

How war and torture affect people

At any point in time, there are hundreds if not thousands of armed conflicts throughout the world. These include wars between and among countries, civil wars, wars against and between militias or guerrillas, and wars against and between terrorist, separatist, and anarchic groups. Armed conflicts make it very difficult, if not impossible, for local governments and charitable organization to provide the most basic services to civilian populations like food, shelter, and safety. The trauma and stress associated to armed conflicts can cause physical and psychological injuries. Those can happen before, during, and long after armed conflicts. Examples of physical injury includes: wounds from firearms and bombs; being beaten; having to walk long distances; having to carry heavy loads; not being allowed to eat or drink water; and not receiving treatment for diseases the person had before the armed conflict. Causes of psychological trauma include: seeing others be tortured or killed, especially if they are relatives; losing one's belongings; being forced to move away from one's home or country; being the target of hate groups; and having to live in overcrowded refugee camps. A particularly stressful type of violence is sexual violence.

The most common form of sexual violence is rape. Women are commonly the target of sexual violence, but it can also happen to men. The victims of sexual violence have both physical and psychological injuries. Physical injuries of sexual violence include: sexually transmitted diseases; injury to the sexual organs; unwanted pregnancy; and injuries at the time of childbirth. Psychological injuries of sexual violence include: being raped or seeing someone be raped, especially if it is a relative; having to carry and give birth to the child of the rapist; being seen as immoral; and being forced into prostitution. The physical and psychological injuries of armed conflicts and torture can cause depression, psychosis, suicide attempts, and post-traumatic stress disorder also known as PTSD. Studies have shown that one third of people who have been exposed to armed conflicts have PTSD.

The treatment of people who have been victims of physical and psychological injuries of armed conflicts and torture includes medications and psychological therapy. Treatment of the physical injuries, those that can be seen with the naked eye, is more available. Because they cannot be seen with the naked eye, treatment of psychological injuries is more difficult to get. Treatments to help victims of psychological injuries have to be inexpensive, applicable to many cultures, and given by people who understand the psychosocial and ethnic environment of the victims.

Pedro Weisleder, Caitlin Rublee

Nationwide Children's Hospital and The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, USA

Publication

[The Neuropsychological Consequences of Armed Conflicts and Torture.](#)

Weisleder P, Rublee C

Curr Neurol Neurosci Rep. 2018 Feb 14