Foreign & Commonwealth Office

<u>**Research Analysts Paper**</u>

Human rights and conflict

Summary

1.   Human rights approaches present opportunities and challenges when preventing conflict, managing it, and building peace in its aftermath. Understanding the local context is key and human rights should be part of a broader strategy to deal with the conflict. Regimes that violate human rights rarely do so by accident. Human rights advocacy and support, even to prevent or manage conflict and build post-conflict peace, may run against the interests of those who commit violations and benefit from war.

2.   Entry points at the national level include the following:

<u>Conflict Prevention</u>

3.   "<u>Upstream</u>": Where analysis identifies horizontal inequalities as a conflict driver human rights approaches may help to reduce or manage them by addressing systematic discrimination and marginalisation:

   a. Promoting democratisation and wider political inclusion.

   b. Combating discrimination that drives conflict-related grievances in access to economic opportunities, access to justice and welfare services, and in the organisation of state institutions, including through security sector reform.

   c. Supporting state and civil society institutions focusing on discrimination e.g. National Human Rights Institutions.

4.   <u>Escalation to conflict</u>: As political tensions rise, human rights approaches can help to track escalation towards armed conflict and also challenge forms of mobilisation that could lead to violence and armed conflict:

   a. Human rights monitoring.

   b. Hate speech monitoring.

   c. Promotion of the freedom of expression, particularly a free, well trained, ethical and independent media.

   d. Human rights training and capacity building for security sector institutions.

e. Strengthening the rule of law and combating impunity.

f. Support for human rights defenders.

Conflict management:

5.   Once armed conflict has broken out, opportunities to use human rights approaches to reduce or mitigate the conflict tend to be few. But human rights approaches can help to track the nature of an ongoing conflict, as well as mobilise political support for further conflict management tools:

a. Human rights monitoring.

b. Support to access to justice for victims.

Conflict resolution and post-conflict peacebuilding:

6.   Transitional justice: Transitional justice mechanisms and approaches can help to inform peace processes and underpin transitions to peace by signalling that violence is no longer an acceptable way to do business. But the contribution of transitional justice is highly contextual. The design and implementation of transitional justice mechanisms and approaches needs to take account of the prevailing balance of political power:

a. Consultations on and assessments of possible transitional justice elements of peace agreements.

b. Collection and protection of evidence of past violations, particularly mass atrocities, both during and after conflict.

c. Implementation of transitional justice mechanisms e.g. lustration, truth commissions, prosecutions, informal mechanisms.

d. Victim participation in transitional justice mechanisms as well as defence advocacy for alleged perpetrators.

e. Strategic communication and public information activities around transitional justice mechanisms and activities.

7.   Institution building: Security and rule of law institutions play a key role in minimising violence and managing the instability of post conflict environments. Human rights approaches can help them to do so in a way that strengthens public confidence in the transition from war to peace:

a. Human rights training for security and justice sector organisations, government and parliament.

b. Strengthening access to justice for post-conflict offences.

c. Support human rights defenders.

d. Support a free, well trained, ethical and independent media.

    e. Human rights monitoring and support to national oversight mechanisms, including National Human Rights Institutions.

8.   <u>Democratisation</u>: Democratisation can be the ultimate consolidation of the transition to peace. But both the process of creating democratic institutions and holding elections are inherently risky, and could trigger a return to conflict. Ultimately, mitigating for this takes time and careful political management. But human rights approaches can help to reduce some aspects of the risks associated with these processes:

    a. Electoral consultation and education, particularly for security forces and demobilised fighters.

    b. Human rights and democracy training for candidates, parliamentarians and electoral officials.

    c. Capacity building and support to electoral institutions.

Detail

9.This paper considers the links between human rights and conflict in order to inform possible UK programming to prevent, mitigate and resolve conflict as well as consolidate peace in the aftermath of conflict. It does not review the breadth of overlap between human rights and conflict. Instead **this paper identifies specific "entry points" at the national level where human rights activity can generate conflict outcomes**. It does not consider activities at the multilateral or regional level (e.g. international commissions of enquiry, international war crimes prosecutions, sanctions, intervention etc.), including that which occurs at the country level (e.g. peacekeeping missions, special rapporteurs etc.

