2019
HART Prize for
Human Rights

Humanitarian Aid
Relief Trust
Table of Contents

About the HART Prize for Human Rights ..................3

List of Winners.................................................................4-5

Junior Essay Category Winners .........................6-13

Intermediate Essay Category Winners .............14-21

Senior Essay Category Winners.........................22-35

Junior Creative Category Winners .....................36-48

Intermediate Creative Category Winners ..........49-52

Senior Creative Category Winners ...................53-57

Contact HART.................................................................59
About

The HART Prize for Human Rights is a competition for young people who are interested in global issues.

In the essay and creative categories of the competition, participants draw inspiration and ideas from issues faced by many in the eight countries where HART works (Burma, Nagorno-Karabakh, Nigeria, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Timor-Leste, and Uganda).

The HART Prize for Human Rights aims to raise awareness of conflict, poverty, and human rights abuses amongst young people in the UK, particularly situations which are underrepresented in the mainstream media. The competition encourages participants to examine and engage critically with human rights issues by conducting independent research, and producing written or creative pieces. In running the yearly competition, HART also aims to invite new voices to contribute to HART’s communications.
Winners

**Junior Essay Category**

1\textsuperscript{st} Place: Isabella Kwicinski  
2\textsuperscript{nd} Place: Alexia Lowe  
3\textsuperscript{rd} Place: Audrea Wang

**Intermediate Essay Category**

1\textsuperscript{st} Place: Aili Channer  
2\textsuperscript{nd} Place: Gillian Gyamfi  
3\textsuperscript{rd} Place: Emily Emiru

**Senior Essay Category**

1\textsuperscript{st} Place: Amber Smith  
2\textsuperscript{nd} Place: Thomas Jaynes  
3\textsuperscript{rd} Place: Maya Muller
Junior Creative Category

1st Place: Shalet Scariah, Yudeesha Sen
2nd Place: Rachel Deakin, Tingting Zhang
3rd Place: Noah Adams, Hattie Brunce
4th Place: Neviah-Rae Shako and Charlotte Sollars

Intermediate Creative Category

1st Place: Martha Langley
2nd Place: Opefoluwa Sarah Adegbite, Beck Broom
3rd Place: Joshua Shortman

Senior Creative Category

1st Place: Hay-Ching Tang
2nd Place: Mandhla Ashley Mavolwane, Alex Parnham-Cope
3rd Place: Sana Arooj Mahmood
Junior Essay—1st Place: Isabella Kwiecinski

Discussing Period Poverty in South Sudan

For you or me ‘that time of the month’ passes without much thought, we have access to a range of sanitary products which mean periods have little to no impact on our day to day life. This is how it should be, but this is not the case for girls living in South Sudan. The majority of girls are forced to stay home from school during menstruation, causing them to miss out on a valuable education, whilst others are forced to leave their homes and hide whilst on their periods. So why has this negative stigma around menstruation arisen in countries such as South Sudan and how can this be improved moving forwards?

Life is already hard in South Sudan since the civil war broke out in 2013, but girls are having to deal with the added difficulty of a lack of access to essential hygiene products. Whilst in the UK our hygiene seems like a basic right which we take for granted, these girls are not so fortunate. As well as this lack of access to sanitary products the negative and harmful stigma around menstruation in South Sudan causes many girls to stay home from school in shame whilst menstruating, whilst others hide from home. This leads to them falling behind in school and many eventually drop out, leading to young marriage and pregnancy. UNICEF estimates that 1 in every 10 African girls miss school due to menstruation but this is likely a much higher number in South Sudan. It seems that there are two main issues, a lack of access to period products, and a stigma surrounding menstruation.

It is reported that menstruation taboos not only keep girls from attending school whilst on their periods but keep them from touching water, engaging in community activities or from going to religious ceremonies in some communities. Whilst a study from the UN found that 48% of girls in Iran and 10% in India believe that menstruation is a disease. It all stems from the belief that menstruating women and girls are ‘unclean’, and gender discrimination.

Lack of access to sanitary products causes many girls to use uncommon and unusual materials, which can have negative effects on their reproductive health. Whilst some girls use rags or cut up mattress, others are forced to use leaves and bark. Not only is this degrading but the use of leaves or old rags can cause serious infections to occur.
So what’s being done about the situation? One South Sudanese refugee, who was given asylum in Australia, was inspired to do something about the dire situation after becoming a mother. Akeer Chut-Deng founded the Freedom Pads Project, which provides essential period products to South Sudanese school children, she says "We must educate girls and look after them if we want a better country,". In March 2018 Freedom Pads Project had enough donations to travel to Uganda in order to begin distributing products to girls living in refugee camps, in total 1500 pads were distributed.

Another local project in South Sudan was set up by David Clement, the project is now supported by UNICEF, he is dedicated to 'breaking the silence' around menstruation in South Sudan. He assessed that one of the main issues is that disposable, single-use, sanitary pads are too expensive and an unaffordable luxury for most families in the poverty-stricken country, and so he designed a reusable pad, which he called the SmilePad after the smiles that the project put on girls faces. The pads are now distributed to girls in schools and displacement camps with the aim of keeping girls from dropping out of education.

Although the above projects are taking huge strides to improve the lack of access to sanitary products in South Sudan, while harmful taboos surrounding periods remain, girls will continue to suffer socially and educationally. Girlguiding in the UK ran a trip to Malawi to help educate local schoolgirls and women about periods, with the aim of tackling taboo.

But this is one small step in the marathon that it will be to end the stigma around periods. So what do I think needs to be done? Sanitary products should continue to be distributed to vulnerable girls and governments should help fund this initiative. Not only this but better sex education in schools is a must, if the next generation of South Sudanese children are educated correctly about menstruation then girls will grow up unashamed and these new, modern views will be passed down to their children. I think that it is a topic which is being shied away from, not only in South Sudan but globally, but it's a conversation which needs to happen, because nobody should have to miss out on an education due to their period.
Junior Essay—2nd Place: Alexia Lowe

To what extent is social media beneficial in tackling human rights crises in Nigeria?

There seems to be no conclusive answer to whether social media in the Western world is beneficial or harmful. However, in a developing country such as Nigeria, which is already in the midst of deadly ethnic violence, the consequences of misinformation on social media can be fatal. On the other hand, its benefits are enhanced: the internet can be used to raise awareness about horrific human rights abuses taking place in Nigeria every day, as well as introducing opportunities for the economy’s development. With 24 million active Facebook users in Nigeria, the use of social media is a key element of daily lifestyle: this essay will assess whether the benefits of social media platforms in tackling human right crises outweigh the fatal repercussions they bring.

Social media is beneficial as it creates opportunities: international communication is a crucial element of a country’s development, especially in Nigeria, which is generally considered the heart of business in West Africa. Lagos’s airport is the main arrival point for eighty per cent of flights into West Africa, and many new service industries, found in the Central Business District, are based there. The internet, particularly business platforms such as LinkedIn, allows for communication that is crucial to the expansion of these businesses, which contribute to the development of a country’s economy; and a well-developed Nigerian economy will be far better at tackling human right crises than one which is corrupt and regressive.

Not only do social media platforms aid a country’s development, but they play an important role in directly raising awareness about horrific human rights abuses in Nigeria. Through platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, international charities and organisations can encourage people living in developed countries to adopt a more politically active stance in order to help those who are suffering. Some of the challenges facing Nigerians today include: female genital mutilation, which affects more than 20 million Nigerian women; extreme poverty, as 64% of Nigerians live on less than $1 per day; an HIV epidemic, which is estimated to affect 3.2 million people; and terrorist groups, including Boko Haram, which has displaced 1 million people, and Fulani herdsmen, which are ranked the fourth deadliest terrorist group in the world. Through social media platforms,
charities can work to raise awareness and tackle these human right crises.

However, the spread of misinformation on social media platforms have already proved fatal in Nigeria. In 2017, ‘fake news’ was nominated to be word of the year: in the Western world, it sparked controversy and created anger and distortions, in both US elections and the Brexit referendum. In Nigeria, its repercussions are amplified by reinforcing resentment between hostile ethnic groups, which leads to hate killings. On 23 June 2018, horrifically graphic images circulated on Facebook, such as one where a man’s skull had been hacked open (which was viewed 11,000 times), claiming to be the result of Fulani Muslims killing Christians in the Ganshish district of Plateau State. These images, however, were fake: the image of the man’s skull was taken in 2012 in Congo-Brazzaville, almost 1,000 miles away. Nonetheless, the photos sparked hatred and resulted in Berom men searching for Fulani Muslims the following day: 11 men were taken from their cars and killed with machetes or burnt to death. Both the Nigerian police and army believe the fake images circulating on Facebook contributed to these reprisals; the public relations officer for the Plateau State Police said ‘fake news on Facebook is killing people’.

