbitrary detention, torture, and discrimination, erode trust in institutions and fuel social unrest. Upholding justice is not

merely a moral imperative; it is a practical necessity for building a just and peaceful world where human dignity is respected and all individuals have the opportunity to contribute to a flourishing society.

Abstract

Human rights violations remain one of the most pervasive and pressing issues of our time, particularly in conflict zones and areas of systemic discrimination. From the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war to the systemic caste-based violence in India and the targeting of journalists worldwide, the universal principles of human dignity, equality, and justice are continuously under threat. This paper examines the toll of such violations on civilians, highlighting key case studies that illustrate the failures of global systems to protect these fundamental rights. Through an exploration of international legal frameworks, national and global response mechanisms, and case-specific examples, this paper aims to underline the urgent need for accountability, reform, and international solidarity to uphold the Ideals of human rights. The findings call for a collective approach to address these violations, ensuring the protection of human dignity in conflict zones and beyond.

- Human Rights Violations
- Conflict Zones
- International Law
- Accountability
- Impunity

Introduction

Human rights are the basic rights and freedoms to which every individual is entitled, simply by virtue of being human. These rights include, but are not limited to, the right to life, liberty, security, education, freedom of expression, and protection from

discrimination and violence. They are enshrined in key international treaties and frameworks, most notably the universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) adopted by the United Nations in 1948. However, despite widespread recognition of these fundamental rights, they are often violated, especially in conflict zones, authoritarian regimes, and areas where systemic discrimination persists.

In conflict zones, civilians often bear the brunt of such violations. The impact of war, violence, displacement, and trauma on human rights is profound and long-lasting. Similarly, in nations that experience authoritarian rule or deep-seated social inequalities, people especially marginalized groups such as Dalits in India or journalists reporting on corruption often face severe human rights abuses. This paper delves into the human rights violations in several global conflict zones, including the ongoing war in Ukraine, the systematic repression of marginalized groups in India, and the continued threat faced by journalists worldwide. By analyzing these instances and their broader implications, the paper seeks to call for urgent reform and greater accountability in the protection of human rights.



Body

1. Human Rights in Conflict Zones: The Russia-Ukraine War

The Russia-Ukraine war, which began in February 2022, represents a stark example of the brutal violation of human rights in a conflict zone. Beyond its geopolitical and military implications, the war has resulted in widespread suffering for civilians, with the most blatant violations of the right to life, liberty, and security of person. Over 8 million Ukrainians have been forced to flee their homes, while tens of thousands have died as a result of bombings, shootings, and extrajudicial killings. The indiscriminate attacks on

civilian infrastructure, including homes, schools, hospitals, and power plants, are clear violations of international law, specifically the Geneva Conventions, which prohibit the targeting of civilian structures during armed conflict.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has also been marked by horrific war crimes, including sexual violence, torture, and forced disappearances. Reports of rape, sexual violence, and other forms of gender-based violence committed by Russian soldiers against Ukrainian civilians, particularly women and girls, have surfaced. These violations are a direct contravention of the international Criminal Court (ICC)'s statutes, which prohibit sexual violence as a form of war crime. The sheer scale and brutality of these crimes have led to widespread condemnation from international human rights bodies, yet the international response remains inadequate. Despite ongoing investigations and calls for accountability, the lack of effective enforcement mechanisms within the United Nations and the broader international community continues to allow such crimes to go unpunished.

This section will explore how the Russian government, under President Vladimir Putin, has consistently dismissed international calls for human rights protections, invoking national sovereignty as a shield against external intervention. This underscores the power imbalance within the international system, where certain nations are able to circumvent global accountability structures with little repercussion. Furthermore, the ongoing war highlights the failure of international law to protect the basic rights of civilians in the face of geopolitical power struggles.

2. Violence Against Journalists: The Case of Mexico

Journalists are frequently targeted for exposing corruption, human rights violations, and criminal activity, particularly in regions where organized crime and authoritarian governments hold sway. Mexico is one of the deadliest countries in the world for journalists, with reporters facing abduction, harassment, and murder on a regular basis. The cases of José Luis Gamboa and Luis Enrique Ramírez, two journalists killed in 2022 for their investigative reporting, are just two examples of the ongoing dangers faced by the media in the country. These murders are emblematic of a broader pattern of violence against the press, where criminal organizations and corrupt political structures seek to silence those who expose the truth.

