

Impact of Iran-Iraq War on Iranian Children

Nasrin Mosaffa *

Professor of International Relations, University of Tehran, Tehran,
Iran.

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Abstract

The devastating Iran - Iraq war was the longest war of the 20 century, that also affected Iranian children from Sep 1980 to August 1988, suffering immediate or subsequent physical, mental, sociological and economic impacts. The focus of this paper is children's victimisation as there are thousands of them killed, injured, captured as prisoners of war, acts that all are now categorised as grave violations of children rights during armed conflicts by the UN. To highlight the extent of these violations and their consequences, this study investigate 'war of cities' with missile attacks on Iranian cities, schools and hospital. Despite existence legal framework for protection the children in International Humanitarian Law and other documents, United Nations failed to positive action to protect them even as a moral imperative. Study will also recount stories of children affected by chemical weapons and remaining mines in western Iran, that still killing them.

Keywords: Children, Iran, Iraq, Iran-Iraq War

Introduction

Thirty years after a devastating eight-year war between Iran and Iraq, various attempts have been made to study its effects on the Middle East

* Corresponding author's e-mail: nmosaffa@ut.ac.ir

and the Persian Gulf region, and on broader themes of international relations and security.¹ The emphasis of focusing on the political and military elements of the war is justified by its nature and consequences; however, a socio-legal and political analysis of how civilians, especially children, were affected by this war, in both the short and long term, is missing. This article offers an examination of the impacts of the Iran-Iraq war on Iranian children, both during and after the war, as a contribution towards developing that analysis. To date, remarkably, there has been little focus on studying the humanitarian consequences of the war, specifically the children. In addition, the role and/or neglect of the United Nations is also discussed. The other concern of paper, is in spite of legal framework for protecting the children in International Humanitarian Law and related documents, United Nations failed to protect them, even as a moral imperative.

First, this article provides a background to the war itself and the general Iranian perception of the war. The rest of the article deals with reporting on and examining the role of Iranian children as part of a population supporting the war and being involved in defending the mother land, and as victims and witnesses. However, the article will not focus on the role of the children at war, as that would require extensive religious, legal, and political discussions that extend beyond the objectives and scope of this article. Given the nature of the Iran-Iraq war, its long duration, and the deliberate targeting of urban areas (hence the appellation “War of the Cities”), there are several examples of direct

¹ Razoux, P., *The Iran-Iraq War*, Translated by Nicholas Elliott; Cambridge, MA, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press; 2015.

attack on cities and premises such as schools and hospital.² This war compares to the First World War on many grounds, specifically the use of attacks on civilian targets and use of chemical weapons on Civilian.

Instances of attacks on cities and premises leading to the victimisation of children or incidents affecting them include: killing and maiming; attacks against schools or hospitals; abduction of children; rape and other grave sexual abuse of children, all of which have now been recognised by the United Nations Security Council as grave violations against children in armed conflict.³ However, it was only in the 1990s that the protection of children in armed conflict was prioritised on the global agenda and the UN Security Council framework drawn up⁴—a framework that did not exist during the Iran-Iraq war. The second section of this article use this framework retrospectively, not for reaching a legal conclusion, but for a better understanding of the dynamics of the conflict, and to highlight the lack of protection for children in armed conflict in that era despite the existence of legal documents such as the framework of the Geneva Conventions I-IV (1949) and its Additional Protocols (1977) and the UN General Assembly Resolution 2318 (December 1974) on the Protection of Women and Children in Armed Conflict. The framework

2 See below, despite its negligence of the issue of children during this war: Tavernier, Paul, 'Combatants and Non-Combatants' in Dekker, I. F., Post, H. G., eds., *The Gulf War of 1980-1988: The Iran-Iraq War in International Legal Perspective*, Nederlands Instituut voor Sociaal en Economisch Recht: Brill, 1992.

3 Recruitment or use of children and denial of humanitarian access to children are two other grave violations against children during armed conflict. However, the first element is not discussed as it goes beyond the objective of this paper, and the second one is not discussed as there are not enough reliable data and information on it. Reference https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/publications/WorkingPaper-1_SixGraveViolationsLegalFoundation.pdf

4 See UNSC Resolution 1539 of 2004.

is further enriched by outlining Islamic norms and values relating to children and armed conflicts, as both belligerents were Muslim states.