Not only does the spread of misinformation on social media in Nigeria lead to brutal killings, but it can also have subtler, but equally dangerous, repercussions. For example, in the 2019 presidential elections, politicians had learnt to manipulate the electorate based on falsities. The election itself was postponed for a number of reasons, including ‘suspected sabotage’. The use of social media allows for the continual spread of ‘fake news’, targeting the most vulnerable people: the general public of Nigeria. Misinformation can have detrimental consequences when it comes to any election, but these effects are exacerbated in a developing country, where an unfair election could damage development, lead to corruption and jeopardise democracy. Social media and the spread of misinformation online can result in the electoral success of unlawful parties, which have a pernicious influence on the public’s access to basic human rights.

There remains a valid argument for both the benefits and detriments of social media in Nigeria. However, the circulation of fake news on platforms such as Facebook has heightened hostility between rival religions and put vulnerable people at risk; without change, this violence is likely to augment. Unless social media companies do more in order to prevent the spread of this misinformation, the disadvantages of social media will outweigh the benefits it brings in tackling human right crises in Nigeria.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


‘How fake news was weaponised in Nigeria’s elections’


A Neglected Camp of Potential

Ragged white tents. Overflowing latrines. Paltry essentials and inadequate sanitation. Such are the conditions Rohingya refugees must endure within Bangladesh’s largest refugee camp, Cox’s Bazar. Although these conditions pale in comparison to the horrors of the ethnic cleansing the Rohingya faced back home in Burma, this temporary settlement is a breeding ground for waterborne diseases, overcrowding, and unemployment. Moreover, the burden of accommodating 900,000 refugees has compelled the Bangladeshi government to resort to refugee repatriation, a process in which thousands of Rohingya are obliged to return to Burma amidst the ongoing conflict. However, it is crucial that we look beyond the superficial and recognize the camps’ true potential.

Although tragic, the plight of the Rohingya is not unique. As conflicts around the world provoke mass emigration, neighbouring countries scramble to provide for the sudden influx of migrants. Such countries are often wary of refugee camps; more than two-thirds of refugees are in protracted situations, meaning they will likely be displaced for more than 20 years due to relentless conflict. In such cases, it is both immoral and perilous to send refugees back. The host countries’ concerns are not unreasonable, however; the long-term stay of refugees in a country, particularly one that’s troubled economically, could put an immense strain on its social systems. For example, Jordan was compelled to close its borders to Syrian refugees despite billions of dollars of foreign aid, stating that this only covered a fraction of the costs necessary to facilitate asylum. Uganda barely received foreign aid at all, and hosting 900,000 South Sudanese refugees drove them towards a food crisis. Likewise, clearing thickets on Bangladesh’s border for millions of Rohingya have devastated national forests in climate change prone areas, endangering biodiversity and local industries. In addition to financial and environmental impacts, citizens are commonly concerned about social consequences; refugees could struggle to find work and assimilate into a new culture.

Given all the potential repercussions, countries are generally reluctant to fund education, healthcare, social security, and local economies within refugee camps for fear that the refugees would become “too comfortable” and decide not to leave. A prime example of this nonchalance is in Lebanon, where authorities have done little to drain the knee-deep water in refugee
camps left by winter storms, instead encouraging refugees to depart. In Europe, migrants are not welcome either. Right-wing populists have run rampant across the EU, stoking panic and fear of supposed migrant invasions. Populist leaders reason that due to internal challenges, the interests of civilians should precede those of welfare-dependent and potentially “dangerous” foreigners. Ironically, these nationalist sentiments have, in fact, produced more refugee camps. For instance, thousands of Syrian refugees are stranded on the Greek island of Lesbos, waiting endlessly for their asylum requests to be processed; heightened border restrictions and reluctance to accept refugees mean the process could take months. Moreover, conditions are appalling—overcrowding and violence have driven children as young as 10 to attempt suicide.

The international community must recognize that degrading life in refugee camps is not an incentive for refugees to leave; widespread war and persecution continue in their home countries. Thus, dire circumstances only contrive them into yet another dreadful situation. In fact, many refugees resent migration and only leave out of necessity. A South Sudanese refugee, for one, declared that “[they] just want to go home. Not to Europe. Not to America.”

It is imperative that countries around the world abandon the misconception that increasing funding for refugee camps solely benefits refugees. Firstly, improving their living conditions and providing refugees with means to sustain themselves reduces the burden on the host country. Instead of relying on the government for basic necessities, refugees will have the means to grow their own crops and bolster the local economy. Secondly, educated refugees can become a skilled workforce capable of contributing to the economy of whichever country they settle in. Finally, improved sanitation and diminished violence could reduce hostility towards refugees across the globe; demonstrating that refugees are neither dangerous nor criminal shatter the existing stigma and undermine populism’s influence. Evidence of such progress can already be seen, notably in Jordan’s Zaatari refugee camp. There, Syrians have opened markets, restaurants, and hair salons to provide themselves with basic goods and services. The children have never glimpsed the world outside the confinements of the camp, yet many have aspirations for the future; one young girl dreams of becoming a pharmacist and aspires to receive university education upon leaving the camp. After decades of fruitless attempts to end conflicts, directing efforts towards refugee camps like Zaatari could be the key to future progress in this area.
Despite the stigma surrounding them, refugee camps have tremendous potential. Rather than leaving them grossly underfunded, countries should be encouraged to invest in a brighter future for all.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


Intermediate Essay—1st Place: Aili Channer

Does cultural tradition impede or enhance development and access to human rights?

From the colonial era to globalisation, traditions that do not conform to the Western social model have been put under threat from outside pressure. This began with the wave of mission work in the nineteenth century, and, more recently, increasing economic prospects along with the soft power of television and the internet have meant that traditional ways of life have continued to decline and customs to disappear. But should this be heralded as the beginning of a more enlightened age, where quality and prospects of life will be improved, or should it cause alarm to humanitarian workers? Focusing on the African context, I will first consider the disadvantages that cultural tradition can pose for development and the ways in which it can cause human rights abuses, before examining how it may be of value. Most importantly, what balance can be found?

Traditional practices that appear to violate the rights of certain groups have been causing concern on the international platform in recent decades. This is true particularly for women, whose traditional role in many pastoralist and traditional rural cultures undermines their possibilities for education and self-advancement, thereby hindering the development of the region. Customs such as bride abduction, child marriage, and, notoriously, female genital mutilation, are still widespread in these areas. FGM is a particularly deep-seated tradition that persists despite the efforts of the outside world to have it outlawed and to educate its practitioners of its harmful effects. As long as these cultures cling to tradition and their cultural notions of desirability in women, girls’ health will continue to be put at risk. One key problem is that connection is rarely made between FGM and its health consequences, which are often attributed to random or supernatural causes.

Similarly, the lives of many Nigerians are still gripped by superstition and the fear of witchcraft. This is the effect of the indigenous belief that life is ruled by spirits of good and evil, which are rooted in the collective psyche of this region, combined with the influence of Nollywood and the work of corrupt Christian pastors and “prophets”. Misusing their spiritual authority and taking advantage of their followers’ precarious financial circumstances and lack of education, pastors may extort fees to identify witches and to carry out exorcisms. Most victims have been vulnerable children, who, once
blamed for illness or family ill-fortune, may suffer all manners of physical and emotional abuse. Children who escape to live on the streets live in constant danger and work to protect them cannot happen fast enough. Unfortunately, this superstitious world-view is deeply ingrained and so long as it remains, childhoods will continue to be jeopardised.

These are examples of cultural practices and beliefs that can have extremely destructive effects and need to be urgently addressed. It would be a mistake, however, to see all forms of tradition in this light. For example, pastoralists in Baringo County, Kenya, regretted the breakdown of the traditional structure of their societies, since in previous times the elders had been able to counsel the youth and to resolve conflicts that arose. They believed that the disappearance of this source of authority and community cohesion was contributing to the destabilisation of the region. Similarly, Malidoma Patrice Somé emphasises the value of the African concept of community with its focus on fostering the individual, which has the potential to create dramatic positive change. Tradition has evolved as an organic response to the physical and social climates of its region, so it can actually hold the solutions to the issues that hinder the area’s development. In the Malian regions of Mopti and Segou, the indigenous associations for restoring and protecting the land, known as Barahogon, have the potential to combat desertification where Western tree-planting schemes have failed. This kind of native knowledge has inspired the regreening of over five million hectares across the Sahel. Likewise, Wangari Maathai saw the Green Belt Movement, being an intrinsically grass-roots initiative, as a way of giving communities an authentic cultural voice.

