Rebel Human Rights Abuses During Civil Wars: Introducing the Rebel Human Rights Violations Dataset

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Abstract

Contemporary studies of civil conflict focus heavily on combatant treatment of civilians. Research on human rights abuses committed by states has benefitted from several widely available datasets on state violations. By comparison, researchers and policymakers have been limited by a dearth of data on violations committed by rebel groups. We introduce a new resource, the Rebel Human Rights Violations (RHRV) dataset, which measures the frequency with which rebel groups engage in eight human rights abuses. The data include information for all rebel groups around the world between 1990 and 2018, and capture a wide range of violations, including arbitrary killing, detention, forced recruitment, property damage, torture, sexual violence, forced displacement, and movement restriction. The RHRV provides new opportunities for researchers and policymakers to analyze an important aspect of civil conflict: the abuse of civilian populations by rebel groups.

Note: This is the final accepted version of the manuscript. The permanent link for the article is here. The dataset, codebook, and scripts for the empirical analysis in this article can be found here and here.

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Introduction

Despite being bound by international humanitarian law to respect non-combatants (Slim, 2010), rebel groups commit a wide range of human rights abuses during civil wars. The International Criminal Count and ad hoc tribunals have prosecuted rebel commanders and soldiers for violations of laws of armed conflict. With some important exceptions, however, existing research focuses primarily on rebel use of violence that has the deliberate aim of inflicting *lethal* harm against non-combatants, such as massacres, indiscriminate bombings, and terrorist attacks. This emphasis on lethal violations, based in part on the availability of cross-national data, has the effect of overlooking the many non-lethal ways in which rebel groups violate the rights of civilian populations.

We introduce the Rebel Human Rights Violations (RHRV) dataset that measures a wider range of abuses committed by rebels. It includes episodes of lethal violence but also detention, forced recruitment, property damage, torture, sexual violence, forced displacement, and the restriction of movement. Building on existing projects that measure violations of physical integrity rights by governments, we use annual human rights reports issued by the U.S. Department of State and Amnesty International to systematically document the occurrence and scale of these abuses by rebel groups for all civil wars in each year from 1990 to 2018. The dataset provides the first systematic, cross-conflict description of multiple human rights violations by rebel forces during civil wars.

Researchers can use the RHRV dataset to address multiple questions regarding civil war violence. Descriptive statistics reported here indicate that there are noticeable differences across civil wars and over time; some rebel groups regularly commit a wide range of abuses, others may develop 'repertoires' of violence that emphasize some abuses more than others (Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood, 2017), and other groups alter the types of abuses they commit as conflict continues for longer periods. The data can be used to systematically investigate the degree to which rebels engage in abuses as complements or substitutes, along the lines of similar analyses of state abuses (Fariss and Schnakenberg, 2014). The dataset can be used to test theories at the organization or conflict dyad level of analysis about the conditions under which rebels abuse civilians, including the relative influences of battlefield outcomes, political goals and ideologies, external actors, and international humanitarian law.

Figure 1 demonstrates how some of the data can be visualized broadly at the country level. The first map shows the peak level of any of the eight rebel human rights violations recorded in the dataset by country. For countries with multiple rebel groups, the maximum value among all groups and all violations is used. Most countries experiencing conflict saw at least one form of systematic human rights violation by rebels during the period 1990-2018. The second map, however, depicts a single type of violation by rebel groups: forced displacement. Systematic levels of forced displacement occurred in just 26 countries during the time period; there were no allegations of forced displacement

by rebels in the majority of countries experiencing conflict. The information available in the dataset can also complement studies that use more fine-grained spatio-temporal data to analyze conflict dynamics in single case studies, allowing researchers to investigate if similar patterns exist across multiple rebel groups.

---Figure 1 about here---

Violence in civil wars

Research on civil wars has sought to explain why rebels abuse civilian populations, generally treating this behavior as an outcome variable. Studies have identified several factors influencing rebel treatment of civilians: the extent to which rebels fund their activities through external support, natural resources, and criminal activities (Weinstein, 2007; Salehyan, Sirosky, and Wood, 2014; Walsh et al., 2019); the degree to which combatants control territory and have reliable information about the allegiances of civilians (Kalyvas, 2006); intra-organizational concerns, including rebel leaders' ability to control their soldiers (Hoover Green, 2016), recruitment needs (Cohen, 2016), and use of foreign fighters (Doctor, 2021); the use of violence to weaken the authorities' popular support (Fjelde and Hultman, 2013); and the relative power and military strategies of the combatants (Stanton, 2016; Wood, 2010).

These works develop general explanations of rebel violence that they test with data from civil conflicts. The most common sources of such data are the Uppsala Conflict Data Program's (UCDP) Georeferenced Event Dataset (GED; Sundberg and Melander, 2013; Croicu and Sundberg, 2017), which includes data from the UCDP One-Sided Violence (OSV) dataset (Eck and Hultman, 2007), the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED; see Raleigh et al., 2010), and the Global Terrorism Dataset (GTD; see Lafree and Dugan, 2007). All these datasets record the time period, location, and perpetrators of acts of violence based on a wide range of sources, including media reports and investigations by non-governmental and international organizations. They differ primarily in terms of the types of violent acts they record. The GED includes only lethal acts of violence. ACLED includes similar data, but also measures changes in territory among combatants as well as riots, protests, and similar politically relevant events. The GTD includes only events that meet its definition of terrorism.