The next section will focus on the long-term impacts of the war on Iranian children, those present during the war or those born after it but suffering from its effects. These impacts are categorised into a) those affecting the personal health and safety of the child, and b) those affecting standards of living. This section also serves as a survey of the long-term impacts of the war on Iran's infrastructure and its society, as they are interwoven with grasping the magnitude of war and also its ramifications for children, with regards to IHL and later considered in the Convention for the Rights of the Child 1989.

Background

On 22 September 1980, Iraqi forces initiated multiple and simultaneous attacks by air and land forces with the objective of invading Iran, following a protracted history of border disputes and in the political context of the Iranian Islamic Revolution in 1979. The usual chaos that follows any revolution in any country was a factor in Iraq's initial advances, but a massive flow of volunteers assisting the armed forces formed a voluntary force that fought until the end of the war. The reaction of the Iranian population should be understood not only in the sense of patriotism and desire to defend the country, but the religious belief of the necessity to defend Islam and the state upholding its values and rulings. Regarding the war as "holy" and calling it "sacred defence" typifies the religious approach of Iranians towards this war. However,

to Iranians it is known as the “imposed war” because Iraq initiated it.⁵ Through this perspective and empowered by Islamic thoughts, those killed during the war are known as “martyrs,” and, in today’s Iran, their children are called “children of martyrs.”

The war claimed the lives of at least 200,000 Iranian combatants, and over 16000 civilians, with more than 500,000 injured.⁶ Iranian children were victims, witnesses, and, in some cases, warriors in this war, directly or indirectly. While a significant number of children⁷ voluntarily went to fight, a small number were forced to fight as Iraqi forces invaded their towns and going house-by-house.⁸

Impact During the War

Every war affects the population of the country directly or indirectly. Children are more vulnerable to the effects of war. The context of growing up during a war, being witness to attacks, killings, and suffering, or themselves being killed or injured are just some of the sufferings that children can experience during the war. During the Iran-Iraq war, children were killed and maimed, through conventional or

5 Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, the United Nations Secretary-General, reported that Iraq’s attack against Iran was an “aggression” and “cannot be justified under the charter of the United Nations, any recognized rules and principles of international law, or any principles of international morality, and entails the responsibility for the conflict.”

6 -, “Iran-Iraq War (1980–1988).” *GlobalSecurity.org*. Available at: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/iran-iraq.htm>. Accessed on 28 April 2013.

7 The age of childhood is a topic of significant debate in Islamic countries, as evident in reservations to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 1 of this Convention recognises a child as an individual above the age of eighteen years.

8 Doroudian, Mohammad, *From the beginning to the end: a review of political and military events of the war from the background of Iraq’s aggression to ceasefire*. Tehran: Center for Documents and Researches of the Sacred Defense, (2012).

unconventional means, their schools were attacked, some were subject to rape and other grave forms of sexual violence, and some were abducted. Before we review the victimisation of Iranian children during Iran- Iraq in lights of 6 grave volitions of Children rights during armed conflicts , we examine protection for children under international humanitarian law and UN resolutions.

Protection for Children under International Humanitarian Law⁹

In terms of more general human rights law and humanitarian law, protection mechanisms for children in armed conflict can be found within the framework of the Geneva Conventions I-IV (1949), the UN General Assembly Resolution 2318 (December 1974) on the protection of women and children in armed conflict, and the Geneva Protocols (1977).

Of course, other UN documents are also relevant to the protection of children, but an exhaustive examination of all relevant guidelines is beyond the scope of this article, and thus we examine only those documents mentioned.