Furthermore, tradition has potential benefits beyond tangible advantages of this sort. It provides a sense of rootedness and identity that is pivotal to a community’s collective well-being. Simone Weil developed this idea, saying “To be rooted is perhaps the most important and the least recognised need of the human soul. An individual is rooted by real, natural and active participation in a community that preserves certain treasures of the past and certain feelings about the future. Uprooting always takes place when there is a military conquest, and this can become an almost mortal disease to the people who are subjugated to colonial rule”. In this view, an effort to revive cultural connectedness in former colonies is actually necessary for their progress. Cultural impoverishment leads to insecurity and community depression, which particularly affect young people and rank alongside material poverty as factors behind radicalisation and violence. The purpose of development is inarguably to serve, rather than to suppress, a culture. The ability to wholeheartedly partake in and practice one’s culture is a fundamental
human right. Tradition by definition retains links with the past, but this does not mean that culture should be static or regressive: in fact, the fluidity that allows it to evolve and progress is key to its health and survival. Therefore, it is possible to embrace traditional culture while reassessing customs that are damaging, such as the examples of superstition and FGM. In order for this to take place, education is vital: it empowers the potential victims of these practices to defend themselves, and their practitioners to recognise and understand their ill effects. Education should ideally take place within the traditional framework of the culture, embodying the fact that tradition and change, far from being contradictory, can be allies.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aljazeera, How Nigeria’s fear of “witchcraft” ruins young lives, 2018
Wangari Maathai, Replenishing the Earth, 2010
Sahel Eco, Farmer managed natural regeneration of trees in the Sahel, 2014
Malidoma Patrice Somé, The Healing Wisdom of Africa, 1999
Simone Weil, The Need for Roots, 1949
Universal human rights are often recognised as a western concept, therefore to what extent can they be enforced effectively?

Due to the nature of its origin, human rights are often considered a Western concept rather than a universal one. Traditions, history, and culture instinctively influence our perceptions and values which, in turn, affects our actions. At the time of the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights\(^1\) out of the 58 countries, there were 4 African countries and 14 Asian countries. This shows the overrepresented western norms and values are in human rights, and fails to acknowledge the social and cultural differences between societies. The UDHR were created in response to the inhumane actions committed in WW2, which I think is quite ironic, as it seems human rights only really mattered until such violations happened close to home. By 1948, much of the developing world was still colonised by western powers, apartheid had begun in South Africa, and the fight for black civil rights in America was gaining steam. This again highlights western bias. Human rights are centered around individual rights which is considered a trait of western society, whereas African and Asian cultures value collective rights. This may be were there is a misunderstanding of what human rights are.

The idea that we are all the same and therefore share the same values is simply not the case. It can be argued that it is impractical to implement universal human rights in a world filled with multifarious cultures and ways of living. By continuously stressing that we each have our own individual rights, we often ‘attempt to transcend cultural bias’\(^2\). This ignorance means that human rights laws somehow fail to protect and apply to those who are most in need of them. No parent likes being told how to raise and discipline their child because to each parent, no matter how good or bad, their way is the correct way. The same can be said about the application of human rights if they interfere with practices and traditions. Take FGM for example, it is used to control a women’s sexuality, promote marriageability, and is often seen as ‘a rite of passage into womanhood’ therefore preventing gender equality. FGM clearly violates Article 5 of the UDHR which states that ‘no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment’. Despite increased international action taken against it, as of January 2019, 87% of women and girls between ages 15-49 in Sudan have undergone FGM\(^3\), and a staggering 41% of women and girls who have heard of the practice, think it should continue\(^4\). These statistics show that
Despite the negative impact it has on women and girls, it is accepted because of the lifestyle and customs of that society. Therefore, it can be argued that human rights aren’t universal because of the differences in social and cultural norms.

Despite this, human rights can still be implemented to some extent through organisations like HART. HART supports ‘people suffering from conflict and persecution’ and helps ‘build local capacity to tackle adversity and connect local need with those who have the power and the means to bring long-lasting change’\(^5\). Organisation like these don’t implicitly aim to make radical change through enforcement of laws (because this clearly doesn’t work), but rather through providing crucial support specific to that area which enable human rights to become an influence in society. HART’s partner the ‘Mai Adiko Peace Project’\(^6\) in Jos, Nigeria is a perfect example of this. Jos has been subject to brutal violence, which has led to poor relations between Muslims and Christian in that area. Mai Adiko strives to create peace by ‘bringing together members of the Christian and Muslim communities for a broad range of activities’ by providing education, economic independence, and physical activities\(^7\). By encouraging interactions between these two groups both parties start to recognise that despite their religious differences, they can live and work together in harmony which is in line with articles one\(^8\), two\(^9\) and eighteen\(^10\) of the UHDR. Therefore, human rights can be implemented but not in such an obvious way.

Our world is made up of societies, each with their traits, ideologies, and ways of life which makes it impossible state that human rights are universal, therefore the extent to which they can be enforced is limited. Foreign organisations can only do so much as to influence. It is up to society to change but as always, change is hard. Human rights also raises the question of morality; we can also conclude that human rights should separate ‘humanity’ and ‘morality’ because each culture and society has their own understanding of ‘morality’ and therefore they shouldn’t be enforced onto others. However, humanity is universal and is something that cannot be ignored.
1. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948. It sets out, for the first time, fundamental human rights to be universally protected and it has been translated into over 500 languages.


5. https://www.hart-uk.org/about-us/


8. All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood. http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/

9. Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty. http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/

10. Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance. http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/
Is Uganda really ‘The Pearl of Africa’?

Pearls are commonly associated with purity, as well as generosity and loyalty. On top of this, they are believed to strengthen relationships, offer protection and attract wealth. Following his trip to Uganda in 1907, William Churchill described Uganda as ‘The Pearl of Africa’. Pearls have multiple positive connotations; but do the characteristics of the country really coincide with what this beautiful gemstone represents?

As a country with an incredibly high refugee intake (predominantly from Sudan), Uganda has undoubtedly displayed the characteristic of generosity, which would make referring to the country as ‘The Pearl of Africa’ justified. They have employed a munificent policy which enables refugees to have the same opportunities as Ugandan nationals, including access to healthcare, education and employment. In fact, refugees are allocated a plot of land on which they can construct shelters and grow food. It seems incredible that a developing country like Uganda has helped more refugees than a nation like the United Kingdom, which has repeatedly denied entry to vulnerable refugees who are simply in search of a better life. Despite the generosity that Uganda has demonstrated, the intake of refugees contradicts what a pearl symbolises. Since it is a gemstone which attracts wealth, it can be argued that this refugee crisis has done the opposite, meaning that it would be wrong to refer to Uganda as a pearl. Through its intake of refugees, Uganda has attracted more poverty instead, evidenced by the increase in food shortages in Uganda, particularly in north-eastern regions like Karamoja, where a large proportion of Uganda’s 1 million refugees reside. Furthermore, the pearl is linked to strengthened relationships; however, this has not been the case as there are often disputes between refugees and Ugandan nationals.

The pearl is associated with the loyalty and generosity of its wearer; however, Ugandan government officials have often engaged in corrupt activity. They are often exempt from prosecution; in fact, the 2013 report entitled ‘Letting the big fish swim: failure to prosecute high-level corruption in Uganda’, revealed that no high-ranking official, minister or political appointee had spent time in prison despite many corruption scandals. According to the 2007 African Peer Review Mechanism report, over £160 million is lost a year due to corruption, which has led to an unequal distribution of wealth in society and a lack of access to opportunity. Officials
have selfishly taken large sums of money which could have been invested into education and healthcare. Uganda has approximately 28,000 HIV-related deaths annually; however, a lack of education has contributed to discrimination towards those diagnosed with the disease and a lack of healthcare funding has resulted in patients not receiving the required treatment. Clearly, the government have not done enough to protect its people from discrimination and health issues. The introduction of the Miss Curvy competition by Uganda’s tourism minister, Godfrey Kiwanda, also demonstrates a lack of government protection. He proposed that Uganda’s ‘naturally endowed nice-looking women’ could be used as a ‘strategy to promote our [Uganda’s] tourism industry’. This demeaning and degrading competition exploits women as it uses them as a commodity to generate revenue within the economy, which is morally wrong and does not correlate with the characteristic of purity represented by the pearl. By launching this competition, the government are propagating the notion that women are simply sexual objects. Individuals should be shielded from the negative ideas promoted by this competition. Not only does it objectify women, it also glorifies a voluptuous body type that not everyone is able to obtain which invites insecurity and could encourage unhealthy lifestyles. Despite the existing issues in Uganda, the government have shown themselves to be unwilling to consider the needs of their people, which has weakened the relationship between the government and the people. The musician Bobi Wine, who is nicknamed the ‘Ghetto President’ has fought hard to represent the views of the population. Unfortunately, the government has tortured him and silenced his voice, instead of listening to him in attempt to improve the lives of everyone in the country.

Ultimately, Uganda is a beautiful nation, which is reflected in its ethnic diversity, vibrant culture and breath-taking scenery. Although the country has its natural beauty, the human rights issues which prevail have diminished the beauty of the nation. One may conclude that Uganda’s title of ‘The Pearl of Africa’ is unsuitable, given the overwhelming amount of evidence exposing societal problems that contradict the positive traits represented by the pearl. However, I reject this view and propose that Uganda certainly deserves its name, but its beauty has simply been tarnished by the humanitarian issues in the country. I contend wealthier nations should endeavour to support Uganda, in order to revitalise the economy and restore the pearl-like beauty that the nation possesses.
“Human Rights can sometimes be dismissed as a western concept. Using one or more of the countries HART works with, explain why this view could occur and/or suggest how you go about promoting ownership of Human Rights.”