These datasets have proven useful in extending our understanding of civil war dynamics. However, by focusing primarily on violent events that may result directly in the death of non-combatants, they provide limited information about the entire range of human rights violations that rebel forces commit. This has led to the recent development of datasets that measure specific human rights violations beyond killings. The Sexual Violence in Conflict (SVAC) dataset (Cohen and Nordås 2014), for example, uses manual text coding from human rights reports by the U.S. State

Department and Amnesty International to measure one non-lethal form of political violence. Along similar lines, the Child Soldier Data Set (CSDS; Haer and Böhmelt, 2016) provides indicators of the use of child soldiers by rebel groups; subsequent versions focus specifically on the use of girl soldiers (Haer and Böhmelt, 2018) and on the forcible recruitment of children (Haer, Faulkner, and Whitaker, 2020).

These datasets have been used to test theories explaining rebel engagement in individual forms of non-lethal violence. Using the SVAC data, Cohen (2016) finds evidence that armed groups that rely on abduction or press-ganging to recruit fighters use sexual violence to create unit cohesion. Whitaker, Walsh, and Conrad (2019) show that rebels that extort natural resource production engage in sexual violence more frequently, while groups that smuggle natural resources limit the use of this form of violence. Tynes and Early (2013) analyze how structural variables such as the length of a conflict and combatants' relative capabilities influence group decisions to use child soldiers. And Haer, Faulkner, and Whitaker (2020) find that rebels that profit from natural resources are more likely to forcibly recruit child soldiers. These studies usefully expand our knowledge of the drivers of rebel human rights abuses beyond killings to explain the dynamics of sexual violence and recruitment of children. But focusing on individual forms of abuse is distinct from examining overall patterns of violence committed by rebel forces and how these patterns may shift in response to international pressure or conflict dynamics.[1]

The RHRV dataset we introduce here builds on these important data collection efforts while measuring a wider range of human rights abuses by rebel forces.[2] This is important because rebels frequently rely on forms of violence that do not directly aim to kill their targets. Mass rape has been committed by rebels who do not engage in mass killings (Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood, 2017, 22, citing Nordås, 2011). Rebels can engage in large-scale property destruction, such as the burning of villages or crops, that only incidentally kills civilians but that nonetheless inflicts considerable harm on non-combatants. Some rebels also frequently use violence to coerce civilians to join their ranks; here the threat of force is used to change the target's behavior, but the goal is not to kill the target. Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood (2017, 21) observe that 'violence against civilians during war varies in ways much richer than that emphasized in most of the literature. Many scholars focus on lethal violence without consistently specifying whether the organization engages in non-lethal forms of violence.' The causes and consequences of lethal and non-lethal violence may differ in important ways. It is difficult to

[1] Stanton (2016) considers a wider range of abuses, although her analysis focuses primarily on the systematic and large-scale use of some forms of lethal and non-lethal violence by combatants, including property destruction, indiscriminate bombing and shelling, and forced displacement.

[2] The appendix includes a statistical comparison of relevant RHRV variables to data from the SVAC and OSV datasets.

know if this is the case, however, as we lack systematic data on forms of violence that may not be intended to cause the death of their targets.

The Rebel Human Rights Violations dataset systematically identifies allegations of the types and degrees of lethal and non-lethal violence committed by rebel groups during civil wars. It builds on similar efforts to measure a wide range of human rights violations committed by governments, specifically the Political Terror Scales (PTS; see Gibney and Wood 2010) and the Cingranelli-Richards Human Rights Data Project (CIRI; see Cingranelli and Richards 2010). Those efforts both rely on regular assessments of the human rights situation in countries around the world produced by the U.S. Department of State and the non-governmental organizations Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. While the PTS measures the overall level of abuse of rights in a country, the CIRI project identifies allegations of specific abuses such as torture and political imprisonment. In the next section, we describe how we use the latter approach to identify and measure abuses of human rights by rebel groups.

Identifying rebel human rights violations in civil wars

The RHRV dataset compiles information on human rights violations committed by rebel groups around the world in each year from 1990 to 2018. Data are drawn from the U.S. State Department *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, which provide qualitative assessments of human rights abuses committed by state and non-state actors in each country, and annual country reports from Amnesty International.[3] The State Department reports are longer and more detailed, on average, than those produced by Amnesty International, are informed by input from Amnesty International and other human rights non-governmental organizations, and also rely on reporting by the department's foreign service officers and other elements of the U.S. government. These factors might reduce reporting bias compared to reports produced by Amnesty International, although they are unlikely to eliminate it entirely. The State Department and Amnesty International annual reports have been found to produce similar assessments of governments' human rights practices, especially after 1990 when our data begin (Poe, Carey, and Vazquez, 2001). Below, we report findings from the data coded from the State Department reports; a comparison with and identical analysis for the Amnesty International data are in the appendix. In short, these reporting sources lead to very similar data for most violations, with some exceptions for displacement and movement restriction.

