HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

2019 TOPICS

Gender-based Violence During Wartime
Child Labor and Education
Why this is important?
Gender based violence during war is an unfortunate reality for people living in war zones across the world. Often this violence stems from either a deliberate strategy to demoralize the population affected during war or as a result of a lack of control of troops. Recently, the Nigerian rebel group Boko Haram kidnapped 200 school-age girls and forced them to cook, clean, and carry out operational tasks for the group such as luring opposing soldiers to areas where Boko Haram would then engage them in combat. Unfortunately, Boko Haram’s actions seem mild compared to those the International Criminal Court sought to restrict in explicitly categorizing rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, persecution on the basis of gender, and other forms of sexual violence as crimes against humanity. These crimes can be committed against all people and are not limited by gender except for those crimes which biologically must be limited by gender, such as forced pregnancy for males.

Topic Summary and Background:
A report on Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict report, covering 129 conflicts between 1989 and 2009, found that 42% of state actors perpetrated sexual violence during the measurement period, compared to 24% of rebel groups and 17% of militias. Experts caution that this number may be skewed, however, because state actors are easier to recognize due to their recognizable uniforms which are frequently not worn by rebel groups or militias. While reporting these crimes is obviously desirable, the instances of reporting may be skewed due to underreporting. Victims are often unwilling to report sexual violence because of the accompanying shame, societal stigma, fear of retributive violence, or an inability to reach authorities. Further, male victims of gender based violence are often hesitant to report the same, especially if the crime committed against them threatens their masculinity. As is evident, research in this area is lacking. While the underlying issues of gender based violence must be addressed, so to must the issues of reporting the same. By reporting gender based violence as close to real time as possible, the appropriate authorities may be alerted to the same and can appropriately address the problem as it arises. Of note is the recent prosecution of Germain Katanga, a former Congolese warlord, who was accused of rape and sexual slavery. It was well documented that his forces raped women and held women as sexual slaves, but the International Criminal Court failed to convict Katanga of the same at least partially due to the passage of time between the incidents and the attempted prosecution. Gender based violence in times of war is an old and ongoing problem, but it is not a problem without a solution. By using the laws already on the books and expanding reporting, the scourge of gender based violence during war can be properly measured and decreased.
Issues to be addressed in a Resolution:

1. Who is in the best position to track the data behind gender-based violence in times of war? What further resources does this entity need to do its job?
2. Should there be a statute of limitations against reporting instances of gender-based violence during war?
3. How does the United Nations monitor the gender-based and sexual violence that continues past the end of the war?
4. Do political movements, such as America’s #metoo, create a broader awareness to problems based in sexual violence? If so, can it be reproduced on an international scale to promote change? If so, how?

Resources

Gender Based Violence and War

Preventing and Responding to Gender-Based Violence
https://www.sida.se/contentassets/3a820dbd152f4fca98bacde8a8101e15/preventing-and-responding-to-gender-based-violence.pdf

Ending Sexual and Gender Based Violence: War and Peace
2019 TOPIC: CHILD LABOR AND EDUCATION

Why this is important?
Forced labor occurs when someone enters a certain work or a service against their own free choice and are unable to leave without huge consequences that will hurt them even more. Examples of industries that used forced labor are domestic work, agriculture, construction and commercial sexual exploitation. It is often referred to as modern slavery. This is a huge problem that dominates so many countries in the world, but it is most common in Asia. There are over 40 million victims of forced labor and 11 million of them come out of Asia. Even economically developed countries such as Europe, North America and Australia are facing these issues. Over 40% of these individuals are children under the age of 18. Over 1 in 4 victims of forced labor are children.

Topic Summary and Background:
Forced marriage is also a related aspect of forced labor that disproportionately affects children due their lack of legal rights and often abandoned nature in cases of forced labor lead them into issues of forced marriage. According to the 1930 Forced Labour Convention, forced labor of children is work performed by a child under coercion applied to a third party (other than his or her parents). Children represent the vicious cycle that forced labor often comes in: if one’s parents are coerced into forced labor, it is not a stress for the absolute control that the boss has over the parents to extend to the rights and work of the child, as well. Although child labor is a large issue in itself, its relation to the child’s education is of key importance. A child who is removed from their ability to have an education has detrimental effects on their future as an individual and as an active member in their communities. Although child labor of children between the ages of 5–17 has decreased by 30% since 2000, there are still 168 million child laborers worldwide. Almost half of the child laborers in the world are missing significant amounts of schooling and for those who do manage to do both, their performance often suffers.

Issues to be addressed in a Resolution:
1. How must child labor be defined in legal framework so that it is easily identifiable and able to be prosecuted on a national and international level?
2. How can a child’s education be mandated and enforced above their presence in the workforce?
3. How does the 1930 Forced Labour Convention address the issues of gender, child labor, and other social impacts of forced labor?
4. How can the United Nations impose sanctions on countries who sell trade and sell goods internationally that are products of forced child labor?
Resources
Child Labor
https://ourworldindata.org/child-labor

Child Labor Hinders Children’s Education
https://www.globalpartnership.org/blog/child-labor-hinders-childrens-education

Child Labor Related Articles--New York Times