10. **Other thematic issues that should affect how we think about conflict and human rights are not covered in this paper**. But these have a role in the design and implementation of activities to address conflict. For example, the differences between international human rights, humanitarian and criminal law as they apply to conflict. Nor does it set out broader theories and approaches to conflict. This paper does not look at the range of human rights activities that are possible in conflict-affected environments.

11.   **Conflict impacts on human rights, and understanding patterns of violations and abuses can tell us something about how a conflict is evolving**. Human rights violations and abuses have often been a feature of the upheaval and political tension that precedes armed conflict within a state. Violent conflict is often accompanied by widespread violations and abuses of human rights. In the aftermath of violent conflict, protection of human rights often continues to be difficult. But there has been growing international pressure in the last twenty years to address the human rights aspects of conflict through a variety of mechanisms: war crimes tribunals and other transitional justice measures, military intervention, commissions of inquiry and capacity building.

12.   It has been common for human rights advocates to make normative claims that promoting and protecting human rights will prevent conflict and make the transition from war to peace more sustainable. However, at a *generic level* there is no conclusive evidence to suggest that there is a link between human rights violations and the likelihood of conflict. Or that embedding human rights in peace agreements or promoting human rights in post-conflict settings reduces the likelihood of conflict more than any other factor. **Context is key. In some places and circumstances, human rights violations can play an important role in generating conflict and signposting an acceleration towards violence**. **In others it can be a critical part of a post-conflict settlement**.

Conflict prevention

13.   Many conflict assessments tend to consider human rights violations as one indicator of the weakness or corruption of state institutions, which in turn are amongst the factors that can lead to conflict. But there is little evidence to suggest that an overall level of human rights observance in a country is in itself necessarily a direct indicator of potential conflict. There are many states where human rights are routinely and systematically violated but which have not descended into armed conflict. In practice **human rights can only be considered as an indicator of potential conflict as part of a wider assessment that considers local, national, regional and international political, social, economic and military factors**.

"Upstream"

14.   A complex interplay between socio-economic and political factors over time creates the underlying conditions for armed conflict. Different theories put the emphasis variously on economic, social, political or some mixture of these factors. However, there is no simple correlation between either absolute or relative social, economic or political inequality or exclusion and conflict.

15.   One **powerful, and statistically consistent correlation of social, economic and political factors and conflict is economic, social and/or political inequality between groups ("horizontal inequality")**. These groups are identified by both their members and non-members. They can be characterised by religion/sect (e.g. Sunni/Shia in Iraq), ethnicity/tribe (e.g. Hausa/Igbo/Fulani in Nigeria), caste (e.g. in Nepal), region, language etc. Group boundaries can be subjective, cross-cutting and change over time. And inequality need not affect all members of the group equally. So there may be powerful figures or cliques in groups that are generally identified (by their members and rivals) as marginalised.

16.   There is a very strong correlation between horizontal inequality and conflict. The **strongest correlation is where there is both political and economic inequality**. For political leaders this creates an incentive to mobilise people toward conflict so that they can access political power. The rest of the group has less to lose economically and more to gain by being mobilised.

17.   Upstream entry points: Where analysis identifies horizontal inequalities as a conflict driver human rights approaches may help to reduce or manage them by addressing systematic discrimination and marginalisation:

a. Promoting democratisation and wider political inclusion.

b. Combating discrimination that drives conflict-related grievances in access to economic opportunities, access to justice and welfare services, and in the organisation of state institutions, including through security sector reform.

c. Supporting state and civil society institutions focusing on discrimination e.g. National Human Rights Institutions.

