

# CONFLICT TIMELINES

## SYRIA

- 2000** Bashar Al Assad succeeds his father as President of Syria.
- 2011** Inspired by protests in other Arab countries and outraged by the detention and torture of several teenagers, anti-government protests erupt.
- 2011** Syrian authorities use excessive force against largely peaceful protestors and conduct mass arrests.
- 2012** The opposition movement becomes increasingly violent. Government forces start using air attacks that injure and kill hundreds of civilians. The situation in Syria turns into an armed conflict.
- 2013** Syrian government forces launch chemical weapons attack.
- 2014** The extremist group Islamic State (IS) increases the area under its control in both Syria and Iraq and commits "mass atrocities."
- 2015** Four years of conflict in Syria has killed more than 200,000 people and displaced more than 10 million.

Source: BBC <http://goo.gl/KVAk22>

## LIBYA

- 1969** Col. Gaddafi leads coup, deposing King Idris, and beginning his 42-year long rule over Libya.
- 2011** Protests erupt in the Eastern Libyan city of Benghazi after the arrest of Fathi Terbil, a prominent government critic. Government forces respond by killing large numbers of protesters in cities all across Libya.
- 2011** Libya erupts in civil war, and NATO carries out a military intervention.
- 2011** Human Rights Watch deploys a continuous research presence in Libya, investigating abuses committed by both Gaddafi and rebel forces, including indiscriminate use of weapons, large-scale executions, torture, and the looting of Libya's massive weapons storage facilities.
- 2011** Gaddafi is captured and killed by rebel fighters in the city of Sirte. Many of those captured at the scene are also executed.
- 2012** Libya elects a 200-seat General National Conference to replace the unelected National Transitional Council.

Source: Al Jazeera <http://goo.gl/2OAqLA>

## FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

- 1989** Slobodan Milosevic elected president of Serbia.
- 1991** War erupts in Yugoslavia as republics declare independence. Under Milosevic, Serbian forces commit atrocities in Croatia and Bosnia. Hundreds of thousands of civilians on all sides are killed or "ethnically cleansed."
- 1995** Srebrenica, a UN safe haven, is taken over by Serbian forces and about 8,000 unarmed boys and men are killed.
- 1997** Milosevic is elected president of Yugoslavia.
- 1998** War begins in Kosovo between Serbian and Yugoslav forces and an ethnic Albanian armed group, the Kosovo Liberation Army.
- 1999** NATO planes bomb Serbian and Yugoslav forces.
- 1999** Milosevic is indicted for war crimes by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY).
- 2001** Milosevic is arrested and flown to The Hague, Netherlands to face trial for war crimes. Yugoslavia (ICTY).
- 2006** Milosevic dies in jail cell, apparently of natural causes.

Source: PBS <http://goo.gl/2OAqLA> Pg. 2

# HIGH SCHOOL STUDY GUIDE

## QUESTIONS FROM HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

### 1. What are human rights?

Human rights are the basic rights and freedoms to which everyone is entitled on the basis of their common humanity. They include civil and political rights, as well as economic, social and cultural rights.

Human rights are drawn from various cultures, religions and philosophies from around the world over many centuries. They are in force at all times and in all places. Human rights protect everyone equally without discrimination according to race, sex, religion, political opinion or other status.

### 2. How are human rights defined?

After the Second World War, the founding countries of the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (<http://goo.gl/hxno>) in 1948, which set out the fundamental rights of all people and declared them a common standard of achievement for all nations. Since then more than two dozen global treaties, as well as many regional agreements, have provided a legal foundation for human rights ideals. When a government ratifies/signs one of these treaties, it takes on legal obligations to uphold human rights.

The core human rights treaties include:

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights: <http://goo.gl/QWk2j5>

*Civil and political rights primarily protect individuals from state power. They include rights to life and liberty, fair trials and protection from torture, and the freedoms of expression, religion, association and peaceful assembly.*

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: <http://goo.gl/NCTr6q>

*Economic, social and cultural rights, such as the rights to housing, education and health, require governments to use all available resources to gradually achieve them.*

Other treaties focus on ending specific abuses, such as torture, enforced disappearances and forced labor. Some treaties protect the rights of marginalized groups, including racial minorities, women, refugees, children, people with disabilities, and domestic workers.

In addition to treaties, the United Nations has adopted various declarations, principles and guidelines to refine the meaning of particular rights. Various international institutions are responsible for interpreting human rights treaties and monitoring compliance, such as the UN Human Rights Committee and UN special rapporteurs who work on specific issues and countries. Corporations and international financial institutions, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, have a duty to avoid complicity in human rights abuses.

### 3. How are human rights enforced?

The duty to enforce international human rights law rests primarily with governments themselves.

Governments are obligated to protect and promote human rights by prohibiting violations by officials and agents of the state, prosecuting offenders, and creating ways that individuals can seek help for rights violations, such as having competent, independent and impartial courts. A country's failure to act against abuses by private individuals, such as domestic violence, can itself be a human rights violation.

However, when governments are responsible for human rights violations, these protections are often inadequate. In these cases international institutions, like the UN Human Rights Council or the Committee Against Torture, have only limited ability to enforce human rights protections.

More frequently, governments that commit human rights violations are held publicly accountable for their actions by non-governmental organizations. Some organizations provide direct services such as legal counsel and human rights education. Other organizations try to protect human rights by bringing lawsuits on behalf of individuals or groups. And organizations such as Human Rights Watch use fact finding and advocacy to generate pressure on governments to change their policies.