Common Article 3 of the Geneva Convention makes general provisions regarding the conditions of the protection of all people not involved in armed conflict. It calls for governments to ensure they have access to humane treatment and are protected from violence and threats to their life. There are also a number of articles in Convention IV that

⁹ This section is taken from the author's previous studies on Children and Armed Conflicts, and applied here: Mosaffa, N. (2011). Does the Covenant on the Rights of the Child in Islam Provide Adequate Protection for Children Affected by Armed Conflicts?. *Muslim World Journal of Human Rights*, 8(1), pp. -. Retrieved 7 Oct. 2018, from doi:10.2202/1554-4419.1220.

clearly refer to children.¹⁰ For example, Article 17 states, 'The Parties to the conflict shall endeavour to conclude local agreements for the removal from besieged or encircled areas, of wounded, sick, infirm, and aged persons, children and maternity cases, and for the passage of ministers of all religions, medical personnel and medical equipment on their way to such areas'. Article 23 also mentions children specifically: 'Each High Contracting Party shall allow the free passage of all consignments of medical and hospital stores and objects necessary for religious worship intended only for civilians of another High Contracting Party, even if the latter is its adversary. It shall likewise permit the free passage of all consignments of essential foodstuffs, clothing and tonics intended for children under fifteen, expectant mothers and maternity cases'.

Article 38, paragraph 2 notes, 'they [children under fifteen, expectant mothers and maternity cases] shall, if their of health so requires, receive medical attention and hospital treatment to the same extent as the nationals of the State concerned'. Moreover, Article 50 states, 'The Occupying Power shall, with the cooperation of the national and local authorities, facilitate the proper working of all institutions devoted to the care and education of children. The Occupying Power shall take all necessary steps to facilitate the identification of children and the registration of their parentage. It may not, in any case, change their personal status, nor enlist them in formations of organizations subordinate to it'.

10 At the time of adoptions of the Geneva convention, the age of a child was undefined; however, forty years later, Article 1 of the CRC defined a child as 'every human being below the age of 18 years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier'. It is worth noting that some Islamic countries disagree with this designated age, although a discussion of this is outside the remit of this pap

Convention IV is specifically concerned with the protection of civilians during periods of war, and among the provisions outlined therein is that children younger than fifteen, expectant mothers, and maternity cases receive extra food to ensure their specific nutritional requirements are met. Throughout Convention IV, children younger than fifteen are afforded preferential treatment, as can be seen in article 89 as well as others.¹¹

The 1977 Geneva Protocols, written almost 30 years after Convention IV to account for gaps in the Geneva Conventions and to more closely reflect changes in conflict patterns, pays particular attention to children' clearly asserts in its first paragraph, 'Children shall be the object of special respect and shall be protected against any form of indecent assault. The Parties to the conflict shall provide them with the care and aid they require, whether because of their age or for any other reason'. Paragraph 2 addresses the relationship between armed conflict and the age of children in the following statement: 'The Parties to the conflict shall take all feasible measures in order that children who have not attained the age of fifteen years do not take a direct part in hostilities and, in particular, they shall refrain from recruiting them into their armed forces. In recruiting among those persons who have attained the age of fifteen years but who have not attained the age of eighteen years the Parties to the conflict shall endeavor to give priority to those who are oldest'.

Article 78 of Protocol I states, 'No Party to the conflict shall arrange for the evacuation of children, other than its own nationals, to a foreign country except for a temporary evacuation where compelling reasons

¹¹ A survey of the different levels of protection afforded to different under-18 age groups is covered by Mary- Jane Fox 2005. Published by Berkeley Electronic Press, 2011.

of the health or medical treatment of the children or, except in occupied territory, their safety, so require. Where the parents or legal guardians can be found, their written consent to such evacuation is required'. Of even greater significance is Part II of Protocol II, entitled Humane Treatment, Article 4(3),(c), which states that 'children who have not attained the age of fifteen years shall neither be recruited in the armed forces or groups nor allowed to take part in hostilities...'