<u>Escalation to conflict</u>

18.   Horizontal inequalities can create grievances. But not all grievances are generated by human rights. And grievances, whether political, economic, social or some combination, are not sufficient to create conflict. A historical legacy of human rights violations, discrimination and marginalisation does not by itself drive people towards conflict. **Conflict requires the deliberate political mobilisation of people, often around a particular leadership and political agenda**. Mobilisation need not necessarily lead to violence or conflict. It tends to be a key element in peaceful and democratic change. But it is also often a critical part of the escalation towards conflict.

19.   **Populations tend to be mobilised by elites**. Marginalised groups tend to be mobilised by elites within those groups. The process of mobilisation can take weeks, months or years depending on the specific context (including in some cases the repressive capability of the state). Mobilisation of one group can lead to or be triggered by the mobilisation of other groups. The state may mobilise groups against opponents, particularly if the government is closely identified with a particular ethnic, religious or other group (e.g. as in Syria and Rwanda).

20.   **Mobilisation can in turn trigger a process of action and reaction that escalates into armed conflict**. As groups that have grievances begin to mobilise against the state, governments may respond repressively to prevent or counter further mobilisation. This can lead to widespread human rights violations e.g. torture, enforced disappearances, suppression of freedom of expression and freedom of association, suspension of fair trials etc. This tends to create a vicious circle. Violations of human rights can reinforce the grievances of opposition groups, leading to further mobilisation and an increase in the likelihood that they will turn to violence.

21.   **Mobilisation (by both the state and opposition) can involve the framing of past violations and marginalisation as leading to contemporary or future threats and the use of hate speech and the demonisation of opposing or rival groups** (e.g. the Balkans, Rwanda, Iraq). Demonisation and dehumanisation of "enemy" groups legitimises violence against them and can be an indicator of the likelihood of mass atrocities. Mass atrocities are more likely in places where they have occurred in the past (in part because the history of atrocities is used to mobilise populations towards conflict).

22.   Inclusive, stable states with mature political and rule of law institutions tend to be able to better manage this kind of escalation through accommodation and co-option of the opposition (or its leaders). Conversely, very strong authoritarian states also tend to be able to break the cycle of escalation through decisive and harsh repression. **Weak repressive states tend to see the highest levels of violence and human rights violations and the fastest escalation and are the most liable to see conflict in the face of opposition mobilisation**. They are more likely to respond violently to opposition, instigating further opposition and violence, but without the ability to decisively eliminate or defeat it. External support to the opposition or the government can also make a significant difference to the willingness and ability of each to escalate and resist the actions of the other.

23.   Escalation entry points: As political tensions rise, human rights approaches can help to track escalation towards armed conflict and also challenge forms of mobilisation that could lead to violence and armed conflict:

> a. Human rights monitoring.
>
> b. Hate speech monitoring.
>
> c. Promotion of the freedom of expression, particularly a free, well trained, ethical and independent media.
>
> d. Human rights training and capacity building for security sector institutions.
>
> e. Strengthening the criminal justice system and combating impunity.
>
> f. Support for human rights defenders.

Conflict management

24.   **Once armed conflict has broken out, opportunities to use human rights to mitigate or reduce conflict tend to be very limited**. And in such situations the scope of a country's human rights obligations may legitimately be more limited (e.g. through the imposition of a state of emergency or legal derogations).

25.   During armed conflict humanitarian organisations (national and international), and where they are present, international peace operations (e.g. UN peacekeeping operations) tend to play a greater role in civilian protection. **Ongoing human rights and humanitarian aid and protection activities can help reduce the human impact of armed conflict. But there is little systematic evidence to suggest that it reduces the overall level of conflict, or helps to end it**. In the longer term, promotion of international humanitarian norms (e.g. training combatants in international humanitarian law) may also help to reduce the human impact of conflict. But this depends on a number of factors including the level of organisation and ambition of a particular group, and its need for wider approval. In any case, it is unlikely to have an impact on that group's likelihood of starting or ending conflict. It has been argued that the presence of international monitors can help to ameliorate some of the effects of armed conflict on civilians. But there is little systematic evidence that the presence of international monitors *per se* has any significant

impact in reducing civilian casualties in war time, except sometimes at a very local level. The presence of neutral international personnel has sometimes reduced the extent of atrocities in their immediate locality, but not by itself in stopping a wider campaign of violence against civilians (e.g. Rwanda).