Unlike the PTS and CIRI projects, we focus on abuses committed by non-state rebel groups. The unit of analysis is the conflict dyad-year, and the sample of observations is based on dyadic armed

[3] Amnesty International stopped producing most annual country reports after 2017, while the State Department continued its reports, allowing us to code data for 2018 from this source only. Amnesty International resumed annual country reports for most countries in 2021.

conflict data maintained by the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP; see Harbom, Melander and Wallensteen, 2008). Our data collection and coding procedures were systematic and transparent, as detailed in the RHRV codebook (see supplemental material). Two undergraduate students were assigned to code rebel groups in a single country. They worked independently and did not consult with one another while coding. Our analysis of inter-coder reliability indicates that the initial coding decisions recorded by the two coders were identical in 87.4 % of the variable observations (see appendix). Once they completed their initial coding, the two students met with a faculty member and a graduate student to discuss any discrepancies and determine final coding decisions for each observation. Although the assigned faculty member varied from country to country, the same Ph.D. student was involved in all reconciliation meetings, providing consistency across coding activities. We found these procedures to be most effective in producing reliable measures given the contextualization and interpretation needed to code quantitative data from qualitative sources. In addition to the explicit rules laid out in the codebook, the dataset provides direct quotations from the source material for all non-zero values of the human rights violation variables, allowing independent researchers to determine for themselves whether they would make the same coding decisions. Drawing on these excerpts, future researchers could use natural language processing to extract measures of rebel human rights violations from subsequent reports.

The dataset includes categorical variables that indicate if and how often the rebel group in each conflict dyad engaged in a particular violation each year. Each variable is coded according to the following scheme: if the variable is coded as '0,' the reports include no allegations that the rebel group engaged in that violation during the given year. If the variable is coded as '1,' the rebel group is reported to have engaged in that violation 'occasionally' or 'infrequently.' If the variable is coded as '2' (the highest value possible), there is evidence that the group engaged in the violation 'frequently' or 'systematically.' Coders looked for these qualitative frequency terms, but the reports sometimes include a specific number of violations. When such numbers are provided, the value '2' is used to denote violations that affected 50 or more victims, while '1' designates 1-49 victims. The most challenging aspects of the coding process was distinguishing between violations coded as '1' and those coded as '2.' Although coders were trained on how to make these distinctions and any discrepancies were reconciled through the process described above, concerns about the data can be mitigated by collapsing the three-category variable into a simple binary variable indicating whether there is evidence of a given violation or not. This approach may be especially useful when examining the likelihood of rebels committing a given human rights violation rather than its intensity.

The dataset includes eight violations of civil and political rights: unlawful or arbitrary killings; detention and disappearances; torture; property violations; forcible recruitment; sexual violence; forced displacement; and movement restriction. See the codebook for definitions of these variables. A key distinction for all violations coded in the data is that they are not combat-related. Many human rights violations occur in the context of armed conflict. For instance, civilians are often killed as an unintentional consequence of battle (i.e., 'collateral damage'). The RHRV dataset does not

include such violations. We focus exclusively on violations that occur outside of direct combat situations.

Rebel groups engage in *unlawful or arbitrary killings* when they deliberately kill civilians outside the context of armed conflict. Under most circumstances, these killings are politically-motivated, as this kind of violence is most often highlighted by the State Department reports. Again, combat-related deaths and the unintentional killing of civilians are not included. The second category, *disappearances and detentions*, involves any forced disappearance or abduction of victims, including political kidnappings. This does not include individuals who were 'disappeared' or abducted in the context of armed conflict. The category *torture* captures the intentional infliction of mental or physical pain on individuals in the custody of the rebel group. Such violence can have multiple purposes, including information-gathering or physical degradation. The fourth category, *property violations*, covers a wide range of activities, from poisoning water wells to attacking cellphone towers. The common link is that they involve rebels interfering with, or destroying, personal property. Combat-related (tactical) destruction of property and interference with property motivated by profit are not included in this category.

Forcible recruitment involves rebel groups forcing individuals to perform work for the organization against their will. This includes forcible recruitment of soldiers as well as general labor. Forced recruitment of child soldiers and forced labor are both included. *Sexual violence* is the intentional infliction of mental or physical pain of a sexual nature, including rape, sexual assault, and genital mutilation.[4] *Forced displacement* measures if rebels use force or the threat of force to cause civilians to flee their neighborhoods. *Movement restriction* involves the deliberate prevention of individuals leaving their homes, neighborhoods, or towns for more than a brief period of time. Table I illustrates how we turned the text in State Department reports into these variables. The table lists the name of the rebel group, the government it opposed, the year of the violation, and the text from the report that was used to code the violation as systematic (a value of '2').

As with other datasets that code human rights violations from existing reports (e.g. Cingranelli and Richards, 2010; Cohen and Nordås, 2014; Haer and Böhmelt, 2018), there are several limitations associated with the RHRV data. The underlying human rights reports are subject to both under- and over-reporting biases. Given the nature of some abuses, victims may not want to come forward. Non-governmental organizations, the media, and other groups may lack the capability, access, or interest to investigate all violations (Davenport, 2009), especially in conflict zones. On the other hand, victims and advocates may at times overstate the extent of human rights violations in an effort to secure assistance and support (Cohen and Hoover Green, 2012; Cohen, 2016). Selection bias could also be a problem, as the U.S. State Department may give more (or less) attention to

[4] In our coding scheme, sexual violence is a subset of torture; all reports of sexual violence were also recorded as incidents of torture.

certain conflicts or groups based on political dynamics. However, as Cohen (2016) notes, State Department reports document major human right violations even by conflict actors supported by the U.S. government. Additionally, there may be temporal variation as reporting organizations increase attention to violations such as sexual violence and forced displacement, due in part to advocacy efforts.

Any dataset based on such reporting, therefore, is more accurately described as a dataset of allegations of human rights violations committed by rebel groups rather than a ground-truth accounting of such violations. For this reason, and consistent with similar datasets, we describe observations for which our underlying sources do not report rebel human rights violations as 'no allegations' rather than 'no violation.'

