Rebel Human Rights Abuses During Civil Wars:

Introducing the Rebel Human Rights Violation Dataset

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Comparing Allegations from the State Department and Amnesty International Reports

Table A1 reports polychoric correlations between the eight measures of human rights violations across the variables that rely on the State Department and Amnesty International annual reports. With the exceptions of the displacement and restriction measures, these correlations are quite high.

Table A1: Polychoric Correlations Between Rebel Human Rights Violations Measured from State Department and Amnesty International Reports

Variable	Correlation
Killings	0.94
Torture	0.96
Detention	0.95
Property	0.95
Recruitment	0.96
Sexual	0.97
Displace	0.37
Restrict	0.58

Tables A2 and A3 are cross-tabulations of the displacement and restriction variables coded from State Department and Amnesty International reports from 1990 through 2017, the last year for which measures from Amnesty International reports are available.

Table A2: Cross-Tabulation of Rebel Displacement Measured from State Department and Amnesty International Reports

		Amnesty			
		No Allegation	Occasional	Frequent	Total
State	No Allegation	1228	0	40	1268
	Occasional	4	0	1	5
	Frequent	126	2	16	144
	Total	1358	2	57	1417

Table A3: Cross-Tabulation of Rebel Restriction Measured from State Department and Amnesty International Reports

		Amnesty			
		No Allegation	Occasional	Frequent	Total
State	No Allegation	1237	3	8	1248
	Occasional	11	0	0	11
	Frequent	141	2	14	157
	Total	1389	4	22	1416

For both displacement and restriction, the variables that rely on State Department reports include more observations in which rebel groups displaced or restricted movement of civilians.

The following conclusions can be drawn from these comparisons. First, with the exception of the displacement and restriction variables, measures derived from State Department and Amnesty International reports are very similar. For displacement and movement restriction, measures based on Amnesty International report fewer violations than do the measures based on the State Department reports. This may be because Amnesty International reports are typically shorter and less detailed than are State Department Reports. It might be because the State Department draws on a wider range of sources, including Amnesty reporting as well as US government personnel, than does Amnesty. It might also be the case that Amnesty did not focus as systematically on displacement and restriction in its reporting as did the State Department, whose Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration is devoted to this issue.

Replication of Descriptive Statistics Reported in the Manuscript for State Department Data with Amnesty International Data

The figures and tables below replicate the analysis reported in the paper, which relies on data coded from the State Department country reports, with variables coded from Amnesty International's annual country reports.