The impunity for such crimes is another major issue in Mexico. According to reports from Reporters Without Borders and the Committee to Protect Journalists, over 90% of

journalist killings go unpunished. This creates an environment where criminal groups and even corrupt officials feel emboldened to target the press without fear of legal consequences. The failure of the Mexican government to protect journalists not only undermines the right to freedom of expression but also erodes public trust in the media as an institution of transparency and accountability.

This section will explore the systemic violence faced by journalists in Mexico, examining the role of impunity, the failure of law enforcement, and the broader implications for press freedom. The lack of meaningful protection for journalists coupled with the growing political polarization in many regions compromises the free flow of information and hinders efforts to combat human rights violations. We will also delve into the response (or lack thereof) from the international community, including human rights organizations and foreign governments, in addressing this ongoing crisis.

3. Caste-Based Violence and Discrimination in India

In India, one of the most significant ongoing human rights issues is the widespread caste based violence and discrimination that disproportionately affects Dalits—historically marginalized communities within the Hindu caste system. Despite constitutional provisions guaranteeing equality and protection from discrimination, Dalits continue to face systemic oppression, exclusion, and violence. The Godhra riots (2002), Karamchedu massacre(1985), and Chundururu massacre(1991) serve as grim reminders of the deep rooted social and economic disparities faced by Dalits in India.

These incidents reflect a broader pattern of caste-based violence that remains prevalent across rural and urban India. Dalits often face violent attacks, social ostracism, economic exploitation, and denial of basic rights such as education, healthcare, and access to land. The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act which was established to protect Dalits from such violence, has not been effectively enforced. The result is that perpetrators—often from upper-caste communities—escape justice due to their societal and political influence.

This section will provide a detailed analysis of caste-based violence, its historical roots, and the failure of India's legal system to address these issues effectively. It will also examine the social, cultural, and economic factors that perpetuate caste-based discrimination, and propose policy measures and legal reforms aimed at ensuring equality and justice for Dalit communities.

4. The Global Power Imbalance and Human Rights

Human rights are universal principles that should apply to all people, regardless of nationality, race, or religion. However, the application of these principles is often inconsistent, particularly when global power dynamics are at play. Wealthy and powerful nations often prioritize strategic and geopolitical interests over human rights, resulting in selective action on human rights issues. While countries like Ukraine receive military and humanitarian aid, nations facing similar or worse abuses such as Syria, Myanmar, and Yemen have received far less attention from the international community.

This imbalance is evident in the ways in which powerful nations use their influence to shield their own human rights violations or those of their allies. The case of the Russia-Ukraine war illustrates how global power plays a role in shaping the human rights agenda, where major powers often choose to prioritize their strategic interests over the protection of civilian lives. This section will examine the ways in which geopolitical considerations shape the enforcement (or lack thereof) of human rights protections and discuss the ethical implications of this selective approach.

Conclusion

Human rights are an essential component of justice, peace, and global stability. However, as demonstrated by the case studies of the Russia-Ukraine war, the ongoing violence against journalists, and the systemic caste-based violence in India, these rights are often violated in ways that cause immense human suffering. Despite the existence of international frameworks like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and national constitutions that guarantee fundamental rights, the implementation of these rights remains uneven, especially in conflict zones and under authoritarian regimes.

The failure of international organizations to hold perpetrators accountable, the lack of protection for vulnerable communities, and the widespread impunity for human rights abuses underscore the need for stronger global cooperation, accountability, and reform. As global citizens, it is our collective responsibility to demand the protection of human dignity and justice for all. Whether it is through advocacy, supporting humanitarian efforts, or pushing for legal reforms, we must ensure that the ideals of

human rights are upheld in both times of peace and conflict.

The violations of human rights, whether through war, authoritarianism, or discrimination, not only harm the individuals directly affected but also undermine the broader stability of societies. It is imperative that the international community, governments, and civil society

Organizations work together to address these violations, promote peace, and create a world where the rights of every individual are respected and protected.

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