Researchers using the RHRV should be cognizant of these limitations and consider the implications in their analyses. The 'no allegation' category, for example, includes observations for which there is no evidence in the reports of a particular violation *and* situations where there is evidence in the reports of the violation, but it is not clearly attributed to a specific rebel group. Because this problem is most likely in countries with multiple rebel groups operating in the same area at the same time, researchers could conduct robustness checks that limit the analysis to countries with only one rebel group operating in a given year. To address the possibility of under-reporting of abuses by rebels in countries where the U.S. opposes the target government, researchers may want to account for U.S. aid to both sides. Over-reporting of violations may be more likely in settings with higher levels of humanitarian aid, which also could be included in the analysis. Researchers can control for the year (Cohen, 2016) or limit the analysis to specific time periods to account for temporal variation in reporting on different abuses.

Future research could investigate more directly questions about reporting coverage. Researchers might build on the RHRV dataset to understand how monitoring practices developed by different organizations to document abuses by state actors influence the likelihood that rebel abuses also are monitored, and how such monitoring might vary across time and space (Tayler, 2011). Similarly, researchers might apply recent innovations in latent variable analysis and Bayesian methods to measure uncertainty and identify biases in reporting (Fariss, 2019). Despite the limitations, State Department and Amnesty International human rights reports are the basis for multiple widely used datasets in our field. For a more detailed comparison between the RHRV and existing datasets, see the appendix.

---Table I about here---
---Figure 2 about here---

Patterns of rebel human rights violations in civil war

There is evidence of rebels committing at least one form of human rights abuse in over half of the dyad years in the dataset. Figure 2 counts the number of dyad years in which the source documents do and do not contain allegations of any of the eight violations. Rebel groups are more likely than not to commit *some* type of human rights abuse during civil wars. Looking at global patterns across the different types of violations and over time, however, rebel violations of human rights are less frequent than might be expected. Figure 3 plots the number of conflict dyad-years in which rebels are reported to have committed each of the human rights abuses described in the dataset. 'No allegation' means that there was no evidence in the State Department report that the rebel group engaged in that form of violation in a given year. Fewer than half of groups are reported to have committed each violation, with the exception of killings. This could reflect bias in the State Department's reports. It may be that extrajudicial killings are more frequently investigated and reported than other violations. Among rebels that do violate human rights, a larger fraction engages in frequent or systematic abuses. This could be because more systematic abuses are more likely to be captured in the source reports. Additionally, there is variation over time in each violation as depicted in Figure 4, which shows the percentage of dyads in which rebel groups are reported to have engaged in each type of human rights abuse.

---Figure 3 about here---
---Figure 4 about here---

Table II shows the polychoric correlations among the variables. The strongest correlation is between torture and sexual violence, which is expected since the categories are not mutually exclusive. There also is a strong correlation between detention and torture. Rebel groups often detain individuals and then torture them for information or to send a clear message to their opponents. Another strong relationship is between killings and detention. Detention and killings are among the most common human rights violations committed by rebel groups. The weakest relationship is between movement restrictions and sexual violence.

---Table II about here---

Figure 5 examines how reports of rebel human rights violations are related to conflict intensity, the nature of the incompatibility between government and rebels, and the internationalization of conflict. Each plot presents the results of a fixed-effects logistic regression in which the occurrence of the human rights violation is the dependent variable, with a value of '0' for no allegations of the violation and '1' for reports of either infrequent or systematic violations by the rebel group ('1' or '2' in the above coding scheme). Explanatory variables are drawn from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (Harbom, Melander and Wallensteen, 2008). Intensity can take two values: minor armed conflict

that produces fewer than 1000 battle deaths in a year, or war, which produces more fatalities. Incompatibility measures if the conflict was over territory and secession or control of the national government.[5] A conflict is internationalized if one or more foreign states intervened with military forces.

Figure 5 reports the odds ratios of the relationships between these three variables and each rebel human rights violation. The most consistent relationship is between intensity and abuses; conflicts that produce more than 1000 battle deaths per year are more likely to involve all eight types of rebel human rights violations. In contrast, the type of incompatibility is not consistently related to rebel human rights abuses. Conflicts over control of the government are no more likely than secessionist conflicts to be associated with such violations with one exception: rebels are more likely to restrict movement when seeking to control the government. Internationalization of the conflict is associated with more reports of rebel killings, forced recruitment, and sexual violence.

---Figure 5 about here---

Patterns and illustrations

Rebels commit a range of human rights violations, but the extent of such abuses varies across space and time. A closer examination of the dataset reveals several interesting patterns. First, there is significant variation among countries, with civilians in some experiencing more frequent and systematic abuse by rebels than those elsewhere. Reports of violations have been consistently high in countries with multiple rebel groups, each engaging frequently in numerous forms of abuse. These include Bosnia-Herzegovina (1992-1995), Colombia (especially 1998-2012), Uganda (1996-2011), Sierra Leone (especially 1993-2001), and Liberia (1990, 2001-2003). Such violations have been surprisingly low in other countries, however, despite experiencing multiple rebellions. Of the 35 annual observations for 16 rebel groups in Chad, just three show evidence of any violations.