Along with the important documents mentioned above, some attention must also be given to the UN General Assembly Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict.¹² Although General Assembly resolutions and declarations not binding, this declaration stands out as a strongly articulated and comprehensive statement that received significant attention and was widely discussed. In its preamble, the document expresses 'deep concern over the sufferings of women and children belonging to the civilian population who in periods of emergency and armed conflict in the struggle for peace, self-determination, national liberation and independence are too often the victims of inhuman acts and consequently suffer serious harm'. It goes on to state, 'Women and children belonging to the civilian population and finding themselves in circumstances of emergency and armed conflict in the struggle for peace, self-determination, national liberation and independence, or who live in occupied territories, shall not be deprived of shelter, food, medical aid or other inalienable rights, in accordance with the

¹² See 'Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict', GA resolution 3318 (XXIX) of 14 December 1974.

provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Declaration of the Rights of the Child or other instruments of international law'.¹³

The declaration also clarifies that 'All States shall abide fully by their obligations under the Geneva Protocol of 1925 and the Geneva Conventions of 1949, as well as other instruments of international law relative to respect for human rights in armed conflicts, which offer important guarantees for the protection of women and children'. One particular resolution was issued following an increase in wars of independence in the 1960s and 1970s, and the unfortunate effects these struggles had on women and children.

These documents provide adequate protection of Iranian Children in war, that even in that time the Iraq should have respected it. The only instance where the United Nations Security Council explicitly calls for respecting the IHL in order to protect the civilian population is in resolution 540 that even fails to clearly mention children.¹⁴

Grave Violations Against Iranian Children During War Killing and Maiming

One of the main features of the Iran-Iraq war was that it was not limited to frontier areas but expanded to cities by missile attacks or aerial bombardment of residential, civilian, commercial, and cultural sites,

13 *ibid*

14 UN Security Council, Security Council resolution 540 (1983) [Iraq-Islamic Republic of Iran], 31 October 1983, S/RES/540 (1983), available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3b00f16b1c.html> [accessed 7 October 2018].

from which this war is known as the “war of cities.” A natural consequence of expanding the battlefield to civilian areas is making civilians more vulnerable to death or injury. In only the first six months of the war, four hundred and thirteen attacks were conducted against Iranian cities, and, by 1984, 4,600 civilians had been killed and more than 2200 injured, many of them children.¹⁵ Such attacks happened despite explicit proscription by international humanitarian law, and “... the Islamic concept of humanitarian law [setting] special protection measures for some civilian groups such as children”¹⁶

An attack on residential sites in Kermanshah,¹⁷ in the western part of Iran, killed 131 people, of whom many were children. Other attacks on Dezful, Lorestan, Ahvaz, and other provinces resulted in the killing of hundreds of children in the first year of the war. One of the significant examples of the killing of children was the attack on Iran Air passenger flight number 655 by a US Navy missile strike, which led to the martyrdom of all 290 individuals on board, sixty-six of them under 12 years of age, eight of them being under the age of two.¹⁸ This attack is a rare example in the history of warfare, breaching ethical and legal boundaries and laws of the war. United State deployed her forces to

15 Yahyavi, Seyed Hussein, “War of Cities,” in *Negin-e-Iran* (The Specialized Quarterly on Sacred Defense) 10.36 (Spring 2011), 25–39; UNSC Mission to Inspection Civilian areas in Iran and Iraq which have been subject to military attack: report of SG (S/5834) 20 June 1983.

16 Mohaghegh Damad, S., *International Humanitarian Law: An Islamic Approach*. Tehran: Center for Publication of Islamic Studies (2003), 110–113.

17 Persian: کرمانشاه, Kermānshāh

18 On 3 July 1988, Iran Air Flight 655 was shot down by a US Navy guided missile. The Americans claimed that the crew incorrectly identified the Iranian Airbus as a fighter jet. For more, see Aerial Incident of 3 July 1988 (Islamic Republic of Iran v. United States of America) ICJ. Available from <http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/?p1=3&p2=3&k=9c&case=79&code=irus&p3=1> > Accessed on 30 May 2013.

the region, as result of the war. Second, there was and still is a perception of U.S. involvement during the war.

