



AN OVERVIEW OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS OF VULNERABLE GROUPS IN CONFLICT-SETTINGS: CURRENT TRENDS AND PATTERNS

The EU current legal framework provides that respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is a core value and legal obligation of the EU and it guides Union actions in the international scene. Accordingly, the general provisions on the EU's external action (Title V of the Treaty on the European Union) have mandated the EU to «consolidate and support democracy, the rule of law, human rights and the principles of international law», on the one hand, and to «preserve peace, prevent conflicts and strengthen international security», on the other hand. As part of the external action of the EU, CSDP operations should be used for «peace-keeping, conflict prevention and strengthening international security». The Strategic Framework and Action Plan for Human Rights and Democracy, adopted by the Council on 25 June 2012, urges to «reflect human rights in conflict prevention and crisis management activities», specifically by means of «systematically include human rights, child protection, gender equality- and IHL where relevant - in the mandates of EU missions and operations».

Since the first EU crisis management operation in 2003, best practices have been identified on incorporating human rights and gender considerations in planning and implementation. However, it is necessary to develop a more systematic focus on human rights in the EU's conflict prevention, crisis management and peace building efforts. Particularly, there is little mention of the role that human rights play within EU policies and how human rights protection can also be seen as part of a wider goal of conflict prevention and contribute to the effectiveness of CSDP operations.

Against this backdrop, this paper aims at providing an overview of human rights violations of vulnerable groups in violent conflict and crisis settings under a broad understanding of the term «conflict». Regarding the focus on human rights violations of particularly vulnerable groups in conflict/crisis-settings, this paper provides a specific focus on the list of vulnerable groups which has been identified in the EU Strategic Framework and Plan of Action and in EU conflict/crisis management policies: namely, children, women, refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) and indigenous peoples.

As regards the methodology, this essay follows a hybrid approach, mixing disciplinary approaches, policy and legal analyses, and provides data compiled by existing databases and human rights reports. In particular, several illustrations of current data on patterns, perpetrators and trends of serious human rights violations committed against selected vulnerable groups are provided. On those bases, some preliminary conclusions and recommendations are on the complex interaction between human rights

violations and conflict and on the surveyed patterns, perpetrators and trends of serious human rights violations committed against selected vulnerable groups.