

War Crimes, Justice and Peace: Wounded Humanity in Search of Peace

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Abstract

War crimes and crimes against humanity continue to haunt modern civilization, revealing the fragility of moral conscience and the persistent failure of international justice. Despite global efforts to promote peace through human rights conventions and humanitarian law, countless conflicts across the world still result in genocide, mass displacement, and systemic violations of human dignity. Women and children, the most vulnerable in society, bear the heaviest burdens of war—through sexual violence, forced recruitment, and loss of livelihood—while the perpetrators often remain unpunished.

This paper examines the complex relationship between war crimes, justice, and peace, arguing that sustainable peace cannot exist without accountability and universal respect for human rights. Drawing from U Thant's vision that human rights form the foundation of human freedom and true peace, the study highlights how the denial of justice perpetuates cycles of violence and dehumanization. The restoration of peace, therefore, demands more than the cessation of conflict—it requires the reaffirmation of human dignity, impartial justice, and a collective moral awakening to heal the wounds of humanity.

Introduction

"The establishment of Human Rights provides the foundation upon which rests the political structure of Human Freedom; the achievement of human freedom generates the will as well as the capacity for economic and social progress; the attainment of economic and social progress provides the basis for true peace."*

U. Thant (Former U.N. Secretary General)

As the world entered a new millennium, all hopes for a peaceful era were crushed, and humanity was forced to witness an ever-increasing face of violence and organized crime perpetuated in the names of religion, nationalism, or democracy. Despite many wars fought to end all wars, neither the wars nor the war crimes have come to an end. There has been a steady increase in civilian casualties as more and more weapons of mass destruction find their way into armed conflicts. Innocent children and unsuspecting citizens are becoming the primary targets of wars they neither chose nor desired.

No nation can claim to be free of responsibility—whether it be a global superpower or a developing nation—each bears the moral burden of crimes against humanity. The aftermath of such atrocities leaves deep and long-lasting scars on society, with victims enduring severe socio-psychological

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trauma that often leads to further cycles of violence and terrorism.

Every day, in all warring zones—declared and undeclared—we find innocent children and grieving mothers being drawn toward the battlefields. Whether due to terrorism, political oppression, or government neglect, the ultimate victim remains **innocence**. Playgrounds are transforming into training grounds as child soldiers march in uniform, while little girls are raped, enslaved, and sold, their hopes extinguished in societies that blame victims rather than perpetrators.

The **United Nations** defines crimes against humanity as murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation, and other inhuman acts against civilian populations or persecutions on political, racial, or religious grounds. These acts, connected to crimes against peace or war crimes, include murder or ill-treatment of prisoners of war, killing of hostages, plundering of property, and wanton destruction not justified by military necessity.

Despite numerous international conventions and organizations dedicated to protecting human rights, humanity's moral compass is weakening as victims remain unprotected. Genocides in the name of race or religion, the silencing of dissent, the humiliation of women, and the torture of prisoners erode the ethical core of civilization. Recruitment of child soldiers, targeting of schools, suicide bombings, and indiscriminate destruction of cities—all point to a grim reality that demands urgent global attention.

Men, women, and children across borders long for peace, but peace is not easily established. We search for justice amidst crimes, yet our tools are weak, our systems prejudiced. True peace can only flourish in an environment rooted in justice and humanity. Without an unbiased mindset—one that holds all perpetrators accountable regardless of nationality, religion, or ethnicity—lasting peace cannot exist.

Denial of human dignity breeds conflict, conflict breeds war, and war deepens the denial of dignity. This vicious cycle must be broken. No war can ever be just if it is fought against humanity itself. The safeguarding of human rights remains the only viable path to prevent the escalation of wars and war crimes. Human rights, as legal and ethical principles, must guide the behavior of all individuals regardless of cultural, national, or ethnic boundaries.

Peace and human rights are inseparable twins; one cannot thrive without the other. To merely desire peace or condemn war is not enough. Only through the universal recognition and protection of human rights can we realize the vision of true, lasting peace. The culture of peace requires unwavering respect for human dignity, equality, and justice.

The proposed conference aims to provide a platform for scholars, policymakers, and humanitarian actors working to establish peace and harmony in our conflict-torn world. Through an interdisciplinary approach, it seeks to unite academics, governmental bodies, international agencies, and NGOs in dialogue and collaboration to ensure that humanity can thrive in safe, secure societies rather than refugee camps and war zones.

Conclusion

In a world increasingly scarred by war, terrorism, and crimes against humanity, the call for peace and

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protection of human rights has never been more urgent. Despite countless conventions, declarations, and global efforts, humanity continues to suffer the consequences of violence born from prejudice, power struggles, and disregard for human dignity. It is evident that true and lasting peace cannot be achieved merely through the cessation of wars but through the establishment of justice and respect for fundamental human rights.

Every act of violence against innocent civilians, every instance of oppression, and every denial of human dignity weakens the moral fabric of our global society. The path to peace lies not in weapons or political negotiations alone, but in nurturing a universal culture of respect, compassion, and equality. Ensuring human rights for all—irrespective of nationality, race, gender, or religion—is the only way to safeguard humanity from the cycle of conflict and revenge.

As U Thant emphasized, human rights are the foundation of human freedom, and through that freedom arises the capacity for social progress and peace. The time has come for nations, organizations, and individuals to unite beyond boundaries and work collectively toward a world where peace is not an aspiration but a lived reality. Upholding human rights is not merely a moral duty—it is the only viable path toward the true and enduring peace that humanity so deeply longs for.

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