Iraq also used chemical weapons against Iranian cities, which led to the deaths of scores of civilians, many of them children. For example, on 28 June 1987, the county of Sardasht¹⁹ in the northwest of Iran came under chemical attack through the release of mustard gas. People were not familiar with the procedures and measures to be taken against those attacks. Many of them escaped from the zones but there are reports of mothers staying to protect their children. Statistics released soon after the attack suggested that most of those who died were young children with respiratory problems. It must be noted that, due to weather conditions of significant wind which spread the radius of chemicals in the air and transferred them, even hospitals were affected, therefore making rapid treatment impossible. Hundreds were killed and more than eight thousand people were poisoned as a result of this attack. Sardasht was subject to a further five chemical attacks. Another example of chemical attack is the attack on the village of Zarde²⁰ in Kermanshah province in western Iran, when people were gathered to mark a religious festival. The village lost 30% of its inhabitants. Reports on the day of the attack suggest that five children under ten years of age died immediately.

Sa'aadolah Azimi²¹ was twelve years old at the time of the attack. He did not die but witnessed the deaths of his friends and family members.

19 Persian: سردشت

20 Persian: زرده

21 Some media reports cite his family name as *Azami*, but the one most used is used in this article.

“I was really interested in continuing my studies and wanted to pursue them further, but the attack, diseases, and the pain have incapacitated me. I dropped out in the second year of my guidance school,” he said.²² This account emphasizes that the consequences of chemical attacks were not only the deaths of children, but the suffering of being contaminated too. Chemical attacks also affected unborn children through the deaths of pregnant mothers or their being forced to have abortions.²³

A group of United Nations inspectors described their observation of the situation following a chemical attack on the city of *Piranshahr*²⁴ as follows:

We have witnessed the effects of the mustard gas on a family living in a village, especially the mother and her daughters of two and four years old. We witnessed a dreadful death of a four-year-old child from two hours before his death. We saw the rightful effects of the mustard gas on a four-month pregnant mother.²⁵

Witnesses of the invasion of Susangerd in Khuzestan province recount memories of old men and women, and mothers with their

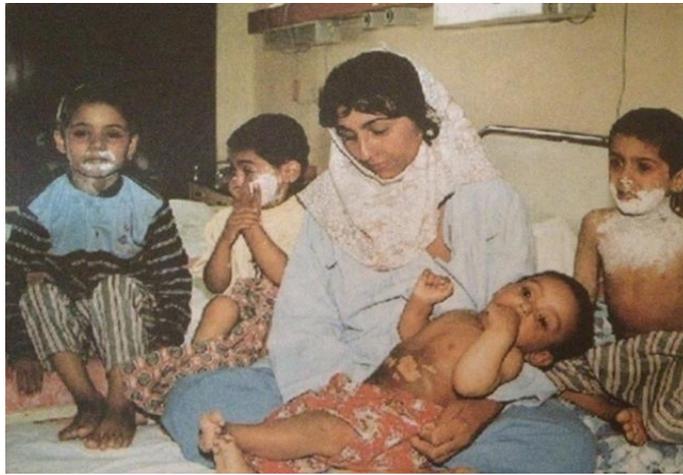
22 Omid, Yazdan, “A report on the situation of injuries of the chemical attack on Zarde: Darken eyes and painful hearts, seeking the angel of death.” *Yazd-e-Farda* (2008). Available at <http://www.yazdfarda.com/news/1392/03/12312.html>. Accessed on 4 April 2013. See also SAJED, “Chemical Bombardment of Zarde,” *Ensani* (2006). Available from <http://ensani.ir/fa/content/80099/default.aspx>.

23 Scientific Institute of Science and Education of Sacred Defense, “A review of the consequences of the application of chemical weapons to women and their children.” Available at <http://www.dsrc.ir/view/article.aspx?id=1045>. Accessed on July 2011.

