

FACT SHEET

www.ploughshares.ca

Armed Conflict



Marco Dormino/UN

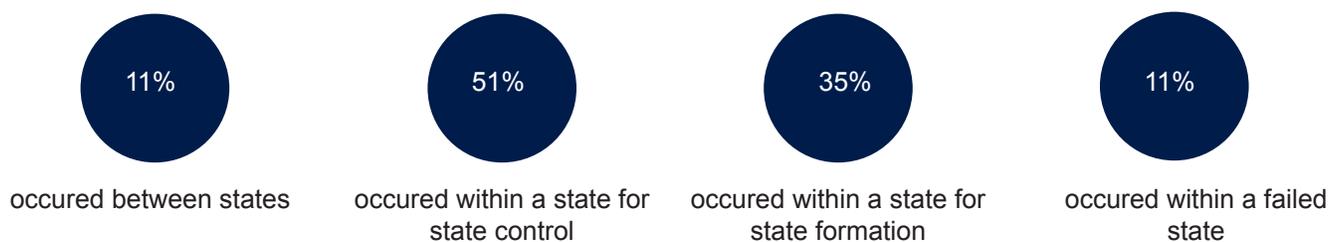
What is an armed conflict? Project Ploughshares defines an armed conflict as a political conflict in which armed combat involves the armed forces of at least one state or multiple armed factions seeking to gain control of all or part of a state and at least 1,000 people have been killed in combat.

An armed conflict is deemed to have ended if

- a formal ceasefire or peace agreement has been signed and there are fewer than 25 combat deaths per year, or
- a conflict has been dormant for two years (and there are fewer than 25 combat deaths per year).
-

Are all conflicts the same?

Of the 81 conflicts to begin since 1987:



How long do conflicts last?

Of all continuing conflicts in 2009,

- 6 began 3 decades ago
- 7 began 2 decades ago
- 9 began 1 decade ago
- 6 began less than a decade ago

How do conflicts end?

Of the 64 conflicts to end since 1987,

- 5 ended through government victory
- 4 ended through insurgent victory
- 33 ended through negotiation
- 22 simply dissolved

The impact of armed conflict

- 150 people are killed in combat each day
- 550 people are killed indirectly by the conflict each day
- 42 million people have been uprooted by conflict (as of December 2009)
- 250,000 child soldiers are active each year
- 35 per cent of food emergencies are due to conflict

Snapshot: armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

During the summer of 2010, rebel fighters from Rwanda and the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) stormed a number of villages. According to media reports, by the time the fighters left, days later, more than 400 people were raped, including women, children and babies.

These victims represent a fraction of the conflict's human toll. Since 1990, five million deaths are directly attributed to conflict in DRC while fears of injury, starvation, disease, rape and abduction haunt those who survive.

Ploughshares first began monitoring in conflict in DRC in 1993, when approximately 7,000 civilians were killed in clashes between various ethnic groups. In 1999, the United Nations failed to secure a ceasefire. In 2003, an interim government initiated a program to demobilize, disarm and repatriate former combatants. After two attempted coups, these efforts were permanently stalled. In 2006, the first democratically elected government took office, only to have its military charged with abusing human rights. In 2007, the government and the National Congress for the People's Defence signed the Goma Peace Accord, which fell apart in 2008.

Hostilities did not improve in 2009. The Lord's Resistance Army (a rebel group originating from neighbouring Uganda) killed more than 800 civilians in northeastern DRC and abducted hundreds of children. Clashes between ethnic groups in the north resulted in 16,000 refugees. A UN-backed military operation—Kimia II—was criticized for adding 1,400 to the death toll. Overall, more than 2,600 civilians, 500 rebels and 58 Congolese soldiers were killed in the conflict by the end of 2009.

It is tempting to blame such atrocities on an inefficient government, but failures at the national level are heavily shaped by external factors—notably, the creation of international economic and security conditions that push benefits toward dominant economic and military powers.

War prevention is a collective responsibility and, with 28 wars still raging across the globe, it is a responsibility that we have yet to meet.

