Rebel Human Rights Violations Dataset Codebook

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Introduction

This document is the codebook for the Rebel Human Rights Violation dataset. The dataset was created by Justin Conrad (Justin.Conrad@uga.edu), James Igoe Walsh (jwalsh@uncc.edu), and Beth Elise Whitaker (bwhitaker@uncc.edu). Further details can be found in the following paper:

Walsh, James Igoe, Justin M. Conrad, and Beth Elise Whitaker. Forthcoming. Rebel Human Rights Abuses During Civil Wars: Introducing the Rebel Human Rights Violations Dataset. *Journal of Peace Research.*

Overview and Sources

The Rebel Human Rights Violation (RHRV) dataset records the occurrence and level of specific human rights violations committed by rebel groups during civil war. The unit of analysis is the list of rebel groups per year identified in the UCDP Dyadic Conflict Dataset for the years 1990-2018. You can find information about groups and conflicts at: http://ucdp.uu.se/?id=1. Variables are coded from two sources: US State Department Country Reports on Human Rights and Amnesty International's Annual Reports. These reports were downloaded and made available to the research team.

Measurement

For each variable, the key information coded is how often (if at all) a rebel group on the UCDP list engaged in the particular violation in a given year. Each variable represents a category as follows:

If the variable is coded as "0" for the year, there is no evidence or allegation in the report that the rebel group engaged in that violation during the year. If the variable is coded as "1," the rebel group engaged in that violation "occasionally" or "infrequently." If the variable is coded as "2" (the highest value possible), there is evidence suggesting the rebel group engaged in the violation "frequently" or "systematically." When these or similar words are not used but numbers are provided, "2" should be reserved for years in which there were 50 or more victims, while "1" designates 1-49 victims.

For each human rights violation described below, there are separate variables for data coded from State Department and Amnesty International reports. Variables coded from State Department reports end with "_s", and variables coded from Amnesty International reports end with "_a".

There are some countries that do not have State Department or Amnesty International human rights

reports for particular years, especially in the early 1990s. In such cases, a period (.) is entered for all variables for these country-years.

Coding Process

During the coding process, each coder works alone. Each coder is assigned a rebel group-year to code. The coder reads the reports from the State Department and Amnesty International and uses these texts to code each of the human rights violation variables using the process and definitions provided below. Coders read the entire report in making their coding decisions.

Initially, coders do not discuss their coding decisions with other coders. They may consult the principal researchers on the project with any questions.

Coders should focus only on the information available in the reports during their initial coding. Copy and paste the quote(s) from the relevant report into the notes column next to the column for the specific human rights abuse that you are coding.

Each rebel group year is assigned to at least two coders, who work independently. The coders then meet together with one of the principal researchers and the graduate student project manager to discuss their coding decisions. The coders, principal researcher, and graduate student examine the quotes from the text sources and compare these to each coder's initial coding for each variable. The team reviews these coding decisions, discusses any discrepancies, and decides on a final coding for that cell. In some cases, this involves consulting the full text from the source as a team.

Accurate coding requires careful attention to the specific words that are used in the text sources, and an understanding of the context of these words. Given the sometimes ambiguous wording in the source documents, we have found team meetings involving faculty principal researchers, undergraduate coders, and graduate student project managers to be more effective in producing reliable coding decisions (as opposed to alternative methods where values are simply aggregated "automatically"). While more time-consuming than other approaches, the involvement of the same graduate student project manager in every coding meeting helps to ensure consistency throughout the coding process.

Human Rights Violations Variable Descriptions

Unlawful or Arbitrary Killings (rkillings)

This measures if the rebel group killed civilians and/or non-combatants outside of the context of armed conflict. Examples include:

- Politically-motivated killings of civilians
- Assassinations of political or religious leaders
- Summary executions
- Deaths resulting from torture

Under most circumstances, the arbitrary killings will be politically motivated. A political motivation is when someone is killed because of their involvement in political activities or due to their perceived support for a political, religious, or ethnic faction.

Combat deaths are *not* considered arbitrary killings, nor are any killings that result from the rebel group defending itself from an attack by the opposing side. Furthermore, deaths of non-combatants that are "collateral damage" of combat operations, rather than the deliberate targeting of civilians, are not counted as arbitrary killings.

Detention and Disappearances (rdetention)

Any forced disappearances or abductions committed by a rebel group. Examples include:

- Detentions of victims
- Abductions where the victim is never found again
- Abductions where the victim disappears for a time and then re-appears later
- Holding non-combatants hostage
- Kidnappings for political purposes, such as to undermine or humiliate the government, coerce the other side into entering negotiations or making concessions, and so on. When possible, kidnappings conducted specifically and solely for ransom should *not* be coded in this category. However, if the rebel group demands a ransom and has political objectives, this should be coded.

Individuals who are seized or detained by a rebel group in the context of armed combat should *not* be coded in this category. Legitimate prisoners of war, or those who are captured in combat situations, are not considered to be illegally detained. Taking civilians hostage is a form of illegal detention.

