

## **6th Committee - Legal**

**EGMUN 2015**

### **Marcus Engvall - Main Chair**

*The use of military equipment on civilians within their own nation*

Civilian casualties in conflicts are not a new phenomenon. Estimates for civilian deaths during the second World War reach around 50 million in total, and indeed this phenomenon has not subsided in the modern age, with the Syrian Civil War being a prime example with around 80,000 civilian deaths. Unfortunately, modern warfare has not excluded the possibility of a substantial amount of civilian deaths, and preventing the use of weapons on civilians should be a top priority for countries worldwide as mandated by several international agreements, among them the **Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court**.

While the Rome Statute mandates the **International Criminal Court** to try war crimes, it's important to note that civilian collateral in a conflict is not strictly a war crime. War crimes occur when there is an *intention* to harm civilians, not if deaths are a consequence of *military necessity*.

Military doctrines usually account for civilian deaths due to their inherent inability to prevent them. For example, achieving the primary objective of disabling an antagonists command and control structure may require the precision bombing of a major population center, creating the risk of civilian collateral. Accounting for this includes developing advanced **precision-guided munitions**, allowing for **surgical strikes** that minimize the loss of civilian life.

Some member states have also signed several conventions relating to the use of particularly dangerous weapons, **weapons of mass destruction**. The **Chemical Weapons Convention** signed in 1993 bans the use of chemical weapons, and the **Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons** signed in 1968 prevents the spread of nuclear weapons in the world. Weapons of mass destruction are particularly dangerous to civilians due to their destructive force, which will in almost all cases affect civilians heavily. Primary targets for strategic nuclear weapons are usually population centers as they are vital to the economy of a country, and the capability of these weapons to completely destroy a city raises an important issue on the ethical aspects of weapons of mass destruction.

Ultimately the usage of military weapons on civilians is almost entirely dependent on the military strategy of a given country. Prohibiting weapons only go so far if national military doctrine is different in aims. Indeed this does not only apply to international conflicts between states, but also campaigns against armed insurgencies within countries. Member states may need to consider both the non-proliferation of particularly dangerous munitions, but also the various strategies employed by armed forces worldwide.