Imagine that you are asked the question; “which of your Human Rights would you be willing to give up?”. What would be your answer? Would your answer be the Right to Life? Protection from Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment? These fundamental rights aimed at protecting our common humanity

are not so easy to dismiss when asked which one we would be happy to part with. Yet, the very rights aimed at protecting us are also subject to criticism, specifically in that they are Westernised, Eurocentric and are applied selectively. This essay will endeavour to address how the view that Human Rights are a Western concept can occur through discussing the colonial history behind their creation and inaction in the Syrian Civil War. This essay will also consider how to promote Human Rights ownership regionally and internationally, concluding that refugee protection is essential to ownership of Human Rights owing to the vulnerability of refugee populations.

The dismissal of Human Rights as a Western concept is not novel, the underlying reasons can be attributed to the colonial encounter. One of the core justifications of colonialism was the need to save natives from themselves, otherwise known as a civilising mission. Features of the civilising mission included placing the conquered under a system of guardianship, teaching them the Christian ways of life and ensuring the natives acted in a manner which was acceptable to European colonizers. Human Rights share some parallels with the civilising missions as they seek to regulate behaviour and to ensure States are acting in an acceptable manner in the international arena. Further, new States claiming independence from colonial rule were only recognised to the extent they respected Human Rights, democracy and the Rule of Law, linking Human Rights with the colonial encounter. As this essay will specifically focus on Syria, it is important to note that this history is applicable to Syria as it was placed under a French Mandate System of Guardianship and Syria is also one of the Non-Aligned Member States which seek to abolish imperialism.
one of the Non-Aligned Member States which seek to abolish imperialism stemming from former colonies in the international arena. Therefore, the historical development of Human Rights and its intrinsic link to colonialism will play an imperative role in the view that human rights are a Western concept.

The selective enforcement and regulation of Human Rights Law in Syria is a second reason why this view can emerge. To date, over four hundred and fifty thousand people have been killed since the start of the war. The numerous actors in the context of the war have been committing War Crimes, such as targeting civilians and hospitals, using chemical weapons and the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria have been systematically enslaving and committing genocide against the Yazidi population. Under International Law, if a State is unable or unwilling to protect its civilians, then a Responsibility to Protect falls onto the International Community (specifically the United Nations Security Council). The permanent five members (China, Russia, USA, UK and France) have a power to Veto any intervention and the international level, which owing to the political dimensions and alliances in Syria has resulted in Vetoing any intervention. This has led to failure to protect civilians in mass atrocity in Syria. Therefore, the view that Human Rights are inherently Western can be given some credibility here as it is Western Human Rights institutions which are preventing action, when such States have acted unilaterally to negate authority in States which they have a vested interest in such as the US-UK Led invasion of Iraq.

It can be said that the insincere slogan of “never again” which the international community pledged following a lack of intervention in Rwanda and Srebrenica, which led to mass civilian deaths is being repeated in the context of Syria.

Ownership of Human Rights is the notion of placing greater emphasis on the need to uphold and respect Human Rights. Ownership of Human Rights is a global effort owing to the universal nature of Human Rights. Ownership can be achieved locally, regionally and internationally and often entails a degree of responsibility on States, as well as accountability. In the case of Syria, ideally, ensuring the Syrian Government, the so-called Islamic State and all parties actively perpetrating War Crimes against civilians are held accountable through International Criminal Law would assist in ownership of Human Rights. Nevertheless, at present prosecution is unlikely, so we must turn to other methods.

At the regional level, refugee protection is essential in promoting Human Rights ownership. It is estimated that more than half of Syria’s twenty-two million civilians have been displaced by the war and most
refugees flee to neighbouring States within the region such as Jordan, Turkey, Iraq amongst others. States hosting refugees must ensure that basic Human Rights of refugees are being met, such as children to have access to school, access to medical care and housing, protection from being repatriated. This will also assist in countering the narrative that Human Rights are inherently Western, as refugees from a non-Western States such as Syria will be afforded equal Human Rights protection.

At the international level, ownership of Human Rights which could assist in countering the narrative that Human Rights are Western, could be through placing more responsibility on States contributing to the conflict either directly through conducting airstrikes or indirectly through arms sales to third parties. For example, the United Kingdom has contributed directly to the conflict in Syria through conducting illegal airstrikes and has also been indirectly contributing by selling arms to Saudi Arabia, who have been supporting the Syrian Rebels. Both direct and indirect contributions to conflict increase refugee numbers and destroy property in Syria, therefore it would be sensible to suggest the United Kingdom should bear a responsibility to host more refugees than it currently does and to assist in rebuilding (both physically and financially) in Syria following the conflict. This will enable refugees to return if they wish to and rebuilding schools, hospitals and homes will ensure basic Human Rights can be accommodated upon return.

To conclude; the criticism that Human Rights are inherently Western is understandable when considered in the context of how civilising missions during the colonial era mirror Human Rights today. This view is also reasonable given the lack of intervention in the Syrian Civil War to safeguard civilians against mass violations of their Human Rights. The inaction in Syria may one day be placed in the same tragic category as inaction in Srebrenica and Rwanda. Nevertheless, Human Rights ownership can assist in countering this narrative and this was briefly demonstrated through promoting regional protection of refugee populations and through focusing on placing responsibility on States contributing to the conflict to accept more refugees and to have a plan in place to rebuild when the conflict ends. Refugee protection is essential in supporting ownership of Human Rights as refugees are vulnerable and are an easy group to target for Human Rights abuse. Resorting to the opening sentence of this essay, which of your human rights would you be willing to part with? Human Rights are not so easily dismissed when faced with such a question; regardless of the criticism that Human Rights are Westernised.
2. ibid article 5.
3. ibid article 3.
5. ibid pg 172.
7. ibid pg 32.
18. ibid pg 3.

21. ibid.


28. 28 Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees (United Nations General Assembly Resolution 429 (V) of 14th December 1950) 189 UNTS 137, article 33.


33. Costas Douzinas, Human Rights and Empire: The Political Philosophy of Cosmopolitanism (Routledge-Cavendish, 2007) pg. 172
“Discuss the roles and impacts of different actors in Nagorno Karabakh's struggle for recognised statehood”

This essay aims to raise awareness of the complex and ongoing conflict in the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh, often neglected by international media. To achieve this, it will outline the enclave’s history and current settlement. Then, it intends to scrutinise political actor's roles. The recent four-day war, clashes along the line of contact, irresponsible rhetoric and military build-up shows a clear need for the acceptance of Nagorno-Karabakh’s statehood and a lasting peace. Crucially, any arrangement depends on the conduct of actors. This essay intends to hold them to account.

Firstly, it is essential to define vocabulary. Nagorno-Karabakh (Russianised name¹; known as Artsakh by Armenians and officially The Republic of Artsakh,² Azeris know it as Dagliq Qarabag³) is a self-declared state in the Caucasus. Internationally, it is unrecognised and is recognised as Azerbaijan⁴. In that case, we will examine history to understand how this settlement occurred. In regards to terminology, the essay will use the name in the title; Nagorno-Karabakh.

Nagorno-Karabakh constituted one of fifteen regions of the Kingdom of Armenia and has long been inhabited by Armenians.⁵ The demographics started to change with the migration of Turkic tribes in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries.⁶ In the sixteenth century, Armenia, including Nagorno-Karabakh, and Azerbaijan became part of Persia.⁷ This lasted until 1813 for Karabakh and Azerbaijan, and 1828 for Armenia when the territories ceded to the Russian Empire. Russian rule lasted until 1917 due to the dissolution of the Tsar.⁸ Resultantly, the short-lived Transcaucasian Republic emerged but led to subsequent declarations of independence by Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia in 1918.⁹ At this time, Nagorno-Karabakh was dominated by Armenians.¹⁰

History shows, when nations emerge from their Imperialist past disputes often occur. Armenia and Azerbaijan disputed several border territories such as Karabakh (Upper and Lower), Nakichevan and Zangezour.¹¹ Nevertheless, in 1920, the Republics were absorbed into the Soviet Union.¹² Alas, the issue came under Soviet control. In 1923, Stalin created the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast.¹³ The justification was because both countries
because both countries claimed the region, to maintain peace; Nagorno-Karabakh should be given special status. However, this left it within the borders of Soviet Azerbaijan. On inspection, this was a political move: to appease Turkey and to implement a divide and rule policy. Ultimately, the Imperialism of the Soviet Union contributed significantly to the current situation.

