

Background paper

Committee: Human Rights

Topic B: Delivering aid to countries with violations of international humanitarian law

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Humanitarian aid exists to protect life and dignity during crises, regardless of political conditions. However, when aid is delivered to countries where violations of international humanitarian law are occurring, the situation becomes significantly more complicated. In these environments, civilian populations may face displacement, food insecurity, disrupted medical care, or active conflict. At the same time, those in power may be responsible for the very conditions that make aid necessary. The central concern is how to ensure that relief reaches civilians without supporting or legitimizing parties responsible for harm.

Throughout recent history, international organizations have confronted this dilemma. In some conflict zones, humanitarian convoys have been blocked or delayed by armed groups seeking to control the distribution of aid. In other situations, governments have imposed restrictions on aid agencies, monitored their operations closely, or diverted supplies for military or political purposes. These actions challenge the core humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality, and independence. Aid agencies are therefore forced to make decisions that balance access to vulnerable populations with the risk of being used as tools within the conflict.

International law emphasizes that all parties to a conflict are responsible for allowing and facilitating humanitarian assistance. This principle is outlined in the Geneva Conventions and reinforced by multiple United Nations resolutions. However, practical enforcement is difficult. The international community often lacks mechanisms that can ensure compliance without escalating conflict or placing humanitarian workers in greater danger. This means that, in reality, aid organizations must negotiate constantly with local authorities, military actors, and international bodies to find workable solutions on the ground.

There is also an ethical dimension. Some argue that withholding aid from countries where violations are taking place may pressure leaders to change their behavior. Others point out that the people most affected by these violations are civilians who have no influence over government or military decisions. In these cases, denying aid may deepen suffering rather than promoting accountability. This tension makes the issue highly sensitive and raises questions about responsibility, justice, and the purpose of humanitarian action.

Additionally, the involvement of donor states and international agencies shapes how aid is viewed. Assistance can be interpreted as a gesture of solidarity, a strategic diplomatic tool, or a form of influence. This perception affects how local populations understand and respond to aid.

efforts. Maintaining trust is essential for aid delivery, and once trust is weakened, access can be difficult to regain.

The complexity of delivering aid in these contexts calls for thoughtful dialogue. Delegates are encouraged to consider approaches that reinforce transparency, strengthen monitoring of aid distribution, and protect humanitarian actors in the field. At the same time, discussions may explore how international systems can promote accountability without interrupting lifesaving assistance. The goal is to support solutions that uphold humanitarian principles while recognizing the political realities present in conflict environments.