



## Review of Patterns of Experiences among Civilians in Conflict Zones

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Received: 2/10/2021

Revised: 11/1/2022

Accepted: 11/4/2022

Published: 30/7/2023

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Citation: Fadhil, A., Basir, S., & Abd Aziz, S. (2023). Review of Patterns of Experiences among Civilians in Conflict Zones. *Dirasat: Human and Social Sciences*, 50(4), 48–54.

<https://doi.org/10.35516/hum.v50i4.5636>

### Abstract

**Objectives:** This paper aims to explore the challenges that civilians encounter in conflict zones by reviewing some previous studies. It is beneficial to use previous studies and reports from international organizations and actors in the field of conflict management; the paper highlights the nature, impact, and experiences related to conflict and how these processes undermine the realization of basic human needs for survival among civilians.

**Methods:** A content analysis was conducted to analyze several publications started from 2015 to 2018 by providing an examination of pertinent literature using a narrative framework and by incorporating pertinent terms and phrases to preserve the intricacies of a methodical process such as civilian experiences, conflict, combatants, military operations, and ISIS.

**Results:** The study results revealed that it is difficult to determine the exact number of civilians who are impacted by conflict. The results also exposed that there were victims from both parties combatants and civilians, yet, 70% of casualties were from civilians. Furthermore, civilian experiences were different from place to place and person to person. The Syrian context received the highest rating in terms of civilian casualties among the rest evaluated literature. The total casualties among civilians were 706 % in comparison to combatants, 294 %.

**Conclusions:** The inability to protect civilians by the governments puts their fate in a critical situation, thus there is a need for international cooperation.

**Keywords:** Conflict, isis, civilian experience, governmental actions, displacement.

### مراجعة الأدبيات المتعلقة بأنماط تجارب المدنيين في مناطق الصراع

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#### ملخص

الأهداف: تهدف هذه الورقة إلى استكشاف التحديات التي يواجهها المدنيون في مناطق الصراع من خلال مراجعة بعض الدراسات السابقة. من المفيد استخدام الدراسات والتقارير السابقة من المنظمات الدولية والجهات الفاعلة في مجال إدارة الصراع؛ تسلط الورقة الضوء على طبيعة النزاعات وتأثيرها والخبرات المتعلقة بها وكيف تقوض هذه العمليات تحقيق الاحتياجات الإنسانية الأساسية للبقاء على قيد الحياة بين المدنيين.

المنهجية: تم إجراء تحليل المحتوى لتحليل العديد من المنشورات التي بدأت من 2015 إلى 2018.

النتائج: كشفت نتائج الدراسة أنه من الصعب تحديد العدد الدقيق للمدنيين المتأثرين بالنزاع. كما كشفت النتائج أن هناك ضحايا من كلا الطرفين من المقاتلين والمدنيين، إلا أن 70٪ من الضحايا كانوا من المدنيين. علاوة على ذلك، كانت التجارب المدنية مختلفة من مكان إلى آخر ومن شخص لآخر. حصل السياق السوري على أعلى تصنيف من حيث الخسائر المدنية بين الأدبيات الأخرى التي تم تقييمها. وبلغت نسبة الضحايا المدنيين 706٪ مقارنة بالمقاتلين 294٪.

الخلاصة: عدم قدرة الحكومات على حماية المدنيين يضع مصيرهم في موقف حرج، وبالتالي هناك حاجة للتعاون الدولي. الكلمات الدالة: الصراع؛ داعش؛ تجارب المدنيين؛ الإجراءات الحكومية؛ نزوح.



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## Introduction

The conflict has persisted over the history of humanity at all aspects of human experience. However, violence does not always accompany conflict; some disputes are violent, while others are not. Human experience of conflict can also be perceived from various facets depending on group characteristics. Women's experiences may differ from children's experiences, and combat and non-combat men's experiences may vary. Nonetheless, violent or non-violent confrontation is an unwelcome occurrence, while each positive or negative experience of peace has a desirable soothing component. Throughout the history of wars and crises, civilians appear to have borne the brunt of the burdens. As any society has civilian individuals, it is essential to unify the international effort to protect them and provide basic living needs. The concept of civilians has many definitions. For instance, article III, of the Geneva Conventions, in its first paragraph, defines the civilian population as persons not directly involved in hostilities, including members of the armed forces who have laid down their arms, persons who are unable to fight for illness, injury, detention or any other cause (Geneva Convention, 1949 Article III). In addition, Al-Zuhaili (2012) defined civilians in his book; *International Relations in Islam*, "non-combatant women, children, peasants, and others." He also defined them: the civilians are the ones who have been thrown out and gone to their jobs, and all those who have a neutral status help the enemy. Even among academics, the belief that conflict is solely harmful has persisted for a long time (Simons, 1972); for instance, Hocker and Wilmot drew attention to some widely held negative assumptions about conflict; one of these beliefs is that harmony is typical and disagreement is aberrant. Furthermore, disagreement and conflict were linked to be similar. This type of collateral harm is prohibited by international law, but it grows in frequency and severity, with potentially devastating results when intergroup conflict intensifies. Likewise, conflict is a condition that must be eradicated. As a result, conflict is effectively a confrontation that must be averted.