In 1988, political unrest spread across the Soviet Union. The Karabakh movement emerged in 1988 and demanded NKSO join Soviet Armenia. In February 1988, the Regional Soviet People's Deputies of NKAO declared independence. As a result, fighting broke out between Armenians and Azeris in Nagorno-Karabakh and triggered fighting between the two peoples who were each also living in Armenia and Azerbaijan. This resulted in population exchange as both ethnicities fled to their corresponding ethnic state. In 1991, fighting intensified when Armenia and Azerbaijan declared independence and the enclave was claimed in the Republic of Azerbaijan's territory. It continued until a ceasefire in 1994 and left approximately 30,000 people killed; 600,000-800,000 IDPs, damage to infrastructure and a ruined economy. The truce resulted in the loss of Nagorno-Karabakh and seven border territories for Azerbaijan.

Our historical analysis was crucial. It allowed us to comprehend why the situation exists; and has highlighted important actors. Now to turn to the topic of the essay. Essentially, it feels appropriate, to begin with, the opinion of Nagorno-Karabakh, so often ignored. Simply, the inhabitants desire recognition as an Independent Republic. This has been clearly proven by: history; the success of Karabakh movement in the mobilisation of the population; and a vote for independence in 1991. But, even though peoples have a right to self-determination under Article I Charter of the United Nations, the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh is not recognised. This is because it did not conform to international standards; it was boycotted by the Karabakh Azeri population and an election cannot take place under an occupying force; there was the presence of Armenian (and Azerbaijani) militias. Despite this, the Karabakhi government aims to defend territory and maintain independence.

Azerbaijan rejects independence. This is based on historical reasoning and the assertion of its natural right to territorial integrity. It uses the Karbakh issue internationally to question the function of international law and domestically to whip-up nationalism. Altogether, the main aim of Azerbaijan is to recover territory. Armenia initially claimed the enclave as a part of its borders but now supports independence. This stance was adopted to appeal the right of self-
determination to the international community. However, Armenia has not recognised the newly declared Republic; due to relations with Russia and the risk of sparking conflict. Overall, Armenia's aim is to protect ethnic Armenians and defend territory.

Officially, Russia supports Azerbaijan but in reality, it exploits the current situation. It sells weapons to both sides, it encourages closer integration with Azerbaijan and deters Armenia from moving closer to the EU; Russia has shown Georgia what happens when the Caucasus looks westward. Arguably, Russia's interests are to maintain the status-quo. Turkey supports Azerbaijan because relations have always been tense with Armenia due to the Genocide. Secondly, there is an Islamist-Nationalist government who is pursuing a pan-Turkic agenda which naturally takes it closer to Azerbaijan. Thirdly, Turkey wants to be economically independent of Russia and has interests in Azerbaijan. Nevertheless, Turkey is unlikely to support conflict overtly due to its obligations in NATO.

Oppositely, Iran supports Armenia because: competition with Turkey over control of Muslims in the Caucasus and territorial disputes with Azerbaijan. Although, this is not a position that can be exploited due to sanctions against Iran. The final actor to consider is OSCE-Minsk co-chaired by France, Russia and the USA. Set up in 1992 to provide a framework for peace and bring parties together it has been criticised for not being useful, inefficiency and the inability of co-chairs to remain neutral.

Now to consider solutions; One is joint sovereignty for Armenia and Azerbaijan. But, this is unlikely due to lack of trust and it denies Karabakhis the right to self-determination. Interestingly, a recent compromise has been suggested known as the Kazan Proposal. This suggests Nagorno-Karabakh could be independent, including recognition by Azerbaijan, if five border territories are ceded. This has even been spoken positively on by Armenia. However, caution must be urged. This could reignite war, could be unacceptable to the people of Nagorno-Karabakh, as it would cut off the geographic link with Armenia, and it could give Azerbaijan a military advantage. Though, this could be deterred with the deployment of OSCE troops to oversee peace. Nevertheless, this could be unacceptable to Russia for personnel from hostile nations being so close to their interests. Azerbaijan could recognise the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh in return for displaced Azeris being permitted to return but due to mistrust, this seems unlikely.

In conclusion, this essay shows the complex nature of the conflict due to history along with competing interests. The political and military settlement is un-sustainable; the people are suffering due to isolation and
settlement is un-sustainable; the people are suffering due to isolation and recurring clashes. With a new President in Armenia, there could be a new beginning and fresh talks, including renewed ideas such as the Kazan Plan. Peace can be achieved through dialogue, determination and guarantees. This essay demands peace and independence; the people have suffered long enough.

ENDNOTES/BIBLIOGRAPGHY

2. Rettmann, “Referendum to create ‘Republic of Artsakh’ on Europe’s fringe”, 2017
4. Ibid no1
5. Ibid no3
6. Ibid no1
7. agbu.org, “NAGORNO KARABAKH: A BRIEF HISTORY”, 2012
8. Ibid no7
9. Ibid no7
10. (NKRUSA.org, 2005)
11. Ibid no7
12. Ibid no7
14. Ibid no13
16. Ibid no1
17. evnreport.com, “The Karabakh Movement or What was Happening in Soviet Armenia 30 Years Ago”, 2018
18. Ibid no17
22. Ibid no19
23. Ibid no 21
25. Ibid no17
26. Ibid no21
27. Ibid no19
29. Ibid no24
30. E.Fuller, “Azerbaijan’s Foreign Policy and the Nagomo-Karabakh Conflict”,
31. Ibid no30
32. Ibid no30
33. Ibid no19
35. Ibid no34
36. Ibid no1
37. Ibid no19
39. Ibid no28
40. Ibid no24
41. Ibid no34
42. T, Vayrynen, “New Conflicts and their Peaceful Resolution: Post-Cold War Conflicts, Alternative means for their Resolution and the Case of Nagorno-Karabakh”, 1998
43. Ibid no19
44. Ibid no34
45. crisisgroup.org, Old Conflict, New Armenia: The View from Baku, 2019
46. Ibid no45
Senior Essay—3rd Place: Maya Muller

How notions of morality in humanitarianism can be used to leverage aid more effectively in Myanmar

Foucault once wrote that humanitarian workers possess an inherent moral core, because “...their raison d’être is doing good.”[1] Conversely, anthropologist Didier Fassin insists on debunking the myth of the ‘moral immunity of humanitarianism’[2]. Fassin bases his argument on the premise that the world of humanitarianism is imbued with a sense of moral supremacy “that claims it need not submit to any external moral oversight.”[3]

In this paper, I propose that Fassin’s line of reasoning necessitates a more serious degree of consideration when granting financial aid to humanitarian groups in Myanmar. This is to recognize that everybody, both local and international humanitarian actors are complicit when it comes to ensuring that aid is effectively leveraged. Additionally, I will introduce John Mearsheimer’s ‘freezer-theory’ as a useful way of understanding the humanitarian agents’ context within the current political transition happening in Myanmar.

To break the illusion of a moral core, an important question is

“Can any and everything be criticized?” versus “Can any and everything be subjected to critical analysis?” The latter suggests a more useful scientific approach. That is, without judgment or criticism, “by taking seriously the [agents’] capacity for reflexivity.”[4] At present, Myanmar is one of the world’s largest recipients of international development assistance. Known as the ‘donor darling’ of Southeast Asia, in 2017 Myanmar ranked fourth in the index of Recipient of Most Foreign Aid In The World, receiving a total of $3.9 billion.[5] Myanmar has one of the highest poverty rates in the region and serious deficits in social services and infrastructure.

From 2011 onwards, following over four decades of military dictatorship, former president Thein Sein opened the floodgates to socio-economic reform. As part of his political agenda, he proactively sought foreign aid by welcoming a number of diversified donor agencies in the country. However, as one of the most corrupt countries in the world[6] with a handful of poorly managed donor programs and charities becoming obsolete, the question on how aid is actually leveraged in a country within

[7]
which ethnic conflicts are rife remains unknown.\[^7\]

Three years ago, The Irrawady newspaper posted an article titled ‘Where Has Burma’s Peace Money Gone?’ In this article, it is argued that international financial aid only created more war throughout the country. The article talks about allegations that emerged of assets funded by international donors which were split among members of the Myanmar Peace Center (who have strong ties with the military) to fund racecars and big office spaces. This was never investigated. \[^8\]

Similarly, the fact that the government’s peace-process negotiating team for the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement was funded by foreign donors, but the ethnic groups’ negotiators teams were not, created an unwanted dichotomy of unequally distributed aid, which severely limited the capacity of the international donors to assist the country as a whole, not just its’ government which at present is made up of 25 % military generals. \[^9\] With the Joint Peace Fund’s current budget of $30 million, it is crucial that this money is distributed equally. Useful here is Fassin’s view that humanitarian actors both nationally and internationally, must be holding each other accountable, because not a single person is morally superior over another.