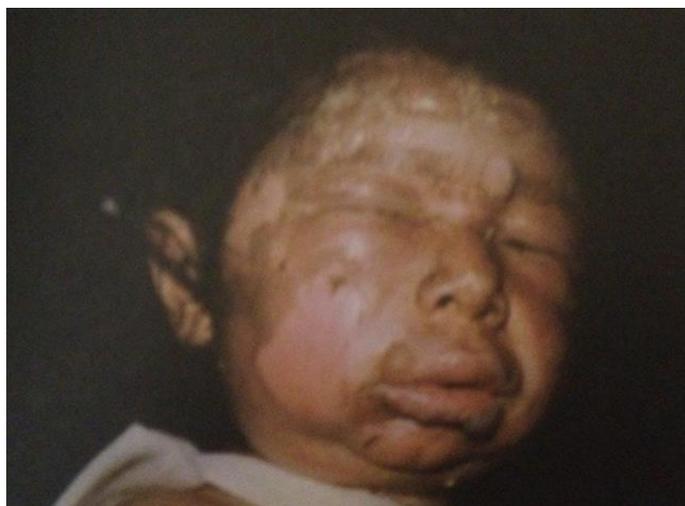
24 Persian: پیران شهر

25 Fuzi, Yahya, “Application of Chemical Weapons by Iraq,” *Quarterly of the History of War* 16. Available at http://www.aviny.com/Occasion/enghelab_jang/defaemoghaddas/84/selah-shimyaie.aspx.

infants or older children, being gathered in the main square of the town in front of a tank which later shot at them, “tearing them apart into pieces.”²⁶ Furthermore, there are cases where Iraqi officers have guided children to minefields and asked them to walk into them. Attacks on cities included numerous instances of both conventional and chemical bombardment of schools and hospitals in direct contradiction with International Humanitarian Law.



26 Sarhangi, Morteza, *The Secrets of the imposed war, narrated by Iraqi PoWs. Volume 2.* (Tehran: Hoze Honari, 1990).



The Aftermath of the Chemical Attack on Sardasht

Source: Nikkhah Bahrami, Mohammad Bagher. *War crimes: Iraq chemical attack in war with Iran*. Tehran: Center for Documents and Researches of the Sacred Defense, 2012. Print.

Attack on schools and hospitals

The Iraqi invasion of Iran started on 22 September 1980, the eve of the new Iranian academic year. The timing disrupted the start of the academic year and placed a physical and psychological burden on the country, the education system, and its students. However, this was not the only impact of the war on schools and students. For example, an aerial bombardment of a school in *Behbahan*, in Khuzestan province, killed 69 students and 5 of their school employees, leaving 130 students and 11 teachers injured and the building completely destroyed. However, there are discrepancies about the details in some cases, such as in this attack. Another source claims that the school had 328 students,

of whom 84 were killed and 200 students injured. The remaining 44 students were unaccounted for. During the invasion of Khoramshahr in the west of Iran, about one hundred schools and four hospitals were attacked and destroyed, which led to the martyrdom of scores of children.²⁷

On 1 February 1987, Iraqi forces attacked two schools in *Miyana*, in the East Azerbaijan province of Iran. One of the schools was called “*Zeynabieh*,” situated near hospitals and major governmental buildings such as a revolutionary guard building. *Zeynabieh* was an important and well-known school as its students had organized various actions to contribute to the frontier, such as knitting clothes for soldiers, cooking food, or packing nuts and sending them to the border areas labeled “*Zeynabieh High School*.” One of the reasons cited for the attack on this school is that “Iraqi forces saw the labels and thought that *Zeynabieh* was a military base.” However, repeated attacks such as one against another school in *Miyana*, named “*Fatematollzahra*,” challenges such an assumption. More than thirty students were killed in these attacks. It should be noted that the day before the attacks, there were rumors about such a possibility; however, they were not taken seriously by either authorities or students.

In 10 January 1987, following the Iranian Karbala-5 Operation,²⁸ Iraq returned to conducting war on the cities by launching missiles against two schools in rural Borujerd, killing 60 people as students were lined up in the courtyard to go back to their classes. One of these schools was “*Shahid Fayazbakhsh*,” a specialized school for deaf students who

27 Sarhangi, Morteza, *The Secrets of the imposed war, narrated by Iraqi PoWs. Volume 2.* (Tehran: Hoze Honari, 1990).

28 The operation was an offensive campaign by Iran with the objective of capturing the Iraqi port city of Basra, a campaign marked by extensive casualties and difficult conditions.

could have not heard sirens giving warning of the attack. Attacks on schools demonstrate the broader picture of how children's rights (such as the right to education) were violated during the war. By the end of the war, Iraq had attacked 162 schools across Iran, killing 728 students.²⁹ Given the context of the war and its consequences, normally the education system would be paralyzed, but in the case of the Iran-Iraq war, it was further affected by direct attacks on schools, against the humanitarian principle of distinction.