As the concept of conflict as a negative force became more prevalent, several scholars began to question this premise. Several prepositions were developed by (Deetz and Stevenson, 1986) all of which presuppose that conflict can be beneficial.; First and foremost, conflict is a natural occurrence. Second, conflict is inescapable, and third, conflict is a result of fundamental disagreements that cannot be resolved. Conflict is unavoidably a part of the human experience because it is a natural phenomenon that occurs all the time. While accountability frameworks are lacking in many conflict zones, there is a fundamental requirement to provide security for civilians during times of conflict. Given that the vast majority of civilian casualties are caused by conflict, the United Nations and international agencies and organizations must have a vision and humanitarian measures in place to protect people (Kedzia, Z, 2009). Failure to cooperate internationally on civil causes may result in further displaced and missing conflict victims ( Collier, 2003). Civilian experience research refers to the application of a set of methodologies and tools to determine how well a civilian experience is presented through the studies. Historical and narrative approaches are among the approaches used to evaluate civilian experiences within conflict zones.

A scant methodology took into account the specificities of civilian rating experience among those who evaluated such situations during the conflict. Besides that, researchers have begun to utilize generic approaches to evaluate such phenomena' effectiveness. Consequently, there is a paucity of an indication on whether these methodologies are sufficient for gathering civilian experiences in the context of war or conflicts (Gates, 2012). To be more specific, the goal of this study is to review some of the associated factors involved in the civilian experience framework during the conflicts. The following section describes the study method, followed by a literature survey, which includes topics such as civilian experiences during conflicts. Following that, a brief discussion and conclusion are offered.

## Method

The objective of this work is to provide an examination of pertinent literature using a narrative framework. By and large, narrative analyses are motivated by a scarcity of available literature or the author's affection for a particular work of literature. Along with demonstrating a strong emphasis on clearly defined themes, the objective of narrative reviews is to contribute to an ongoing general discourse about a subject by offering an analysis of previously published material (Tate, 2015). It was vital to incorporate pertinent terms and phrases to preserve the intricacies of a methodical process such as civilian experiences, conflict, combatants, military operations, and ISIS. We used relevant Boolean operators such as "AND" and "OR" during the

search. Springer Link, Science Direct Elsevier, Taylor & Francis, and humanities and social sciences journal were the databases used to conduct the literature search. Only peer-reviewed English-language papers from 2015 to 2018 were considered. The titles and abstracts of articles provided by the databases were examined first, and then the entire body of the article was examined. Ineligible articles were those that did not relate to the civilian experience in the conflict zones. Any article that did not meet the previous criteria was considered ineligible.

In the course of a more extensive screening procedure that took into account predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria, various and several publications were revealed to be associated with the civilian experiences in conflict settings, as previously stated table 1 lists when these articles were published, as well as their chronological order. One article was published in 2015, followed by four in 2017, and three in 2018. However, even though the year 2016 was covered, there was a decrease in civilian experiences studies in comparison to 2017. Many studies have proposed numerous dimensions and traits to evaluate civilians' experiences, and the list continues to grow. Table 1 presents some of these patterns of civilians' experiences.

**Table 1 Related literature about civilians' experiences**

<b>Years&amp; authors</b>	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>data sources</b>	<b>Methods</b>	<b>Main results</b>
(Guha-Sapir, Schlüter, Rodriguez-Llanes, Lillywhite, & Hicks, 2018)	To depict the demographic data and direct causes of death in Syria	Records from Violation Documentation Center (VDC) in Syria.	X <sup>2</sup> method to timely analysis of civilians' ways of death. The period started in 3/ 18/2011 To 12/ 31/ 2016.	The center documented 143630 instances of unintentional death. Syrian civilian casualties account for a disproportionately large share (706 percent) of total casualties in comparison to combatants (294 percent).
(Lafta, Cetorelli, Burnham, & health, 2018)	to uncover the kinds of civilian lives that were impacted by the IS in Mosul, Iraq.	Data were collected through a two-stage 40 cluster survey, with 30 households per cluster. Clusters were located randomly in selected administrative units, designated here as "neighborhoods"	Survey	This study examines the effects on households of ISIS's authority over east and west Mosul, respectively, over a 31–36-month period. Throughout this historical period, the people, the social structure, and children's education have all experienced significant harm.
(Joshi & Quinn, 2017)	To analyze why insurgents and the government were targeting civilians from 1996-2006.	Informal Sector Service Center (INSEC) in Nepal	Survey and interview	This was the first study to do a comparison of those people who had been killed by rebels or the government in the context of Nepal.
(Frounfelker et al., 2018)	To explore the military hospitals targeting in Afghanistan	international humanitarian law database	Legal Matters description	To help ensure the delivery of necessary medical attention, we need to ensure that it is clear that all health-care facilities are protected.
(Koren, O., 2017)	To ascertain why, between 1996 and 2009, the majority of attacks against civilians occurred in capital cities.	Using new geolocated global atrocities data	Coarsened Exact score Matching (CEM) and Zero inflated negative binomial (ZINB) regressions	According to this research, a racial or separatist struggle in a country's capital is more likely to cause atrocities than other conflicts.