Additionally, according to Burma specialist Bertil Lintner, “peacemaking has become a lucrative business in Burma with little or no regard for the suffering of ordinary people.”\[^10\] The director of the Norwegian Burma Committee similarly echoes the lack of understanding by international peace funds; donors worryingingly confuse local paramilitary groups motivated by economic interests, with ethnic armed groups driven by political interests. Parallel to this, what has happened since the opening up of the country in 2015 with the National League of Democracy’s victory is that majority views on minorities were brought to the surface. Here, the Rohingya crisis matches with Mearsheimer’s ‘Freezer Theory’. The main premise of the theory is that ethno-national conflicts which tend to occur during the formation of states, become dormant as they are overridden by bigger territorial issues, only to return later. For instance in Myanmar’s history of British colonial rule followed by the Japanese occupation, as a result of the country’s opening up after 40 years of military rule, natural forces of nationalism and ideas of nationhood have re-emerged.\[^11\]

Similar to the end of the Cold War in 1989, local and regional disputes driven by territorial and nationalist sentiments ‘frozen’ by international historical events were brought to the surface with different groups in the Eastern bloc fighting to settle previously disputed historical accounts (the Ukrainian crisis, and ongoing conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh.) So too, a recourse to nationalism in Myanmar with the first
Karabakh.) So too, a recourse to nationalism in Myanmar with the first exodus of Muslims in 1978 was inevitable with Myanmar’s National League of Democracy’s victory in 2015 and the subsequent opening up of the country. The key question that arises: what constitutes a ‘moral core’ for donor agencies wanting to help the country transition into a democracy? For instance, scholar Patrick Meehan, in discussion about the power of militias in Myanmar’s borderlands, suggests that perspective is a key component: prospects for peace building look starkly different at the margins, than in the capital, Yangon, or abroad. He insists on the need to ‘centre’ borderland experiences in order to recognize the country’s transition to peace.

Understanding the complexity of historically ‘frozen’ ethnic conflicts, how local and international humanitarian groups choose to act in Myanmar plays a critical role in the course of the country’s future. For instance, politically, it is important for NGO’s to urge the National League of Democracy at both the national and sub-national level to engage with Rakhine politicians and include them in the decision-making process regarding Rakhine state. Meanwhile, it would be useful to conduct nationwide interviews (in Burmese) with a representative sample of the Buddhist Burman majority (over 60% of the total population) to see what they think about continuous ethnic conflicts happening in the country. As far as I know, no Buddhist Burmese member of society has ever been formally interviewed by a journalist to provide their opinion on the Rohingya crisis.

The more that the voices of Buddhist Burmese people are shunned or ignored the more difficult to comprehend where widespread hatred against Muslims is coming from. The more an attempt is made to understand the Burmese Buddhist viewpoint by transcending the idea of an ‘assumed morality’, the bigger the chance that humanitarian aid groups can adapt and offer the appropriate help that is so desperately needed on a nationwide scale. The fact of the matter is that Muslims are perceived as a national threat. From a Western perspective, an attempt to unbundle this reality, which to many Buddhist Burmese is seen as a very ‘real’ threat, has not yet been considered.

In conclusion, given how much international aid Myanmar receives each year, more should be done to learn how to leverage aid effectively. I have introduced two different theories as a way to contextualize the current political transition in Myanmar: the ‘freezer theory’ as a way of understanding the current wave of ethnic conflicts, and the ‘immunity of humanitarianism’ to suggest how humanitarian aid can be more effectively leveraged to improve the daily lives of people from all conflict-affected areas.


3. Ibid, p.333


NEARLY 80% OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING IS FOR SEX, AND 19% IS FOR LABOR EXPLOITATION. RESEARCHERS NOTE THAT SEX TRAFFICKING PLAYS A MAJOR ROLE IN THE SPREAD OF HIV. THERE ARE MORE HUMAN SLAVES IN THE WORLD TODAY THAN EVER BEFORE IN HISTORY. THERE ARE AN ESTIMATED 27 MILLION ADULTS AND 13 MILLION CHILDREN AROUND THE WORLD WHO ARE VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING. HUMAN TRAFFICKERS OFTEN USE A SUDANESE PHRASE “USE A SLAVE TO CATCH SLAVES,” MEANING TRAFFICKERS SEND “BROKEN-IN GIRLS” TO RECRUIT YOUNGER GIRLS INTO THE SEX TRADE OR TRAIN GIRLS THEMSELVES, RAPING THEM FOR TRAINING. PEOPLE ARE OFTEN TRAFFICKED ACROSS BORDERS INVOLVES SEX AND CAN BE FOR ORGAN HARVESTING. SOME ARE FORCED INTO CHINA AND OTHER EAST ASIAN COUNTRIES. TRAFFICKING CAN BE THE ACTIVITY OF ANYONE, ANYWHERE.
Quicksand

Waiting for life to pass me by,
Hoping that time will heal all the scars across my mind.
I hear sirens in the distance, feel the ground shake again,
And for the thousandth time imagine what my life was like back then...

Wonder what I did to deserve all this pain,
Wonder why the rain and my tears can't wash this blood away.
I'm walking a line there are cracks in the sky over my head,
I'm walking along to the beat of a drum - it grows weaker with every step

'Cause my mother's gone, sister too,
Don't know where my dad is, but I hope he made it through.
And my brother went to join the fight, I don't think he'll make it out alive.
I've lost so many friends along the way, I see all their faces burn into everyday stained in the back of mind, memories of those I left behind.

Although, it's been a while now, I still remember
Those nights in late November
As autumn faded away and winter came to stay we would sit and talk for hours
I didn't know what would happen 'til I was left alone.

But I still wonder what I did to deserve all this pain
Wonder why all the chaos I see won't delete itself from my brain
I'm walking a line, there are cracks in the sky right over my head
I'm stumbling along don't know where I went wrong, can't help thinking this might be the end.

Cause my mother's gone, sister too,
Don't know where my dad is, but I pray he made it through.
And my brother went to join the fight, I don't think he'll make it out alive.
I've lost so many friends along the way, I see all their faces burned into everyday stained at the back of mind, it's all I see when I close my eyes.
Cause when you've lost everything.
And your life's on the brink
You need a helping hand need someone to find fast you and pull you
out of the quicksand
They say we're born to run
Born to live our days under the sun
But now we run so we won't die, but we are running with no place to
hide.

Cause my mother's gone and my sister too
Deep down I know that my dad didn't make it through.
My brother, he is still out there
But I won't see him alive again I swear.
My friends and my home they're just memories
Reminders of a distant life so it seems.

So I'm down on my knees,
Begging with tear stained cheeks and gritted teeth -
I'm just a lost boy will you come and save me please?
Untouchable

The world was starkly different all those years ago, back when Kazima had boarded a rattling train, yearning for a better life outside of famine and poverty. Belongings clutched tightly against her thumping chest, a small ember of hope flickered inside of her. In that moment, failing her family - the ones that loved her, was no longer a conceivable option. Her Mother’s face obstructed her vision, wrinkled with kindness and trying to hold back the tears that would inevitably fall. She had hope for her young daughter.

Looking back upon her eight-year-old self, Kazima longs for that same innocence to return. Yet, seven years later, she knows it is purely foolish to dream of the prospect of returning home. No- she only ever returns to the barren farm in the midst of her purest daydreams. An empty, mocking laugh escapes her. Now, too far in debt to do anything but remain in the city, she knows with a sinking soul that her future is inexorable.

Every evening, Uncle Faraj offers the girls a meal in reward for their hard work. Gifts fall from his fingers as frequently as ripe apples from a tree. Kazima draws the makeup and clothes over her body like a mask; a mask to hide her true feelings from her clients. Although it feels wrong to lock up her emotions, she finds it easier to be numb. Impassive.

Blending their tongues together, she has managed to grow a mutual understanding with the girls she spends her life with. Sometimes she wonders why they all look so similar with their large doe eyes, dark skin, and tiny forms. But, on the rare occasions she glances at her reflection, she realises that she could be their matches. A doll, replicated over and over again. With food in her stomach every night and the emaciated wastes of the country far behind her, to voice her complaints seems like a mere waste of precious breath. Besides, the men never seemed to care…

Daggers of pain pierce her chest as a new girl is lead into the dark room. Excitement and exhaustion are always painted on their faces, with this one marking no change. Kazima wonders if the child can sense the sadness weighing down on the ambience like a second
skin, and whether she will put up a fight. If she does, she will be mentored with the words Uncle Faraj repeats like a holy prayer. *Don’t speak out. Don’t ever leave the bed until the man is satisfied.* Those were the rules that left her sobbing nonchalantly into rancid pillows. Those were the rules that she never dared break. For Uncle Faraj loved her, as he did all the girls, and Uncle Faraj would never damage her.

The first time that she sold her body to a man, she had barely seen nine summers. At that tender age, she struggled to understand what the older girls spoke of when they said such a phrase. Turning their sorrowful eyes to her eager form, they would exchange silent messages with each other. *She is so young still. She has hope.* Hope. The word seems a cruel thing, intent on sardonically teasing her. She knows what the older girls said as they looked into each other’s broken eyes, for she is now the older girl and she silently prays for each youngster.

The man exchanged few words with her, on that damned night. His excitement buzzed in the air, filling her stomach with a bubbling disgust. She didn’t know that she had lost something so special, until after it had been taken. By then, it was far too late to snatch it back.

