

THE SHUR PROJECT

The European Union has identified peace-making, the respect for human rights and the development of civil society as key priorities in its external relations.

Non-governmental actors have become key players in ethno-political conflicts, both as violators and as promoters of human rights. This has been facilitated by the transformation of these conflicts, increasingly characterised by high intensity in intra-border ethno-religious tensions and strong international appeal to human rights protection.

Shur's overall objective is to analyse the impact of civil society on ethno-political conflicts through human rights, and to identify the means to strengthen the complementary actions of civil society and EU actors. It does so by analysing four case studies in the European neighbourhood: Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cyprus, Israel-Palestine, and Turkey-Kurds. Through the comparative examination of these cases, Shur will draw-up policy guidelines tailored to governmental and non-governmental civil society action.

The research is multidisciplinary, combining different perspectives including comparative politics and international relations, political theory, sociology, history, anthropology and international law. It is carried out by two distinct kinds of partners: University and academic research centres, and activists and NGOs research centres.

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HUMAN RIGHTS IN CONFLICTS: THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY



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Commission**

**SIXTH FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME
PRIORITY 7:**

**Citizens and Governance in a
knowledge-based society**

THE RESEARCH

The research focus of this project is built on three pillars. First, relations between human rights and conflicts are examined from normative and political perspectives. Second, the specific characteristics of civil society agents are examined from a socio-political perspective, in order to delineate their potential and their limits in dealing with conflicts in their human rights aspects. Third, the concrete actions of civil society actors are analysed in their different forms and impacts in terms of the reduction/production of human rights violations, together with their complementarity with governmental actions.

Recent ethno-political conflicts present new challenges for civil society organisations. Due to their different structure and values, civil society actors significantly impact on human rights situation in ethno-political conflicts, at times even more consistently and effectively than governmental actors. With the resurgence and manipulation of ethno-nationalism, civil society actors have had to redefine their identity and re-interpret their mission, which had been firmly anchored to inter-state dynamics. The perception of whether and when civil society actors contribute to human rights abuses or to their protection depends on specific normative views of historical narratives and political objectives.

Case Studies

Four conflict case studies have been selected on the basis of their relevance with respect to their human rights and civil society dimensions:

- Bosnia - Herzegovina;
- Cyprus Conflict;
- Israel - Palestine;
- Turkey - Kurds.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this research project consists in gaining a thorough understanding of the inter-linkages connecting the conflict - human rights - civil society nexus. On the basis of this understanding, the project sets out the following objectives:

- Understanding the mechanisms and strategies through which civil society actors impact on conflicts through their effects on the violation and respect for human rights.
- Developing empirical knowledge on the human rights-civil society – conflict nexus in the four selected case studies.
- Drawing upon these findings to advance wider interdisciplinary research.
- Presenting a set of policy proposals for improving the effectiveness of non-governmental actors in reducing human rights violations.
- Producing a number of policy recommendations for enhancing the potential complementarity of civil society agents with governmental actors, and in particular with EU institutions.

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

The intended products of the project are available on our web-site.

They include:

- Reports
 - On the nexus Human Rights/ Conflict / Civil Society
 - On each case study
- Web-site
- Electronic Newsletter
- Policy blue-print
- Articles
- Edited book