# UNIVERSITY STUDY GUIDE

## QUESTIONS FROM UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

### 1. How are human rights treated differently in armed conflict?

International humanitarian law, or the law of war, is a separate but related body of international law. Unlike human rights law, which applies at all times, the laws of war only apply during armed conflicts. The laws of war do not prohibit war, but set out rules on the conduct of hostilities by both national armed forces and non-state armed groups in order to protect civilians, provide for the humane treatment of all prisoners, and reduce wartime suffering. While customs of war have existed for thousands of years, international treaties restricting warfare date back about 150 years. Most commonly recognized today are the Geneva Conventions as well as treaties banning certain weapons, such as the Land Mines Treaty.

### 2. Are human rights violators ever prosecuted?

Individuals who commit serious violations of international human rights or humanitarian law, including crimes against humanity and war crimes, may be prosecuted by their own country or by other countries exercising what is known as "universal jurisdiction." They may also be tried by international courts, such as the International Criminal Court, which was established in 2002 to try individuals responsible for very serious crimes such as genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes. In the film, Slobodan Milosevic is tried by the International Criminal Tribunal in the former Yugoslavia or ICTY, which is located in The Hague in the Netherlands.

### 3. Question for Anna Neistat: Given societal norms in many of the countries in which you work, how has being a woman affected you in your job? In what ways has your gender been advantageous, and in what ways has it been an obstacle?

*Anna:* Generally, I think being a woman is an advantage when working in hostile or closed environment. There are downsides, of course, such as greater exposure to gender-based violence or harassment. But the benefits are undeniable: you are perceived as less "threatening", which means you can get to and through areas that may be inaccessible for men, you can talk your way out of difficult situations, and overall use your perceived "weakness" as strength. Plus, I find that many people are more comfortable talking to women than men: of course, women themselves in more traditional societies, but in many cases also male witnesses, children, and, importantly, perpetrators.

### 4. How do the researchers establish themselves as trustworthy and credible?

*Fred:* There are many steps. The first is the introduction, which is key. Have you been introduced by a person that the researcher and interviewee both trust? Then one must establish a rapport. It takes time to make a person comfortable and to explain the purpose of the interview. One must describe what can be achieved (documenting the crime and informing the world) and what can't be achieved (immediately arresting the perpetrators or getting compensation). And one must take time to listen to the person's story. Of course being sensitive to the culture also helps, even if that means drinking too much tea or eating something unhealthy.

*Peter:* Our research involves interviewing a great number of witnesses, victims, and even perpetrators to establish the truth of what happened. It is important to first have people understand the purpose of our work, so we carefully explain our investigative mandate to them, and ask them if they are willing to be interviewed. This is particularly important in the cases of victims of human rights abuses—we want to give them back a measure of control over their lives that they often lost when they were abused. Once we get permission, we conduct a very detailed, often hours-long interview, asking for a lot of specific details about the incident. It is through carefully cross-checking such details over many interviews that we can reconstruct what happened, and assess the credibility of individual witnesses. The information collected through interviews is also compared to other forms of evidence, such as photographs, videos, an inspection of the scene of the incident, and even satellite imagery.



# SUGGESTED READING

## RECOMMENDED BY E-TEAM RESEARCHERS

Adams, Douglas. *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. New York: Harmony Books, 1980.

Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Library, 1996.

Cranshaw, Steve. *Small Acts of Resistance: How Courage, Tenacity, and a Bit of Ingenuity Can Change the World*. New York: Union Square Press, 2010.

Danner, Mark. *The Massacre at El Mozote: A Parable of the Cold War*. New York: Vintage Books, 1994.

Laber, Jeri. *The Courage of Strangers: Coming of Age with the Human Rights Movement*. New York: Public Affairs, 2002.

Loyd, Anthony. *My War Gone By I Miss It So*. New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1999.

Mandela, Nelson. *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1994.

Neier, Aryeh. *The International Human Rights Movement: A History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press; Reprint Edition, 2013.

Power, Samantha. *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide*. New York: Basic Books, 2002.

Walzer, Michael. *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations*. New York: Basic Books, 1977.

X, Malcolm, and Alex Haley. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1992.



In the early 1990s, Albania, Europe's most closed and repressive state, began a startling transition out of forty years of self-imposed Communist isolation. Albanians who were not allowed to practice religion, travel abroad, wear jeans, or read "decadent" Western literature began to devour the outside world. They opened cafés, companies, and newspapers. Previously banned rock music blared in the streets.

*Modern Albania* offers a vivid history of the Albanian Communist regime's fall and the trials and tribulations that led the country to become the state it is today. The book provides an in-depth look at the Communists' last Politburo meetings and the first student revolts, the fall of the Stalinist regime, the outflows of refugees, the crash of the massive pyramid schemes, the war in neighboring Kosovo, and Albania's relationship with the United States. Fred Abrahams weaves together personal experience from more than twenty years of work in Albania, interviews with key Albanians and foreigners who played a role in the country's politics since 1990 — including former Politburo members, opposition leaders, intelligence agents, diplomats, and founders of the Kosovo Liberation Army — and a close examination of hundreds of previously secret government records from Albania and the United States. A rich, narratively-driven account, *Modern Albania* gives readers a front-row seat to the dramatic events of the last battle of Cold War Europe.

### MODERN ALBANIA

By: Fred C. Abrahams  
384 pages, 2 maps, 30 b/w photographs; NYU Press  
<http://goo.gl/5uJ6KH>