26. **Widespread violence against civilians during conflict tends to be the result of deliberate tactics and strategies employed by combatants**. Research suggests that it is not sufficiently explained by "ill-discipline". Violence against civilians can serve a number of potential political and military goals e.g. control of the civilian population, expelling "enemy" populations from territory. Monitoring and exposure of atrocities tends only to directly influence the actions of belligerents where the latter judge the value of international approval to outweigh the tactical and strategic value of violence against civilians.

27. **Monitors can however be important in generating political support for other more coercive conflict management tools** e.g. sanctions, peacekeeping, military intervention, international prosecutions (e.g. Bosnia, Kosovo, DRC). **Monitoring can also help to track the changing state of a conflict** and give an insight into changing conflict dynamics by identifying the scale and type of violence against civilians and the targeting of particular groups. It can help to identify needs/opportunities for other conflict reduction or protection activities.

28. Conflict management entry points: Once armed conflict has broken out, opportunities to use human rights approaches to reduce or mitigate the conflict tend to be few. But human rights approaches can help to track the nature of an ongoing conflict, as well as mobilise political support for further conflict management tools:

> a. Human rights monitoring.
>
> b. Support to access to justice for victims.

Conflict resolution and post conflict peacebuilding

Transitional justice

29. **Mediators and parties to a conflict increasingly face pressure to address atrocities committed during (and sometimes before) a conflict, as well as to prevent future post-conflict violations in peace agreements**. Relevant measures can include prosecutions, truth commissions, vetting/lustration for public institutions and reparations. But the impact of transitional justice on conflict resolution and post-conflict peacebuilding is highly contested amongst experts.

30. Academics and practitioners generally agree that there is a tension between human rights approaches to accountability and conflict resolution. Human rights advocates often claim that human rights must be central to peace processes. Otherwise peace is may not be sustainable, since impunity for past injustices and the reoccurrence of violations and abuses can fuel grievances that lead to the recurrence of conflict. They also point to evidence that populations affected by conflict demand justice for past violations, and will often continue to do so for many years after the end of violent conflict. For many human rights advocates, **human**

rights protection is both an end in itself as well as a critical part of the social contract between citizens and the state without which no peace agreement can be regarded as legitimate or enduring.

31.   **Impunity for atrocities in the aftermath of a conflict undermines populations' confidence in peace agreements, particularly where violators remain in or are given positions of power**. In practice this could leave populations more vulnerable to the influence of those opposed to the agreement; the latter may come to be seen as the only source of protection from wartime violators. In the short term this reinforces the fragility of peace. **Confidence in new security arrangements remains weak, violence close to the surface and further conflict remains highly likely**. It is also argued that in the longer-term some transitional justice measures, particularly prosecutions and "truth" mechanisms can reduce the scope for future mobilisation of populations towards conflict. They establish the facts of historic violations and atrocities, and provide individuals and groups (both victims and perpetrators) the chance to come to terms with the reality of past events. In doing so they are reducing the chances that historical events could be manipulated to generate support for violence in the future.

32.   In some cases, perpetrators have been prosecuted for committing atrocities in national courts. Some analysts and lawyers have argued that prosecutions can have a deterrence effect and thus reduce or constrain the level of violence during conflict. But there have tended to be relatively few such prosecutions during war-time (particularly for sexual violence). In most civil conflicts where atrocities are committed, both sides commit them. And where the state is a party it tends to commit the worst atrocities, in part because it tends to control the greater share of the means to commit them. But national prosecutions invariably target mainly non-state (usually opposition) perpetrators. **Selective national prosecutions can be discredited and thus sustain rather than reduce conflict**. National prosecutions that envisage the death penalty, or which themselves entail human rights violations (e.g. torture, lack of due process) can also have this effect (and be difficult for donors to support). In a post-conflict environment, selective prosecution of perpetrators from one side in a conflict (particularly communal conflict between e.g. members of ethnic or religious groups) risks generating "collective guilt". This can feed future mobilisation towards conflict by reinforcing a sense of "victimisation" amongst the group cast as the perpetrators, and "righteousness" amongst the group cast as the victims.