Years& authors	Objectives	data sources	Methods	Main results
(Staněk, M. 2017)	To draw attention to Syria's humanitarian catastrophe and its impact on immigration to Europe	Documents, reports, statistical from United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), European Commission For Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection	content analysis	According to the data cited in this paper, Syria's current humanitarian calamity is severe, and all parties to the country's armed conflict often violate international humanitarian law. While this law can benefit war victims, it falls short of effectively protecting them..
(Porter, H. E. 2017)	To investigate the reactions to rape in northern Uganda.	Participant observation and in-depth interviews with a random sample of 187 women from two Acholi communities during a three-year period	Interview	It demonstrates how rape experiences and the suffering they inflict are founded on perceptions of wrongdoing about threats to societal stability.
(Çelikel, et, al., 2015)	To examine the demographics and injuries of Syrian children who died in Turkey while receiving treatment during the Syrian Civil War..	Postmortem examination and autopsy reports of 985 forensic deaths from Hatay - a Syrian neighborhood city of Turkey-between January 2012 and August 2014 were analyzed retrospectively.	Anatomy	Syria's Civil War has killed many children. A very high shortened injury scale and injury severity score. The majority of the children we reviewed perished from head and neck injuries from bombing strikes, with fatal cerebral haemorrhages and parenchymal injuries.

### Evaluation Methods of Pattern Civilian Experiences

Numerous studies have offered a variety of characteristics and dimensions for evaluating the entire civilian experience. A study by (Guha-sapir et,al.,2018) attempted to analyze and evaluate the causes of death during the conflict in Syria. The main source of data for the evaluation was from Violation Documentation Center (VDC) in Syria. The X2 approach is used to analyze the causes of death in people in real-time. The center registered a total of 143630 occurrences of death by natural causes. Comparing the rate of Syrian civilian casualties to the rate of combatant casualties (29.4%), the rate of civilian casualties in Syria is significantly higher (70.6%). Another study by (Frounfelker et al., 2018) revealed that a military hospital was targeted in Afghanistan by American areophane. The study concluded that in the process of establishing safe zones to protect the wounded and sick, it is important to highlight that these zones must be respected in order to ensure that vitally needed medical care may be delivered to those who need it the most without fear of being attacked. In the same context of the civilian experiences, a study by (Çelikel, et, al., 2015) was conducted to determine demographic information and injury characteristics of Syrian children who were wounded during the Syrian Civil War and died while receiving treatment in Turkey. The data was collected from January 2012 to August 2014, 985 forensic deaths from Hatay, Turkey's Syrian neighborhood city, were examined and autopsy reports were compiled. The data were evaluated retrospectively. The findings indicated that a large number of children have died as a result of the Syrian Civil War. Their average condensed injury scale and injury severity score values were extremely high. Furthermore, the majority of the children we reviewed died as a result of head and neck injuries, which were primarily caused by bombing strikes. Autopsies of the children revealed fatal cerebral hemorrhages as well as parenchymal lesions. Another scenario comes from a study by (Porter, H. E. 2017). The investigation was carried out to examines northern Ugandans' responses to rape. Three years of observation and in-depth conversations with 187 women

from Acholi tribes. The results highlighted how many acts of rape and the negative consequences they generate are rooted in conceptions of moral misconduct. A study by (Koren, O., 2017) focused on the reasons behind targeting civilian in most conflicts that occur in capitals cities. The newly geolocated datasets on global tragedies were used in the study as a source of data. According to the findings of the study, racial and separatist wars are more likely than other conflicts to lead to atrocities in the nation's capital.