Even within countries facing multiple rebellions, there is variation in abuses among rebel groups. In Afghanistan, Angola, India, Iraq, Pakistan, Rwanda, Somalia, and Sudan, at least one rebel group has been involved in systematic violations while others have been involved in few to none. A good example is the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), where 14 groups waged armed rebellions against the government between 1990 and 2018. For eight of these groups, there is no evidence that they engaged in any violations. Two other groups engaged systematically in just one of the violations: AFDL committed frequent unlawful killings and Kata Katanga forcibly recruited troops in one year. The remaining four groups (CNDP, RCD, M23, and Kamuina Nsapu) engaged systematically in

[5] We drop two observations in which the incompatibility concerned both territory and government.

multiple violations. Two other rebel groups fighting against governments of neighboring countries (the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda-FDLR and the Lord's Resistance Army of Uganda) also operated in eastern Congo and systematically committed a wide range of human rights abuses. Thus, even in a country that has become notorious for civilian abuse during conflict (Autesserre, 2012), there is variation in the extent to which individual rebel groups have engaged in such violations.

Patterns of civilian abuse also appear to change over time. In most cases, the frequency of human rights violations increases over the lifespan of a group. This was true for the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), whose troops committed occasional unlawful killings for the first few years in the dataset (1990-1992). Such killings became more frequent starting in 1993, and the group's commission of other forms of civilian abuse also started to rise. By 1998, FARC soldiers were reportedly engaging systematically in all human rights violations coded in the dataset. In Burundi, the Palipehutu-National Forces of Liberation (FNL) committed few human rights abuses from 1997 to 2000. Starting in 2001, however, its forces engaged occasionally in unlawful killings and property violations; by 2004, they were frequently committing all human rights violations in our dataset. There is evidence of similar upward trends for the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front (RUF), Hamas, and the Communist Party of India (Maoist). In some cases, however, the frequency of reported human rights violations declined over time: Peru's Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path), the Armed Islamic Group of Algeria (GIA), and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in Turkey.

Finally, rebel groups have different 'repertoires of violence' (Hoover Green, 2016; Tilly, 2010). Most groups that engage in one form of human rights violation also engage in others. For several groups, there is evidence of systematic engagement in multiple abuses. These include: the Taliban in Afghanistan, the Serbian Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO), the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre), Al Shabaab in Somalia, Sri Lanka's Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), and the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A). Other rebel groups seem to specialize, however, systematically engaging in one or two forms of civilian abuse while avoiding others. Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) systematically killed and detained civilians but shows no evidence of other abuses. Similarly, several groups in India and Thailand have engaged in frequent killings and property violations but no other abuses. For other rebel groups, it is impossible to discern a specific repertoire of violence. In general, there is widespread variation in how rebel groups treat civilian populations, and future research can use the RHRV dataset to investigate these patterns.

Conclusion

In the effort to explain the treatment of civilians by rebels, most research has focused on indiscriminate killings and, more recently, sexual violence. This emphasis is influenced by data availability. Using the RHRV dataset, researchers can develop a more nuanced understanding of how rebels treat civilians, including not just killings and sexual violence, but also torture, detention, forcible recruitment, property violations, forced displacement, and restrictions on movement. What factors influence the extent to which rebels commit different human rights abuses? If a rebel group uses one form of violation, is it more likely to use another? Do groups use some forms of abuse more strategically or systematically than others? How do military capabilities, funding streams, and battlefield dynamics influence the extent to which rebels commit different human rights violations? And how do such violations affect the ability of rebel groups to govern and hold authority in areas they control? In addition to facilitating quantitative research on such topics, the dataset includes textual excerpts from the source material that can be searched and further analyzed.

Policymakers should also be interested in understanding variations in the treatment of civilians by rebel groups. Attention and resources may be better directed toward situations in which armed groups are committing abuses systematically to prioritize the resolution of conflicts that cause the greatest human suffering. Of course, there are various factors that motivate international attempts at conflict resolution, including geopolitics, strategic concerns, media visibility, and domestic political pressure. With the development of a more systematic approach to collecting data on rebel human rights violations, such evidence can help inform and mobilize efforts to find peaceful resolutions to violent conflicts.

Replication Data: The dataset, codebook, and scripts for the empirical analysis in this article can be found at https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/KT3PZS.

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Table I. Examples of text used to code systematic violations

Violation	Rebels	Government	Year	Text
Killings	AFRC	Sierra Leone	1998	Throughout the year, AFRC and RUF rebels committed numerous egregious abuses, including brutal killings, severe mutilations, and deliberate dismemberments, in a widespread campaign of terror against the civilian population.
Torture	LRR	Ukraine	2015	Separatists systematically engaged in abductions, torture, and unlawful detention.
Detention	Boko Haram	Nigeria	2015	Boko Haram insurgents kidnapped hundreds of civilians during their multiple attacks in the Far North Region, including Double, Waza, Amchide, Tchakamari, and Blame, among other districts.
Property	ELN	Colombia	2001	Guerrillas, usually the ELN, caused massive damage to the country's power industry and increases in electricity rates for consumers. ELN sabotage in December 2000 and FARC attacks in March left several towns in the Uraba region without electricity for weeks at a time, causing economic and health problems.
Forced Recruitment	Serbian Republic	Bosnia	1995	Reliable sources reported wide-scale use of prisoners for forced labor on the front lines by the Bosnian Serbs.
Sexual Violence	Seleka	Central African Republic	2013	Armed men reportedly belonging to the Seleka perpetrated 140 rapes.
Forced Displacement	Kashmir Insurgents	India	2013	According to 2013 IDMC statistics, regional conflicts had displaced at least 526,000 persons, including several thousand Kashmiri Hindus driven from their homes by antigovernment insurgents.
Movement Restriction	IS	Iraq	2016	The government, the PMF, and Da'esh all established roadblocks that impeded the flow of humanitarian assistance to communities in need.