Having never attended school, it seemed so simple back on the farm. Leave for the city and return with money. She would never have to stretch her body to its limits, labouring out in the weathering sun until her legs felt as unstable as a new-born deer’s. Oh, how she was wrong. Oh, how she despised and clung to the woman with the sickly-sweet face, whose honey-coated words dripped soothingly from her bitter tongue. She said that Kazima was special, and that the man had bid a high price for her. So, she braved that bedroom with her head held high and the knowledge that she would survive the experience. Survive maybe- but at what cost?

As the night drew to a near, she cursed herself for feeling so violated and exposed. At the creak of a closing door, she could not even glance at the man’s unruly beard without her body lapsing back into tremulous lurches. She touched her thigh hesitantly, hating the pain the reverberated through her whole body. Salty and sticky, the dark of the night didn’t hide the blood that fell from her. The same way it would a wounded soldier. And the tears that continued to course from her eyes, seemed useless and weak. The tears didn’t help her.

Once they finish for the night, the girls shift their dull and aching bodies to bed. Amid the sweltering heat and noise of the city, it can sometimes take hours to fall into a sleep. A restless sleep ridden with
plague and nightmares. She silences herself when the terrors grow so bad that she wants to scream and scream, as if the devil were gnawing at her spine. But she can’t make any sound. Even though the noise of men, which is the only waking proof that she remains in the city after all, shatters through the walls. She cannot risk losing any of the money she so dutifully earns- every, single, night- to a weakness.

Torn and previously opened, a letter arrives on the bed she shares with five other girls. Her name is written on it, in a handwriting so poor it is almost illegible. Her breath catches in her throat, and for a moment she pictures the hundreds of men she has slept with over the years. Their faces all blur into one leering presence, towering over her head. For surely if her parents knew the trade she worked in, they would scorn the sight of her face. She would never be accepted into the family again. Despite her mother’s words sticking with her this whole time. “Work hard Kazima,” She cooed stroking her hair, “It will all be worth it in the end.”

How ironic, Kazima considers, that the very cause of her leaving now curses her from returning back.

Scattered into the grit of the Juba, the letter leaves a solemn imprint on her soul. Famine struck her family as it did millions of other innocents. God killed both her parents, and the shell of her baby brother. Her baby brother that would no longer have been a baby. She shakes viciously at the memories of starved children that haunt her childhood. Her family had been succumbed to the curse of bent spines and skeletal legs. Guilt overwhelms her, strangling her with its prodding fingers. Guilt for the family she left behind, guilt for her poor judgement and guilt for the faces that she can hardly remember. Her parents are lost to her; she is alone to face the world.

Slipping out when the moon is at the highest point in the sky, Kazima runs. Her bare feet deftly dodge the metal that litters the floor of the poor area. Lights flicker in the police station, the only place that has power. Words spill from her mouth rapidly as they sit her down, exchanging weary glances across the table. She talks and talks, screaming as they force her into biting handcuffs and put her behind bars. When Uncle Faraj bails her out, adding more money to her debt, he does so with impatience. He slaps her harshly, screaming endless profanities at her quivering form. Morning rises with its shimmering rays, and the patient man she has grown to love returns. She doubts her memories run true. She must have hallucinated the terrifying, bitter anger. But she doesn’t hallucinate the money that adds years to her worktime.
As usual, when dawn turns to dusk, she gives herself to another customer. If she doesn’t, she’ll be on the streets, little more than a rat and left to fend for herself. So, in memory of her parents, she works harder than ever. Even when the policeman who arrested her walks into the brothel. Even when she begins to question. Small things at first, and then everything seems immoral.

But still, she manages to convince herself. She will escape the prison of this eternal cycle. Uncle Faraj loves her and will not damage her. She will not let herself be damaged.

She is already damaged.
“Water”

This piece illustrates the major problem in places such as Uganda, Nigeria and South Sudan, where more than half of its citizens do not have clean water to consume. Drinking contaminated water can lead to many diseases such as Cholera, Typhoid, and Dysentery. That is why I believe it is a common human right to have clean water so that we can survive and live healthily.
Child Army

Jake woke up to the sound of knocking on his front door. He sat up and scratched his head. People knocked on the door a lot but not normally this late. He heard his max go and open the door. Then he heard a loud voice shouting at him and Max replied in a startled voice. The man asked how many people there were in the house and how old they were. Max replied by saying that there was him and he was 19 another boy whose name was Joe he was 16 and there were two boys named Frank and Joe who were 14.

As this was happening Jake had woken up Frank who had been sleeping next to him and together they both crept to the wall and looked through a small hole. They were living in a small slum which had ordinarily belonged to Franks parents. But his dad had died from drinking bad water and his Mom had never returned from a trip into the village. So Frank had invited them to live there Max had been one of 12 children who were all kicked out at the age of 12 and he had crossed half the country alone and with no money or food to find his uncle but had given up and decided to stay there. Sleeping in a small hole under the house until frank and Jake had found him and invited him in. the 16 year old Boy was Franks brother he had been dropped as a baby and as a result refused to leave the house he also couldn’t speak or move his left arm.

Then the man who had been talking to Max pulled out a bat and in a single movement smashed it across his knees Max fell to the floor crying out in pain just as A second swing of the bat smashed the back of his head knocking him out him out. The 2 boys reeled back. Suddenly they realised what was happening. They had herd about it from a boy who had run away from the town to the north. He had told them about the men who had forced him to kill his own parents and then go and fight. But he had run away. They saw the man drag Max away by his hands and out into the street. That was the last time they had ever seen or heard about max. then they went for Joe they heard him scream then the man asked him a question Joe tried to reply but he couldn’t speck.

They heard a loud sound and then Joe fell to the floor Dead. 2 men came into there room Jake stood up the dust cascading of him and onto the floor. The solder shouted at him to sit down. He did
nothing then a second man came in to the room he was the one with the Gun. He pointed it at frank and with tears in his easy he threw his hands above his head the man pointed at the doorway and frank scrambled out. Then the same man took out a stick and began hitting and beating Jake until all he could feel was pain then the mans boot slammed into the side of his head and he was knocked out.

The next thing that happened was he heard a voice calling out to him. He opened his easy. You been asleep for 2 days Frank told him where am I Jake asked. Frank shrugged with obverse caused him a lot of pain. He sat up and looked around there were about 20 boys in the room all his age or younger. Jake remembered the stories that the boy had told about boys being forced to beat there parents to death.

Then the man who had knocked him out came in and took him by the arm. A second man came in and took Frank by the arm. They were all forced into the back of a truck. They felt a jolt and then started moving. Over the journey he herd the men talking was able to pick the fact that they were going to go and kill some boys who had run away. The 2 boys looked at each other with terrified easy. They ground to a stop and the back door was opened. A huge heavy gun with a long chain of bullets snaking out of it and 2 sticks facing down at the front was given to Jake and a long thin Gun with a small cinder on the top was given to Frank.

They made there way to the top floor of a building with one window. Frank had never hurt anyone and he even went out of his way to make Shure that ho animals got hurt. When his parents had died he had invited all of the boys without homes to live there with him. And he was friends with everyone. In the village. He was told to kneel by the window and point the gun out. He put his easy to the cinder and looked out the man pointed at a young boy who was helping a old lady across the street. Frank looked up at the man pleadingly. But the man Just nodded. Frank looked pack out the window the cold breeze bruising against his skin. He stood there for a few minuets not doing any thing. Then he took a breath and. And moved his hand.

There was a shot and frank fell to the flor dead. Jake wield round with tears in his easy and tried to lift his gun. But it was to heavy. The man pointed at the gun and Jake took the dead boys place. He saw the boy on the strest and decide that he didn’t want him to die the same way as frank. He felt cold stele against the back of his neck. He stood up and shok his head there was another crack and he fell to the floor dead.
Girl, Wife and Mother

This is the first time in my life where I want to bleed. When I was a child, I used to dread the time of the month where my body insisted upon reminding me that I was a woman now. The time of the month where I’d miss so much of school I couldn’t keep up, and eventually lead to me leaving school entirely. The time of the month where I’d frantically search streets and bins to find as many rags as I could until I stopped leaking blood.

If I stay dry any longer, it can only mean one thing. I need to bleed.

Dust floats in through the crack in the wall beside my bed, dancing upon my lungs. I turn into the beam of sunlight. It’s hot against my skin, and all I want is for it to burn holes through my flesh until I slip away. My whole world is in pieces, as is my country. I have no idea how I’m supposed to pick up the shattered parts, let alone put them back together.

I need the tools to repair them.

People used to say that once we’d become our own country, created our own South Sudan, things would be different. Not only different, but better. Yet this war has stolen our future.

I stiffen as he stirs beside me and I decide the only way I might avoid him is to pretend I’m asleep. Perhaps as I’m facing away, he’ll leave me alone.

No such luck.

I don’t know how much more of this I can take.

I need freedom.