Staněk, M. (2017) carried out a study to draw attention to Syria's humanitarian catastrophe and its impact on immigration to Europe. The data were gathered from United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) documents, reports, and statistics, as well as from the European Commission for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection. According to the analysis carried out by the sources on which this study is based, Syria's current humanitarian calamity is severe, and all parties involved in the country's armed conflict are guilty of flagrant violations of international humanitarian law on a regular basis. Although this law can be of assistance to war victims, it is unable to provide them with enough protection. In addition to being the biggest humanitarian disaster in modern history, the humanitarian crisis in Syria is also related to the problem of conformity with international humanitarian law as a result of the ongoing civil conflict, which further exacerbates the crisis. Another study by (Joshi, M., & Quinn, 2017) evaluated the disastrous civilian experiences in Nepal between the period targeted by the rebels or government in the period of 1996 to 2006. The results of the focus group interview and survey revealed that among its many accomplishments, the study was the first to establish a comparison between civilians slain by rebels and the government in fighting and non-combatting areas in the context of Nepal. Lafta, et, al., (2018) carried out a study to explore the civilian experience in Mosul city during ISIS occupation to the city. Two-stage surveys of 40 clusters were conducted, with 30 households in each cluster, and the results were analyzed. Clusters were placed at random within specified administrative units, which are referred to as "neighborhoods" in the study. This study explores the effects on households of ISIS's control of the east and west Mosul over 31–36 months, respectively. During this period, significant damage is done to lives, communities' social structures, and children's education. During this period, significant damage was done to lives, communities' social structures, and children's education. The struggle to retake Mosul from ISIS has exacerbated misery among Mosul households through the destruction and damage to buildings, continued deterioration of utilities, and a scarcity of cooking fuel.

## **Discussion**

The total number of civilian fatalities of war and conflict is staggering in terms of emotional and bodily toll. Numerous international agencies have issued on-the-spot evaluation reports on civilian victims and their experiences in conflict circumstances in various regions of the world through studies undertaken in collaboration with research organizations. Basically, experience as a phenomenon entails involvement with or familiarity with objects or events (OED, 1989). In questions about humans, we must have context since our approach to our perception is derived in two ways: from the individual and from the item being observed. The primary focus of this study is on victims' perceived views with regard to conflict situations, with the goal of identifying and evaluating the most important concerns surrounding the topic. An umbrella notion with various dimensions, all of which are aimed at explaining the real observation of facts or occurrences, which is regarded as a source of knowledge within humans, is represented by the term "experience." Many individuals find it hard to live in a state of constant war and have no one who can really understand their circumstances except other people who are in the same position. As a result, it is incredibly difficult for people to visit and see what life is like for those who live in conflict zones. Experience can also be defined as research conducted over a specific period or more broadly regarding the life of an individual. Due to the inherent differences between people, it's natural for two people to have divergent experiences when viewing the same phenomena.

Additionally, the experience might vary by place; for example, a victim's experience of conflict in Africa may differ from a victim's experience of conflict in Asia. This is true when examining the experience of civilians in Syria; most of them experienced bombing barrels which is unique and scarce in another part of the world. While in Africa, particularly in Uganda, the rape issue is a catastrophic civilian experience against the women there (Porter, H. E. 2017). Capital cities were in the middle of this scenario, as mentioned above, and civilians were still in the eddy of these conflicts.

Nevertheless, It's critical to distinguish between civilians and combatants in this situation. Consider International Humanitarian Law's Customary Rule 6, headed "Civilians' Loss of Protection from Attack," which declares that civilians are protected from attack "unless and for such time as they take a direct part in hostilities". This rule becomes a standard of customary international law via practice, making it relevant to global and non-international military actions. For the period that they are actively engaged in war, civilians, according to numerous military manuals, are not shielded from assault when they are directly involved in hostilities and can therefore become valid military targets (Frounfelker et al., 2018).

## Conclusion

Militant activities against millions of conflict-affected civilians have taken place every day for the past 20 years, as well as in the years before that. As long as there is no urgent action to deal with the core challenge of improving and securing respect for international humanitarian law and international human rights law, particularly in the conduct of hostilities, they will continue for another 20 years and possibly longer. Every month, hundreds of civilians are killed, injured, or maimed as a result of the failure of warring parties to exercise constant caution in the conduct of military operations and to take all reasonable precautions to avoid or at the very least minimize civilian casualties sets off a downward spiral that results in the displacement of thousands of more people forced to flee their homes, communities, and countries. There are various difficulties in establishing the number of casualties in the battle zone because of the direct and indirect consequences of the conflict. Overall, the experience can be categorized into a variety of categories, including physical experience, mental experience, emotional experience, spiritual experience, religious experience, social experience, and subjective experience. Physical experience is the most obvious category to consider. While it is true that all parts of existence have experienced qualities that can be acquired, we are specifically interested in conflict experience as a product of social experiences arising from human interaction in this study. Whereas research in the Syrian setting got the highest rating in the evaluated literature, there are significant gaps in the literature in Iraq and other parts of the world that require further examination. The current study recommend the concerned authorities such as the international law and international humanitarians organizations to put an effective plan and take real measures towards protect and minimize the civilians casualties during the conflict.

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