Table II: Polychoric correlations

	Killings	Torture	Detention	Property	Recruitment	Sexual	Displace	Restrict
Killings	1.00							
Torture	0.79	1.00						
Detention	0.80	0.85	1.00					
Property	0.76	0.73	0.72	1.00				
Recruitment	0.65	0.79	0.74	0.65	1.00			
Sexual	0.72	0.93	0.75	0.67	0.77	1.00		
Displace	0.70	0.65	0.64	0.54	0.55	0.52	1.00	
Restrict	0.62	0.62	0.68	0.54	0.67	0.43	0.75	1.00

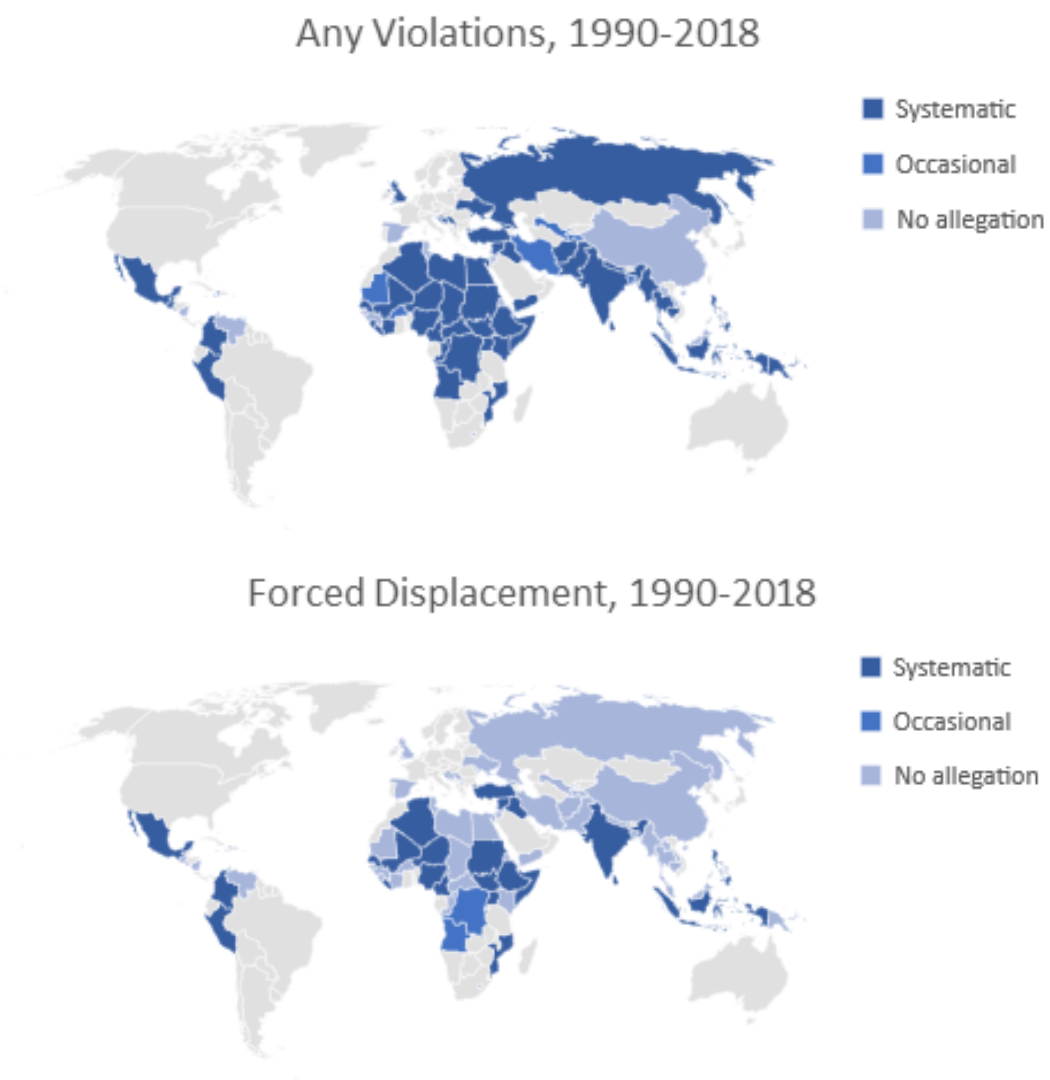

Figure 1. Peak levels of human rights violations by rebel groups

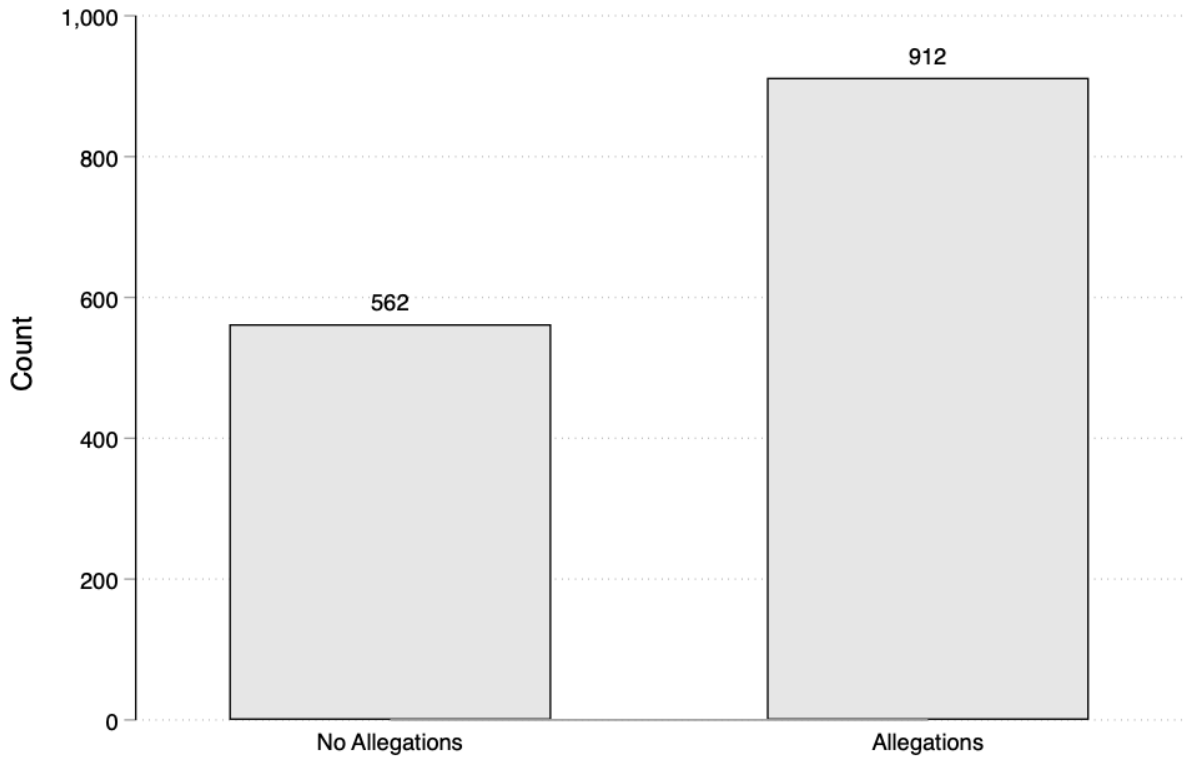

Figure 2. Rebel human rights violations, 1990-2018