Torture (rtorture)

Torture is the intentional infliction of mental or physical pain on those in the rebel group's custody. The violence may or may not be used with the intention of obtaining information from the prisoners. The violence can be used simply as a way to physically and mentally degrade those in custody. Examples of activities that constitute torture while in custody:

- Beatings
- Rape or other forms of sexual violence (any instances of sexual violence, which are also coded in a separate category below, also constitute torture)
- Hazing
- Electrocutions

Executions or intentional killings while in custody are *not* considered torture (although there may be additional evidence suggesting torture occurred prior to the execution, which should be coded as such). Such killings should be coded as an Unlawful or Arbitrary Killing (see 3.1) instead. Likewise, if a death occurs specifically as a result of torture, this should be coded as both Unlawful or Arbitrary Killing *and* Torture.

Property Violations (rproperty)

Any instance in which the rebel group interferes with or destroy personal property, particularly to punish or create fear in a community. Examples include:

- Forcibly entering an individual's home or business
- Raiding civilian homes and confiscating property
- Burning down homes or villages
- Destroying vehicles or equipment
- Setting fire to schools
- Poisoning water wells
- Attacks on public buildings and infrastructure that have a clearly civilian purpose, such as

school, bridges, churches, etc.

- Attacks on private and public infrastructure, such as pipelines, cellphone towers, electrical generation and transmission equipment, radio stations, etc.

Any interference with property solely motivated by profit should *not* be coded. When the attack is on government property, consider who is victimized. If the target is a school, the victims are students and teachers, who are clearly civilians; this should be counted as a property crime. But if the target is a municipal or police building or military barracks, in general do not count this as property violations.

Note that property is often destroyed incidentally during combat or terrorist attacks. Only code an incident as a property violation if it is clear that one of the goals of the perpetrator is to destroy property. For example, many terrorist attacks destroy automobiles, buildings or parts of buildings, and so on. But the objective is usually to kill, not to destroy property. So such violence should not be coded as property violation, unless there is information suggesting that one goal was to destroy property.

Forcible Recruitment (rrecuitment)

Any instance in which the rebel group forces an individual against their will to perform work for the organization. This may include forcible recruitment of soldiers, as well as civilian labor.

- Forced recruitment of child soldiers
- Press-ganging of civilians
- Forcing individuals to perform menial tasks, such as carrying equipment
- Forcing individuals to staff natural resource production sites, such as mining operations
- Forced prostitution

Sexual Violence (rsexual)

The intentional infliction of mental or physical pain through the use of sexual violence. Sexual violence is often used as a way to physically and mentally degrade those in custody. Examples of sexual violence include:

- Rape
- Sexual assault

- Mutilation of genitals or women's breasts
- Sexual slavery
- Forced prostitution
- Sexual abuse/exploitation
- Forced abortions

Sexual violence is considered a sub-category of torture but we are coding it separately because of the unique nature of this strategy and the widespread attention it has received. Any instances of sexual violence should therefore be coded both in this category and in the torture category discussed above.

Forced Displacement (rdisplace)

Any instance in which the rebel group deliberately cause individual/s to leave or flee their home due to human rights violations. Rebel groups have a number of motives for forcing displacement; these can include controlling economic resources (such as minerals or farms), seizing politically or militarily important territory (such as a city or road), or to "cleanse" a location of people who oppose the rebel group.

Civilians often flee combat between warring parties. This alone is insufficient to be counted as forced displacement for our purposes. There should be evidence that the rebel group *wanted* people to flee. This might include statements encouraging civilians to leave, the use of terrorist attacks on civilians that results in displacement, or the deliberate destruction of property outside of combat. In many cases, though, direct evidence of the rebel group's motives may be unclear, so in coding this variable, take the context into account. For example, if a rebel group takes actions that cause displacement, but from areas where there is not significant combat, one could infer that the motive was to cause displacement.

Restriction of Movement (rrestrict)

Any instance in which the rebel group deliberately restrict the movement of individuals, preventing them from leaving their homes, neighborhoods, or towns for more than a brief period of time. Examples include blockading communities and the use of checkpoints, roadblocks, and curfews.

Coding Best Practices and Notes

Keep the following guidelines in mind:

- When coding, you will frequently encounter other armed groups that are not included in this dataset. Alternatively, you may see information about groups during the years in which they do not appear in the dataset. In either case, do not code this information in the spreadsheet.
- There are sometimes multiple rebel groups in a country. Only code a violation if you can determine if it was committed by a particular group.
- If rebels are not explicitly named, do not code them for a violation unless they are the only rebel group or the context (such as the location) allows you to infer that the rebel group named in spreadsheet committed the violation.
- The distinction between "frequent" or "systematic" violations takes precedence over the number of people affected when deciding to code an activity as a "1" or a "2." For example, if a rebel group takes control of a school, burns the doors, and occupies it, many people are affected, but this is one incident. If this is the only indication that the group violated property, this should be coded as a "1."
- "Repeatedly" may be seen as systematically or frequently, so code as a "2".
- We assume that the term "numerous" implies that the abuse occurred systematically, and that we code this as a 2. If applicable, rely on other information available in the report to make the distinction between a "1" or a "2." Similar words include "many," and "several." Likewise code these as 2.
- If an outside group is operating in the country, make a note to include these activities for that group's years. For example, if the Rwandan group FDLR is committing abuses in the DRC, code these activities for the FDLR in the Rwanda section of the spreadsheet.
- As you are coding, keep track of different names that are used for rebel groups, government forces, and so on. The reports do not always use the most common name for a group, and some actors have quite different translations of their names.
- Do not code an activity if it happens when a rebel group is in power. For example, a group commits torture in February 2010, becomes the official government in May 2010, and continues to engage in torture. Torture in February should be coded. Torture after May should not.
- When a report mentions violations occurred in previous years, code accordingly.