Abduction

Another impact of the Iran-Iraq war on Iranian children was their capture as prisoners of war. As well as combatants, Iraq also captured civilians living in invaded areas. For example, children and women who could not leave the town of Soomar in Kermanshah, were abducted on 24 September 1980. The abduction of children and their forced removal to other areas were the regular practice of the Iraqi forces in occupied areas, contrary to existing norms.³⁰ There are cases of captured individuals not being returned even after the end of the conflict. Studying child combatants who were captured requires additional analysis, as mentioned earlier.³¹

29 Personal interview.

30 Fried, J.H.E., "Transfer of Civilian Manpower from Occupied Territory," AJIL 40 (1946), 307-8.

31 For an example of a child combatant PoW, see "The confrontation of *Adnan Kheirollah* with the little soldier of Imam," *Iranian Student News Agency*, April 2013. Available at <http://isna.ir/fa/news/92021408815/سر‌باز-با-خیرالله-عدنان-رویارویی>. Accessed on 28 April 2013.

Rape and other grave sexual abuse of children

With Iraq organizing a ground invasion and attacks against Iranian territories, it was not only members of the armed forces but civilians as well who confronted the Iraqi soldiers. One of the most notable issues arising from the ground invasions was rape and sexual assault by Iraqi forces. Studies relying on the testimony of witnesses suggest that rape and sexual assault were part of the “war strategy of Iraq.”³² For example, in the case of the invasion of Susangerd, one of the Iraqi officers named Karim Fazel (from Divaniye in Iraq) told his soldiers “I’ve heard girls from Susangerd are beautiful.”³³ There are reports of girls and women being raped in Susangerd and if they showed resistance, they were killed and dismembered.

A particularly shocking story involves two girls aged eight and nine years old:

“... [In Susangerd] officers were patrolling the town and found a group of mothers who were pregnant or had infants and children under ten years old. [Officers] selected two girls, aged eight and nine, and took them to their jeep while their mothers were yelling and crying. [The Iraqi officers] said that they wanted to use those girls to clean their bases ... [but later on], the girls were taken to a demolished house and were raped by two officers. Both girls died as the result of the incident..”³⁴

Long-Term Impacts

32 Sarhangi, Morteza. *The Secrets of the imposed war, narrated by Iraqi PoWs. Volume 2.* (Tehran: Hoze Honari, 1990).

33 Maafi, Parvaneh. “Violence against Women and Children during the imposed war.” n/a. Print.

34 Sarhangi, Morteza. *The Secrets of the imposed war, narrated by Iraqi PoWs. Volume 2.* (Tehran: Hoze Honari, 1990).

As with any other war, the Iran-Iraq war left a devastating impact on Iranian society. Other than the loss of people during the war, the infrastructure was severely damaged. Infrastructural problems, although dealt with in following years, affected children in terms of access to education, access to the health system and whichever other systems were also affected by the war. The effect on the Iranian economy also undermined the general welfare of children for the first years after the war, as it was not until later that Iran started its reconstruction programs. These long-term and structural problems were the focus of government attention in order to rebuild Iran. However, problems with regard to the personal health and safety of children on an individual level were not in nature problems that could have been confronted overnight.

The most basic issue was traumatised children. Traumatized children are those who have witnessed an attack or been injured or captured, which has affected their mental health. This has either deprived them of enjoying their childhood and their rights, or limited their activities in later stages of their life. Programs have been established to take care of these victims by providing therapy and assistance. This group also includes those with injuries or physical trauma that have incapacitated them later on, especially those with chemical intoxication. For example, Hadie, who experienced the chemical attack in Zarde, had breathing problems that made attending high school and, later on, university classes, impossible. She had to carry a 5 kg oxygen tank to be able to

breathe properly.³⁵ The use of chemical weapons also had long-term effects on pregnant mothers and their children, children born after the attack with deficiencies and anomalies, and the environment.³⁶

Another group is those who have lost a family member, causing both grief and traumatic consequences. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is one of the most common consequences of war for anyone who has experienced it, but children are psychologically more vulnerable to PTSD³⁷ than adults are.³⁸ Unfortunately, there has been no such specialized study on the effects of the war on Iranian children. Graça Machel's study on Children and Armed Conflict³⁹ writes about the effects of the war on children who “grow up deprived of their material and emotional needs, including the structures that give meaning to social and cultural life. The entire fabric of their societies their homes, schools, health systems, and religious institutions are torn to pieces.” This was the case with the Iraq-Iran war too.