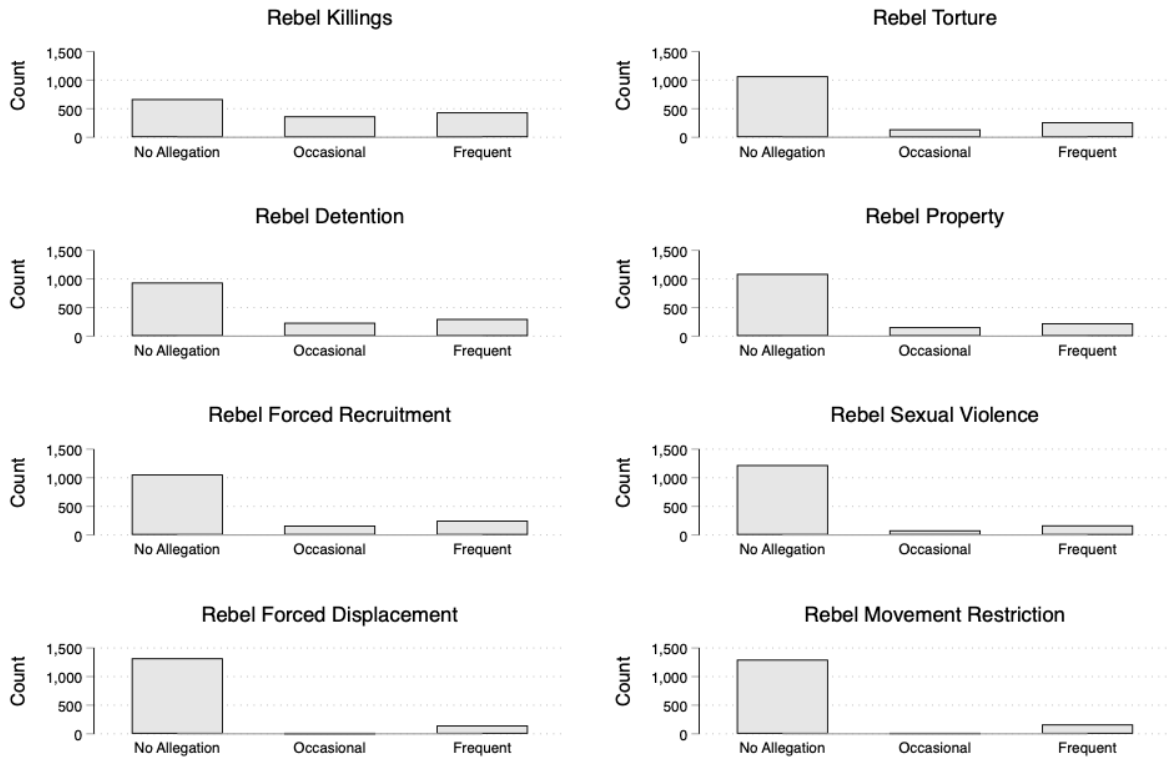

Figure 3. Specific violations, 1990-2018

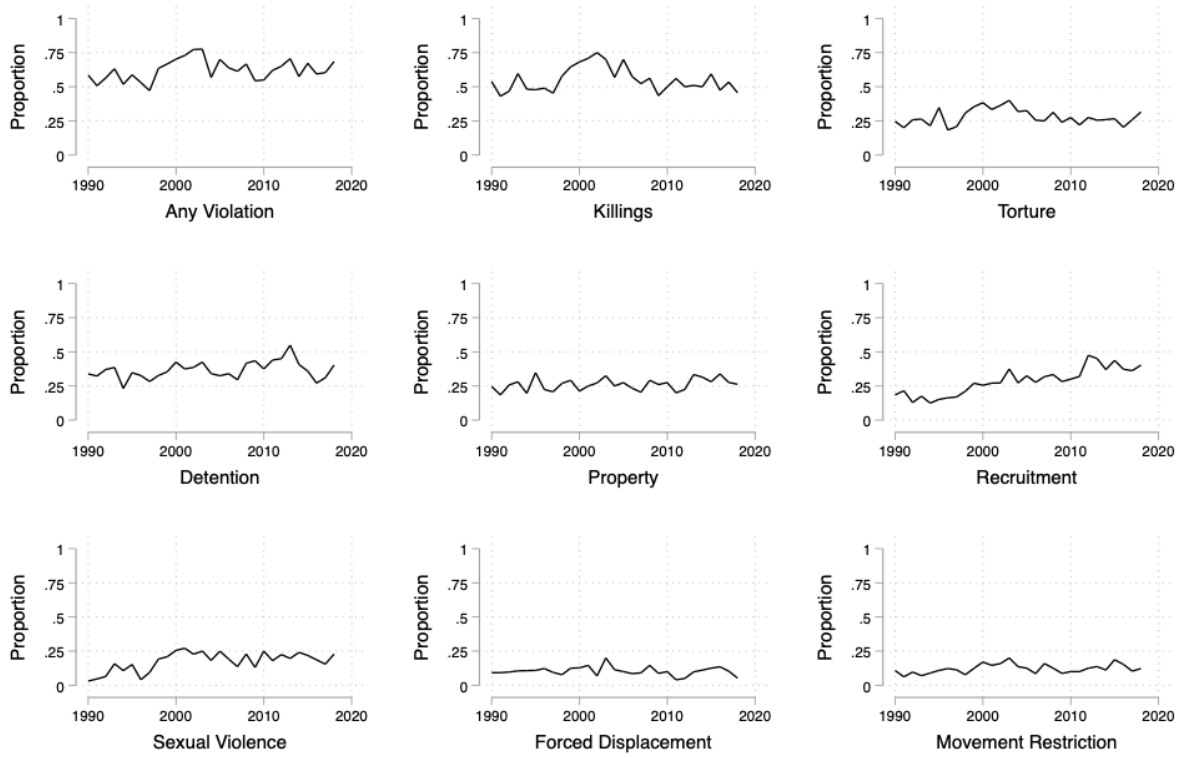

Figure 4. Violations per year, 1990-2018

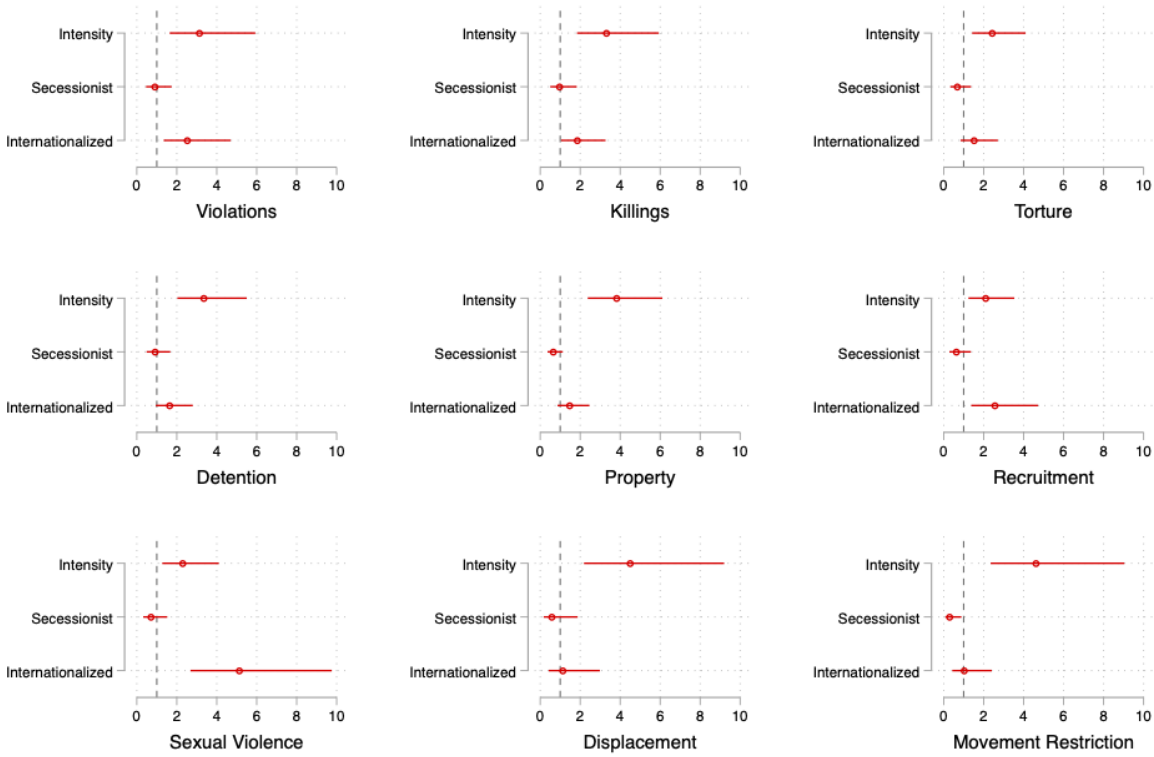

Figure 5. Conflict characteristics and rebel violations