- Code reports that an actor has used non-combatants as human shields under the detention variable.
- Kidnapping is a form of detention. However, this should not be coded when it is clear that the sole motive is profit.
- In general, do not code violations of press freedom; this violation is not included in our project.
- Landmines qualify as a form of killing if they result in the deaths of civilians.

Variables Included in the Dataset

Variable Name	Description
Sidea	The name of government against whom the rebel group is fighting
Sideb	The name of the rebel group
Year	Year
rkillings_s	Rebel killings from State Department reports
rkillings_a	Rebel killings from Amnesty reports
rtorture_s	Rebel torture from State Department reports
rtorture_a	Rebel torture from Amnesty reports
rdetention_s	Rebel detention from State Department reports
rdetention_a	Rebel detention from Amnesty reports
rproperty_s	Rebel property crimes from State Department reports
rproperty_a	Rebel property crimes from Amnesty reports
rrecuitment_s	Rebel forced recruitment from State Department reports
rrecruitment_a	Rebel forced recruitment from Amnesty reports
rsexual_s	Rebel sexual violence from State Department reports
rsexual_a	Rebel sexual violence from Amnesty reports
rdisplace_s	Rebel forced displacement from State Department reports
rdisplace_a	Rebel forced displacement from Amnesty reports
rrestrict_s	Rebel restriction of movement from State Department reports
rrestrict_a	Rebel restriction of movement from Amnesty reports
rkillings_notes_s	Text used for coding rebel killings from State Department reports
rkillings_notes_a	Text used for coding rebel killings from Amnesty reports
rtorture_notes_s	Text used for coding rebel torture from State Department reports
rtorture_notes_a	Text used for coding rebel torture from Amnesty reports
rdetention_notes_s	Text used for coding rebel detention from State Department reports
rdetention_notes_a	Text used for coding rebel detention from Amnesty reports
rproperty_notes_s	Text used for coding rebel property crimes from State Department reports
rproperty_notes_a	Text used for coding rebel property crimes from Amnesty reports
rrecuitment_notes_s	Text used for coding rebel forced recruitment from State Department reports
rrecruitment_notes_a	Text used for coding rebel forced recruitment from Amnesty reports
rsexual_notes_s	Text used for coding rebel sexual violence from State Department reports
rsexual_notes_a	Text used for coding rebel sexual violence from Amnesty reports
rdisplace_notes_s	Text used for coding rebel forced displacement from State Department reports
rdisplace_notes_a	Text used for coding rebel forced displacement from Amnesty reports
rrestrict_notes_s	Text used for coding rebel restriction of movement from State Department

	reports
rrestrict_notes_a	Text used for coding rebel restriction of movement from Amnesty reports
violation_s	A dichotomous variable that takes a value of 1 of the rebel group engaged in any human rights violation documented in the State Department reports in a given year, and a value of zero otherwise
violation_a	A dichotomous variable that takes a value of 1 of the rebel group engaged in any human rights violation documented in the Amnesty International reports in a given year, and a value of zero otherwise
svac_s	A dichotomous variable that takes a value of 1 of the rebel group engaged in sexual violence in a given year, and a value of zero otherwise; this variable is from the "Sexual Violence in Armed Conflicts" dataset's variable that relies on State Department reports
svac_a	A dichotomous variable that takes a value of 1 of the rebel group engaged in sexual violence in a given year, and a value of zero otherwise; this variable is from the "Sexual Violence in Armed Conflicts" dataset's variable that relies on Amnesty International reports
osv	A dichotomous variable that takes a value of 1 when the One-Sided Violence dataset records 50 or more killings of civilians and a value of zero otherwise
dyadid	The dyad ID variable from the UCDP Dyadic Conflict Dataset
conflictid	The conflict ID variable from the UCDP Dyadic Conflict Dataset
location	The location of the conflict; this variable is from the UCDP Dyadic Conflict Dataset
incomp	The incompatibility that characterizes the armed conflict in the UCDP Dyadic Conflict Dataset
terr	If the conflict is over control of territory or the government in the UCDP Dyadic Conflict Dataset
intensity	The intensity of the conflict, from the UCDP Dyadic Conflict Dataset
type	The type of conflict, from the UCDP Dyadic Conflict Dataset
startdate	The start date of the conflict, from the UCDP Dyadic Conflict Dataset
gwnoa	The ID number of the government (side a) with whom the rebel group is engaged in conflict
sidebid	The ID number assigned to the rebel group in a conflict dyad by the UCDP Dyadic Conflict Dataset