His fingers are cold, strange for the time of year yet this is how his hands always seem to be, and they slip underneath my clothing. I bite on my tongue to stop myself from crying out.

He pushes his lips against my ear, sending a chill down me. His beard scratches my face as he says, “Did you go?”

“Where?”

“You know...”

I decide I don’t know. If he’s going to insist on intruding on my privacy, the least he can do is say it.

“The clinic.” he concludes.

“No.”
All other words jam in my throat.
I can’t be a mother at fourteen. I’m too young, even if he has…
I’m not a child anymore, he’s made that quite clear. I’m his wife,
I must let him do to me what all husbands do to their wives.
No one told me it would hurt so much.
No one told me I would bear a child so soon.
How will we afford a child? He doesn’t work, and I missed too
much of school to get a job. What will become of us?
I should be at school like my brother, not serving this man who
is old enough to be my father, and who has by force taken away any
hope I had of a future different to those of my sisters before me.
I need to believe that things will change.
If I have a daughter, I won’t sell her to another man to save my
family’s farm. I won’t abandon her as my parents did me.
If I have a son I will make sure he knows how women are to be
treated: with respect and care, not sold for cows and then hurt by their
husbands. I will teach him to protect his sisters and help them when
they fall behind classes at school.
He touches me again, and I do all I can not to squirm at his
touch. But I can’t stop a cough erupting as a result of the continuous
flow of dust. At least it hides a sob.
I always felt so dirty when I bled, covered in stains that I had
nothing to prevent from leaving its mark on my clothing.
I had no idea.
Real dirtiness is when his hands touch my skin, infecting every
part of me with his germs.
I need to realise this is my life now.
No one will rescue me. Perhaps, in the future, someone will pick
up what’s left of my country and stick the pieces back together. But
no one will do this for me. I don’t have the tools to repair.
I am a wife now. I will be a mother.
I am not a child anymore.
“What Was Left Behind…”

Our entry is about Human Rights in Burma.
“Life Lessons”

My creative entry is a model of two contrasting classrooms to highlight the intimacy of war and innocence, destruction and the creation that is brought about by education. One classroom is untouched, open to the world and therefore, learning. The other half of the model has been soured by the fire of war, what was once a place of hope now void of purpose and left to rot as are the communities that are caught up in war.
after the kidnapping of the Chibok girls, April 2014

she comes back to a place of metal railings and dust-bitten roads.

the silence, a gag.

when daddy cracks his knuckles, it sounds like the vomit of gunfire and rip of torn flesh…

she can see creased pupils creaking open, gluttoning their way through the crusted slits of eyes – the city’s mouth alive and bursting at the seams, wondering: perhaps she’s been radicalised? they scream – hear that tune of wooden doors slamming shut the force of fingers with their calloused accusations.

things she cannot do without being eaten alive by memory:

hug her parents
(the space between her chest and theirs smells like blood)

thrive at university
(the scratch of a pencil = the carve of a knife)

listen to night
(midnight squeals are futile protests – the worst kind)

fear rattles behind the teeth she brushes with a pockmarked arm.

she washes her hands slowly and again, again

but boko haram stays like a shell lodged beneath the tide.

is this what it feels like?
the weight of a thousand voices,
the chorus of accusation?

hunt them down.

find them.

put them on trial.

jail them.

kill them.

serve justice with bitter hearts.

but what good is that,

when there are already terrorists in the prison cell of your own mind?
On Switch Off

The sky is red and black, smoke so thick and heavy and cloying that you can’t tell whether it’s night or day. Your skin feels like it’s on fire, like any second you could just melt away into nothingness and it wouldn’t have mattered, it wouldn’t have changed anything. You stand in the middle of a street - of what used to be a street - and nobody sees you. Nobody sees you, and you question whether you’re really there at all.

Rubble is scattered over the ground, crumbles underfoot and threatens to trip you as you walk lethargically forwards. Or is this backwards? Direction makes no difference when there’s no destination, and the destination here has been lost for years. People are blind to where they should be, where they need to be. These bricks used to be a home, they used to hold somebody’s life. Now all you see is a prison, and an unstoppable, unyielding wall.

There’s a child crying. You can’t see it but you know it’s there, and you wonder when guilt turned to indifference. Has the time worn away at your sympathy—eroded it so that all that’s left is resigned acceptance? Or is simply wanting to help an excuse for not helping? Some children will make it and some won’t but this will always stick with them, the blame that they’ll carry for the rest of their lives permeating society like gas in the air.

This isn’t your conflict. This isn’t your fight, this is never what you wanted. You wish you could turn back time, walk away, change history, but you’re just you. It would be impossible. Why fight an impossible fight?

Sorry, you think. Sorry, but I can’t help you. I can’t change anything.

Sit back down. Change the channel. Switch off.
Intermediate Creative—3rd Place: Joshua Shortman

“Syria in Fragments”
Senior Creative—1st Place: Hay-Ching Tang

Description on next page.
Viewed from the left, the piece shows Shwedagon Pagoda - Myanmar/Burma as in the eyes of many tourists; a central view offers a juxtaposition; while viewed from the right, the piece tackles the Rohingya plight in Rakhine State. It is a commentary on how it is easy for us as individuals and as the international community to visit a country and be LEFT with only beautiful memories (hence the view from the left). I know that I myself have been guilty of this. However, it is RIGHT that we should also educate ourselves, consider, and in some wag act upon the human RIGHTS situations in such countries and not be wilfully blind or otherwise ignorant (hence the view from the right). The materials, technique and symbolism used in the piece offer my own take on this.

LEFT: The pagoda side is shiny, golden and beautiful; some parts even glisten! It is easy to be blinded by such dazzling beauty that our judgment can become clouded (symbolised by the clouds in the blue sky). The painting is smooth, gentle and subtle - again adding to the perception of beauty.

RIGHT: The Rakhine state side by contrast is rough and textured. It shows the destructive fires stemming from Myanmar/Burmese security forces setting Rohingya villages alight. This violence against the marginalised Rohingya has displaced many people (shown by the refugee camp on the right-hand side). The wire fence is held by 3 posts of red, green and yellow, symbolising the national flag. This fence is an interpretation of the stateless status of the Rohingya people, who are subject to extreme security measures. In contrast to the pagoda, the only glossy surface in this picture is the river of blood along the bottom, representing the casualties and bloodshed as a result of the atrocities.

JUXTAPOSITION: The juxtapose shows that whilst one may admire the splendour of sites such Shwedagon Pagoda, it is possible to do so whilst at the same time being aware of the human rights horrors such as the persecution of the Rohingya people. I urge the international community to look beyond what is in the tourist guide.
Sacrifice: A tale of a Devadasi girl

Sunrise comes to my rescue,
I can take a break from this nightmare.
A nightmare that made me nocturnal like the moon.
Born with a call I could not ignore,
The beads and gems confirm my affiliation to the Devadasi system.
My matrimonial contract is sacred to Yellamma
But mortal men pass me around like a cigarette.
Each one has different needs
Each one despises the latex sheath
Each one leaves me with an ailment
All I know is discrimination and prejudice.
I no longer enjoy the food I buy
As I pay for it with money and the change I get is hatred.
Growing up I fantasized every girl's dream,
To marry a good man and have a family.
All that was washed away like seashore sand,
Today I fulfill sexual desires to all men.
Men who come nicodemously without their wives' knowledge.

As the sunsets on the horizon,
I prepare for the moon's shift
Where I sacrifice my womanhood
For the heavenly riches that await my family.
“De-Territorial”

This piece is entitled "De-Territorial" and is a personal reflection on the Syrian refugee crisis. The subject matter is a study from a photo taken of an actual refugee child in Syria. The word "De-territorial" is inscribed in the top section of the piece in Arabic.

The naive, chaotic rendering is supposed to evoke a feeling of distress and displacement, with the child abstracted from a background and place in front of a Syrian flag, which is symbolically deconstructed around him. In particular the facial features are abstracted so as to anonymise the boy; he could be any of the hundreds of thousands of children fleeing Syria, and so this image is not specific to his story or identity, but a holistic comment on a vastly wider issue.
Burma

Place a glass against the wall to the other world
if you’re silent enough
you can hear the muffled cries of children
move your ear closer
you can hear the hunger that strikes in their stomach
don’t move
stay still
can you hear that
the sounds of bodies being burnt
a mother sobbing as she is passed from man to man
soldiers laughing as a boy begs to see his father
I don’t know about you
but I can hear ethnic cleansing
and if you listen really closely
you can hear a genocide happening.
To learn more about next year’s HART Prize for Human Rights, please visit:

https://www.hart-uk.org/get-involved/humanrightsprize/
Contact Us

HART has offices in the United Kingdom, the USA and Australia.

Our UK office can be reached using the details below:

Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust
Unit 1, Jubilee Business Centre
213 Kingsbury Road
Kingsbury
London NW9 8AQ

Tel: +44 (0)20 8205 4608
Email: office@hart-uk.org