Resilience

35 Omid, Yazdan, “A report on the situation of injuries of the chemical attack on Zarde: Darken eyes and painful hearts, seeking the angel of death,” *Yazd-e-Farda*, 2008. Available at <http://www.yazdfarda.com/news/1392/03/12312.html>. Accessed on 4 April 2013.

36 Scientific Institute of Science and Education of Sacred Defense, “A review of consequences of application of chemical weapons on women and their children.” Available at <http://www.dsre.ir/view/article.aspx?id=1045>.

37 For more on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in Children, see Lubit, Roy H., “Posttraumatic Stress Disorder,” *MEDSCAPE*. Available at <http://emedicine.medscape.com/article/918844-overview>.

38 Debre, Isabel, *What War Does to Kids*. 26 Feb 2013. Available at <http://www.care2.com/causes/what-war-does-to-kids.html>. Accessed on 10 May 2013.

39 Machel, Graça, *The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children* (UNICEF, 1996), (*insert page reference*) Available at www.unicef.org/graca/a51-306_en.pdf.

Despite psychological problems, the war contributed to a sense of resilience within children. Although many have suffered from the war, the experience of war and suffering has made some more resilient. Today in Iranian society, many individuals are resilient and in positions of power due to their experience of the war and how they coped with it.

Mines

After the war, minefields proved to be another of the major issues that had an impact on children.⁴⁰ Up until 2006, 16 million mines remained intact on three million acres of land across Iran. Some of these minefields lacked adequate warnings, which led to the death or injury of children playing in farms or other areas that used to be war zones. According to Iranian authorities, significant parts of Khuzestan province are contaminated with mines that frequently kill and maim children and young people. “Numerous incidents have happened in surrounding areas. There are families who have lost three of their children because of minefields,” he said.

Conclusion

The eight-year war had had both short-term and long-term consequences for Iranian society and its children. Thousands of children were killed and injured during the war. The chemical weapons used by Iraq not only affected children during the war, but also caused physical and mental Development all problems for future generations and had lasting effects on the environment. The war also prevented

40 Also see Otis, John. Decades On, Land Mines Shatter Young Lives in Iran. *NY Times*. Retrieved on 5 September 2013 at <https://lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2016/07/06/thirty-years-on-landmines-shatter-young-lives-in-iran/>

children from living a regular life, enjoying their basic rights of education and access to health, and food, and affected their mental health. Mental health and post-traumatic disorders are more prevalent in the case of children who have lost their parents during the war, or have parents with chemical injuries or disabilities.

During the war, the reality of the victimisation of Iranian children did not lead to international recognition, condemnation and support. However, since the end of the Iraq-Iran war, protecting children in, at and after war is on the global agenda.

Article 38 of convention on the rights of child, and it's protocols, resolutions of security councils on agenda on children and armed conflicts, six grave violations of children in armed conflicts that recognised in various international jurisdiction are worth to mention. Cases in international criminal court, and some other concerned with a specific crime against children and also establishment of Office of Special Representative of Secretary General for Children and Armed conflicts are also important. A large numbers of NGOs active in attracting and mobilising world in the issue. Iranian children during the war and even and after that were deprived from this protection.

Of course in spite of all of these changes in legal and mechanism for protection of children in and at war, escalation of armed conflicts and tribal violence, we still face atrocities against children. A cursory look at annual reports of UN Secretary General on Children and Armed Conflicts reveals the gap between reality and aspirations of protecting children in war-torn areas such as Yemen, Syria and else that is now only manifested in expressing concerns than concrete action, despite it being of moral impetus, legal responsibility and fulfilling the charter's obligation regarding international peace and security.

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