**The relationship between hunger and war**

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Mass hunger occurs during many wars today. In some cases, hunger is used as a weapon against people.

In 2018 the United Nations (U.N.) condemned the practice of causing hunger and food insecurity in war. The U.N. is a global group meant to promote peace between countries around the world. Food insecurity occurs when there is not enough food or it is too expensive. The U.N. said hunger in war is a threat to the lives of millions of people. It passed a resolution that said causing hunger as warfare may be a war crime.

The U.N. action is aimed at countries in international or civil wars. The resolution tells all parties to protect food, farms, markets and delivery methods. It demands that all groups allow humanitarian aid workers to help people in need.

In 2015 the U.N. adopted the goal of ending hunger and food insecurity. The number of hungry and undernourished people began to increase after 2015. Experts believe climate change and wars are the main reasons for this increase. Climate change warms the Earth and causes extreme weather that prevents growing food. Sixty percent of the millions of people suffering from poor diets in 2016 lived in areas of armed conflict.

**Destroying Food Supplies During Wars**

Wars are destructive, but destroying resources can do more damage than weapons. Enemies may ruin each other's food supply, farms and livestock. These actions can threaten the survival of entire populations.

Armed conflicts force huge numbers of people out of their homes and the people become refugees. Food insecurity, disease and job loss cause suffering. On the other hand, when people stay in their homes, opposing parties can trap them in their neighborhoods. Enemies might keep food and medicine from the people. Many areas in conflict need humanitarian aid, but fighters stop aid workers from reaching them. Sometimes fighters attack humanitarian organizations.

Wars can cause hunger and food insecurity, but some scholars argue the reverse is also true. Food insecurity can lead to conflict. A sudden change in food prices or availability can trigger social unrest. One example is the French Revolution of 1789. This violent revolution was fueled by sharp increases in the price of bread. More recently, uprisings in 2011 took place in North Africa and the Middle East when food prices were high.

History shows us examples of ways people have starved enemy armies or people. During the U.S. Civil War, Union soldiers were allowed to starve enemy soldiers. In World War II Nazi Germany did not use a special plan it had to starve millions of people in the Soviet Union, now Russia. However, hundreds of thousands of people did starve to death when the Germans surrounded the city of Leningrad for three years. Leningrad is now St. Petersburg in Russia.

Three examples show the problem of hunger in conflict zones today:

**South Sudan**

South Sudan is in east-central Africa. This poor country declared independence from Sudan in 2011. Civil war broke out two years later. The fighting led to 400,000 deaths and drove 4 million people from their homes. The fighting plus poor harvests caused a hunger emergency in 2017. Armed groups stole food, burned markets and prevented farmers from working. Food became too expensive for most people. South Sudan was also the world's most dangerous nation for aid workers in 2017. Rival groups agreed to a ceasefire in September 2018, but the U.N. says that more than half the people there still face food insecurity.

**Syria**

Fighting began in Syria, a country in western Asia, in 2011. The conflict has forced more than 12 million people from their homes. By 2016, fleeing Syrians were part of the largest world refugee emergency since World War II. More than half of the Syrian refugees are still inside Syria. This huge number of people and decreased food production have helped cause Syria's hunger disaster. The Syrian government and its rebel opponents have both used hunger as warfare.

**Yemen**

A 2018 U.N. report called the situation in Yemen "the worst human-made disaster in the modern history of the world." The report confirmed the strong link between war and hunger. Yemen is Saudi Arabia's neighbor in the Middle East. A rebel movement known as the Houthis ousted the government in 2014.

A group led by Saudi Arabia wanted to restore the government. Bombing from Saudi Arabia destroyed much of Yemen. The country's money became worthless, public employees weren't paid and food prices soared. The Saudi Arabian group blocked food imports and humanitarian aid. Today more than half of Yemen's people need food assistance to survive.