33.   Most conflict resolution practitioners agree that human rights has an important and legitimate place in establishing peace. **But in the short-term it may be necessary to make difficult and pragmatic choices between peace and justice**. In the absence of peace, human rights protection will itself be *ad hoc* and opportunistic, depending largely on the tactical military calculations for combatants and their vulnerability to international criticism. Many have also argued that the promise of legal accountability for atrocities may well discourage combatants from coming to the negotiating table or concluding or implementing an agreement. Conflict resolution practitioners point to evidence that the highest priority for populations affected by violence, including where atrocities have occurred, is always physical security and an end to violence.

34. **The international community sometimes faces difficulties in simultaneously supporting the application of international human rights, humanitarian and criminal law, and supporting the generation of locally led approaches to transitional justice**. Local prosecution and government capacity may not be sufficient to undertake significant transitional justice exercises early on in a post-conflict situation. But traditional or other informal justice mechanisms which may be more familiar and easily accessed than formal state institutions, may not be consistent with international standards. And the way that populations emerging from conflict choose to deal with past violations may pose substantial political difficulties for Western states. In Uruguay a 1989 plebiscite supported a general amnesty for those accused of human rights violations in the past. Similarly in Argentina, immunity from prosecution for most alleged perpetrators of human rights violations during the country's "dirty war" was passed into law by a parliament that had been elected in a free and fair democratic elections (although this law was struck down by the Argentine Supreme Court in 2005).

35. The empirical links between human rights and conflict resolution remain under-researched. It remains to be demonstrated that, as a rule, raising the issue of human rights makes it more or less likely that a peace agreement will be reached, or once reached that it will be more sustainable. **In some cases, the contribution of human rights to sustainable peace is itself a long-term goal**. In the short to medium term, it may be necessary to focus on the creation of the political, legal and security environment that will *subsequently* allow more extensive and penetrating human rights protection. Emerging research suggests that the likelihood of conflict recurrence after a peace agreement relates to the sustainability of the political deal underpinning the end of conflict. In this context, **transitional justice arrangements that reflect the prevailing political balance of power are more likely to make a positive contribution to peace**. A pragmatic approach to transitional justice need not rule out accountability for violations *per se*. Where levels of trust between parties are particularly low and instability and insecurity are high, it may be that "weaker" transitional justice measures, like vetting and "truth telling", may make a stronger contribution to peace than "harder" ones like prosecutions. It may also be necessary to calibrate these with amnesties for certain types of violations.

36. **A key dilemma in such situations may be to find ways to support pragmatic and politically realistic approaches to transitional justice, without letting justice and human rights fall off the agenda**. In Latin America transitions from dictatorship in the 1980s and 1990s were often accompanied by weak or no transitional justice mechanisms. And in few cases was there a reversal of the transition to peace and democracy. But in most cases, as democracy has become more entrenched, and the political power of the military has declined, it has become possible to address impunity. A key activity that can be undertaken in the immediate aftermath of violent conflict that might help later transitional justice efforts is the gathering and protection of evidence.

37. <u>Transitional justice entry points</u>: Transitional justice mechanisms and approaches can help to inform peace processes and underpin transitions to peace by signalling that violence is no longer an acceptable way to do business. But the contribution of transitional justice is highly contextual. The design and

implementation of transitional justice mechanisms and approaches needs to take account of the prevailing balance of political power:

    a. Consultations on and assessments of possible transitional justice elements of peace agreements.

    b. Collection and protection of evidence of past violations, particularly mass atrocities, during and after a conflict.

    c. Implementation of transitional justice mechanisms e.g. lustration, truth commissions, prosecutions, informal mechanisms.

    d. Victim participation in transitional justice mechanisms as well as defence advocacy for alleged perpetrators.

    e. Strategic communication and public information activities around transitional justice mechanisms and activities.

