

War Issues

Iraq

When Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990 (The Gulf War), the UN authorised a military response. The war was swift and brutal, with over 100,000 Iraqi soldiers killed. The US claimed that smart bombs meant fewer civilian deaths, whilst others claim that only a minority of bombs hit their targets.



In Gulf War 2 (2003-2011) the UN had not made a further resolution supporting a second invasion, and weapons inspectors had failed to find conclusive proof of weapons of mass destruction. Many critics saw Iraq as a mis-judged response to 9-11, motivated by greed for oil, and certainly not the last resort. The death toll was higher than in the first conflict, with estimates between 100,000 and 1,000,000 violent deaths.

Libya

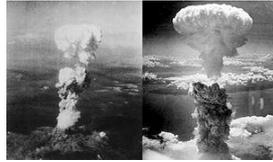
In February 2011, the Libyan government responded violently to pro-democracy demonstrations, and hundreds were killed. The UN Security Council passed a resolution to allow member states to establish a no-fly zone over Libya to prevent Gaddafi bombing his own cities, allowing member states to use "all necessary measures" to prevent civilians being killed.



In June 2011 the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for Gaddafi for planning and implementing "a policy of widespread and systematic attacks against civilians and demonstrators and dissidents". It is estimated that in excess of 30,000 Libyans died in the civil war.

Hiroshima and Nagasaki

The 2 atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki ended the Second World War by killing 100,000s – over 400,000 are now considered to have died as a result of the two bombs. The decision to drop the bombs was made on pragmatic grounds, as more would have died if the war had continued. Within a week of the second explosion, the Japanese surrendered. 1.6 million Soviet troops had been deployed to fight Japan, and some argue they would have made Japan surrender with fewer deaths.



Landmines

Now called IEDs (improvised explosive devices), these are anti-personnel and anti-vehicle weapons that often remain around for years after the conflict has finished. They kill indiscriminately. The Ottawa Treaty to prohibit their use has been signed by 159 nations. There are other indiscriminate devices (like cluster bombs) still widely used. One of the Just War criteria says that you should always discriminate between combatants and civilians, which means never using indiscriminate weapons.



Guantanamo Bay

Guantanamo Bay detention camp is a US prison set up in Cuba in 2002 to allow the US to do things there that would be against the law in America. People held in Guantanamo have been arrested and detained without trial. Under the Bush administration, prisoners were tortured for information. Bush denied that 'water-boarding' is torture, but many have criticised this. Other complaints include sexual degradation, religious persecution, forced drugging, torture with broken glass, barbed wire, cigarettes. There are still 171 people detained in Guantanamo, despite Obama's promises to shut down the facility.



Pacifism

Pacifism is an opposition to war and any form of violence. Absolute Pacifists are against the very idea of war, saying that it is in principle wrong to deliberately kill other human beings, even in self-defence. Conditional Pacifists believe that war just doesn't work. Whilst it may in theory be possible to imagine circumstances that would justify war, Conditional Pacifists oppose war because they believe it leads to worse consequences than other methods of conflict resolution. Selective Pacifists only oppose certain types of war, like Nuclear War. Critics claim this latter category are not pacifist at all.