<u>Institution building</u>

38. **Enshrining human rights in the structures of post-conflict states is often an objective of international support in the aftermath of conflict**. In part this is because adherence to human rights is increasingly regarded as a norm of responsible statehood. It is common, for example, for the UN Security Council to include democracy and human rights as prescriptions for post-conflict situations. Governments that observe their international human rights obligations are more likely to be regarded as legitimate by other members of the international community, particularly by democratic governments. Most Western donors have consistently taken the position that democracies that respect human rights are less likely to revert to conflict on the following assumptions (amongst others):

- Security forces that do not torture or arbitrarily detain people are less likely to victimise the population and thus inspire rebellion.

- Effective judicial systems that do not discriminate and that observe due process provide methods of settling disputes in a transparent and just way without recourse to violence.

- The exercise of the freedom of expression and participation in systems of accountable government also allow groups of people to pursue their interests peacefully through peaceful protest and democratic elections.

- If impunity for non-international crimes continues after a conflict, public confidence in peace agreements may be undermined.

- Adherence to international human rights standards is a way of sending a clear signal both to former combatants and to conflict affected populations that things have changed.

But, as with the impact of human rights on peace processes and peace agreements, this remains an under-researched area.

39.   Post-conflict societies can be extremely difficult environments in which to promote and protect human rights. It is common in the immediate aftermath of violent conflict for government structures to be weak or non-existent, as in Afghanistan and Somalia, or compromised through their association with a former regime, as in Kosovo and Libya. Donor coordination is often weak, lacking any clear single strategy around which to coalesce. And there may be few viable local governmental and non-governmental partners to work with.

40.   Conflicting motivations can also make human rights capacity building and protection difficult in post-conflict situations. Civil and political human rights are essentially about placing limits on the exercise of state power. In post-conflict situations, reconstruction is often characterised by attempts by outsiders to "rebuild" state power. But the political settlements that end a conflict (whether this is through a negotiated peace agreement or a military victory) tend to reflect the balance of the power on the battlefield. Those with most military power get most political power, either directly or indirectly. Moreover, a great deal of political and military power in post-conflict environments tends to exist outside the government/state. So the first task of many of the wartime and post-conflict indigenous elites and powerbrokers (e.g. warlords, religious leaders, clan elders, businesspeople) is to get the institutions of the state to reflect their influence and interests. **This can make the establishment of the necessary checks and balances that constrain and mediate the exercise and abuse of state power e.g. legislatures, judiciaries, extremely difficult**. Such institutions tend to be extremely weak in post-conflict environments.

41.   In the immediate aftermath of conflict, and once a minimum level of physical security has been secured, the largest cause of instability is often the absence of the rule of law. **Reforming security forces, and the supporting structures that allow them to be effective such as the criminal justice system, is often a high priority for national governments and the international community**. There is a great deal of expertise on these subjects amongst human rights, security sector and rule of law experts. But experience and research shows that successful post-conflict rule or law and security sector reform is limited by and reflects the prevailing political balance of power. Focused interventions e.g. on a specific facility or on counter-terrorism, may be more feasible in the short term. But even these will be subject to local political dynamics and the politics of institutions and the groups that control them. Performance of post-conflict government institutions is likely to be weak at first, below the level of expectation of local populations and international donors.

42.   <u>Institution building entry points</u>: Security and rule of law institutions play a key role in minimising violence and managing the instability of post conflict environments. Human rights approaches can help them to do so in a way that strengthens public confidence in the transition from war to peace:

> a. Human rights training for security and justice sector organisations, government and parliament.

> b. Strengthening access to justice.

> c. Support human rights defenders.

d. Support a free, well trained, ethical and independent media.

e. Human rights monitoring and support to national oversight mechanisms, including National Human Rights Institutions.

<u>Democratisation</u>

43.   It has become common practice for countries emerging from conflict to undergo a process of democratisation (normally including elections) as part of their transformation. **Even where the conflict affected country was a democracy, peace agreements generally include some change in the constitution or political order (e.g. a power-sharing agreement or government of national unity)**. The post-conflict political order itself may be subject to popular endorsement e.g. through a referendum or election (although it is increasingly recognised that the holding of elections by themselves does not constitute the establishment of a democratic system). The process of democratisation involves building institutions that service and respond to democratic politics. The exact form that these institutional arrangements take will vary according to a country's political settlement. Common elements of a democratic system often (although not always) include accountable security forces, impartial judiciary, independent media, political parties and legislatures.

44.   But **democratisation is often inherently destabilising**. The creation of political parties, for example, may be a way of shifting the basis of popular political support from allegiance to individuals (and their personal ambitions and interests) towards institutions that promote a particular agenda. They can also be a way of shifting political power from military to civilian institutions. Both of these pose a risk to the power of conflict actors who had hitherto dominated politics, and incentivise their retaining that power through force and intimidation. There is also a risk that the creation of political parties will simply institutionalise existing conflict drivers (e.g. through the creation of parties that promote the interests of one ethnic group). And where political leaders have retained the ability to go to war, elections can trigger a renewal of conflict. In the pre-election period many parties see themselves as having something to gain from participating in democratic processes. Post-election however, those that lose out at the ballot box may revert to violence as the best way of achieving power. Moreover, the process of democratisation (including everything from the drawing up electoral divisions to the choice between federalist or centralist political systems) reflects the prevailing political settlement. Those left out of political power are less likely to seek change through democratic participation, or are likely to be frustrated if they do. Either way, there is a risk that they will turn to violence.

45.   These risks are particularly salient in conflict-affected countries without a recent history of democratic government, or where there has been insufficient preparation for elections and the electoral process it not underpinned by an impartial security force. This is not an argument against democratisation. But where international actors are involved in supporting it, they need to understand that that **democratisation may be the beginning and not the end of a process of establishing non-violent politics**. In the short to medium term they may also need to mitigate for the shocks and insecurity it generates.

46.   <u>Democratisation entry points</u>: Democratisation can be the ultimate consolidation of the transition to peace. But both the process of creating democratic institutions and holding elections are inherently risky, and could trigger a return to conflict. Ultimately, mitigating for this takes time and careful political management. But human rights approaches can help to reduce some aspects of the risks associated with these processes:

> a. Electoral consultation and education, particularly for security forces and demobilised fighters.
>
> b. Human rights and democracy training for candidates, parliamentarians and electoral officials.
>
> c. Capacity building and support to electoral and parliamentary institutions.

Conclusions

47.   Human rights approaches and institutions can potentially contribute to conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict peacebuilding. **Local context is key**. None of them by themselves is likely to have a decisive impact on conflict. They need to be part of a broader strategy involving action by other national, regional and international partners, and reinforced by action at the international and multilateral level. The entry points identified in this paper are not an exhaustive description of human rights activity that could be undertaken in conflict environments. There are lots of other possible human rights activities that can be undertaken for good human rights or other policy reasons, but which may not have a significant effect on conflict. And lots of other non-human rights activities that could reduce the likelihood of conflict, reduce conflict, consolidate peace or reduce the human impact of conflict and strengthen the protection of civilians.

48.   Regimes that commit human rights violations, even where this leads to conflict, rarely do so by accident. So **human rights advocacy and support, even where this is to prevent or manage conflict and build post-conflict peace, may run against the interests of those who commit violations and benefit from war**. To be effective, any conflict related activity, human rights or otherwise, should be based on a proper understanding of the political, social and economic dynamics underpinning the situation.

49.   Specific activities will need to be designed to meet clear objectives. This may also involve being prepared to accept pragmatic compromises. **It may be easier to resolve tensions between human rights and other outcomes at the level of HMG than amongst national or international partners** (international and national NGOs, state institutions, international missions, regional organisations, private sector institutions). Many of these may also be implementing partners, with their own mandates and objectives.

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