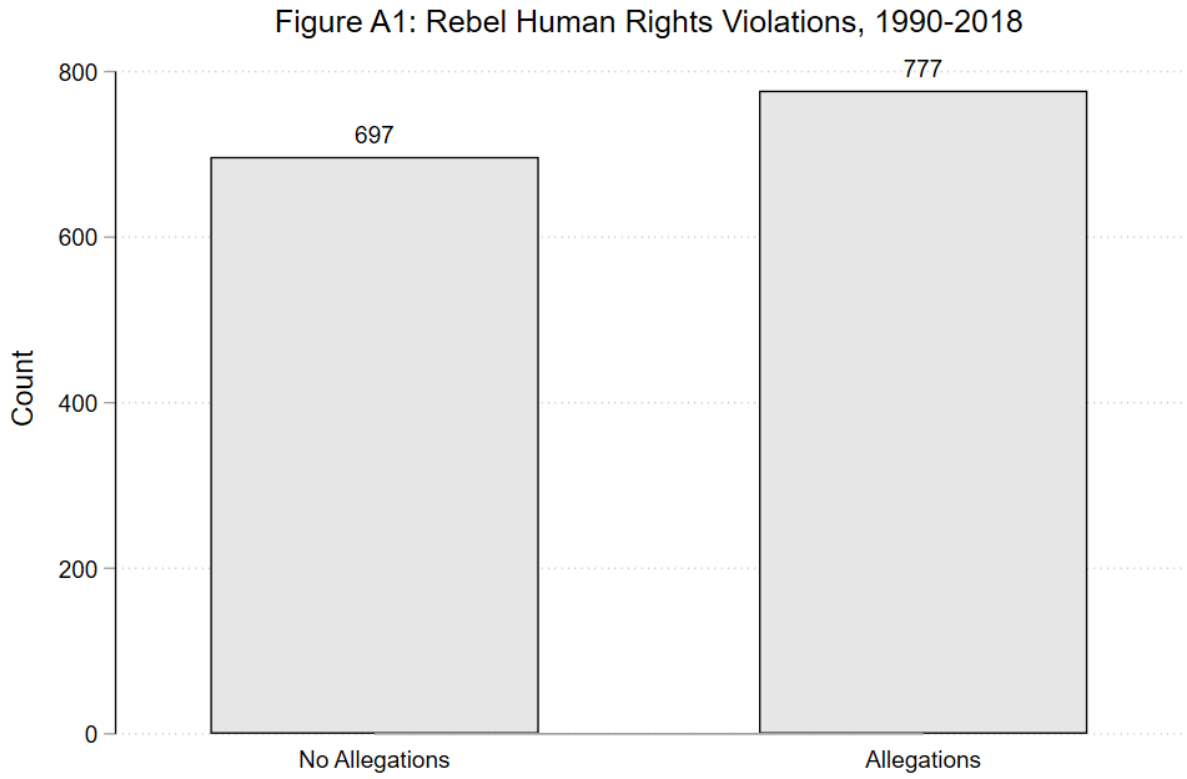


Figure A2: Specific Violations, 1990-2018

Table A4: Polychoric Correlations

	Killings	Torture	Detention	Property	Recruitment	Sexual	Displace	Restrict
Killings	1.00							
Torture	0.81	1.00						
Detention	0.82	0.84	1.00					
Property	0.77	0.70	0.69	1.00				
Recruitment	0.74	0.79	0.76	0.66	1.00			
Sexual	0.79	0.93	0.73	0.67	0.77	1.00		
Displace	0.52	0.56	0.55	0.43	0.48	0.48	1.00	
Restrict	0.50	0.46	0.41	0.36	0.38	0.35	0.49	1.00

Figure A3: Violations Per Year, 1990-2018

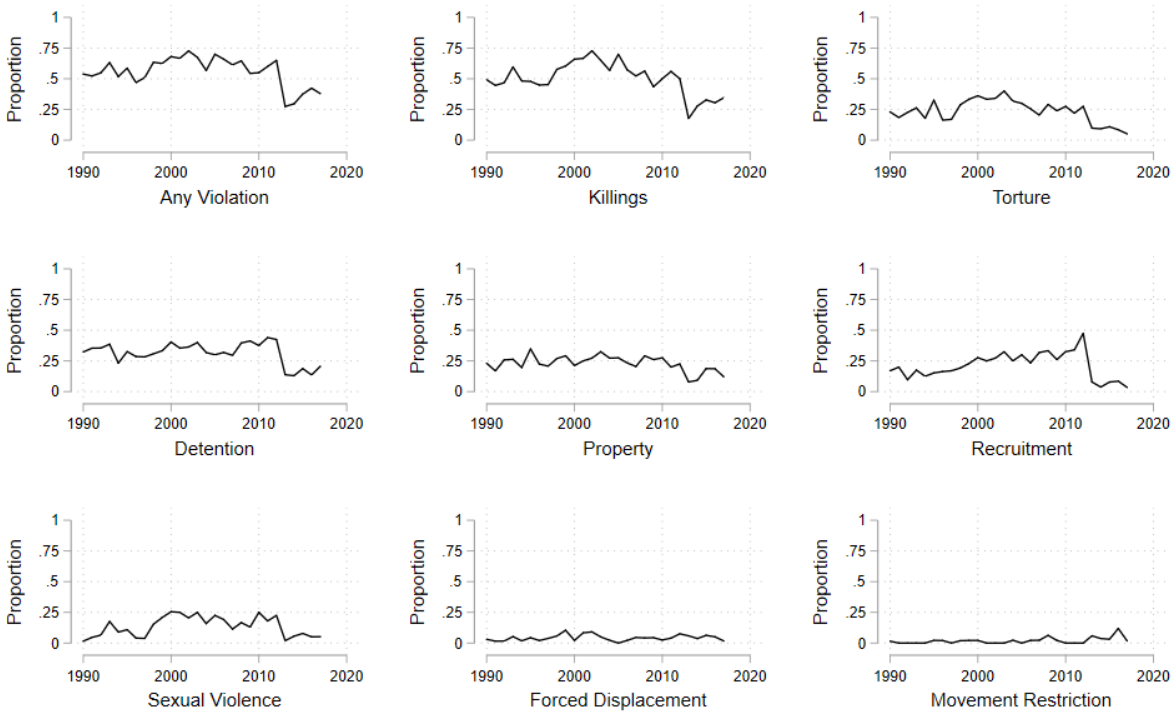
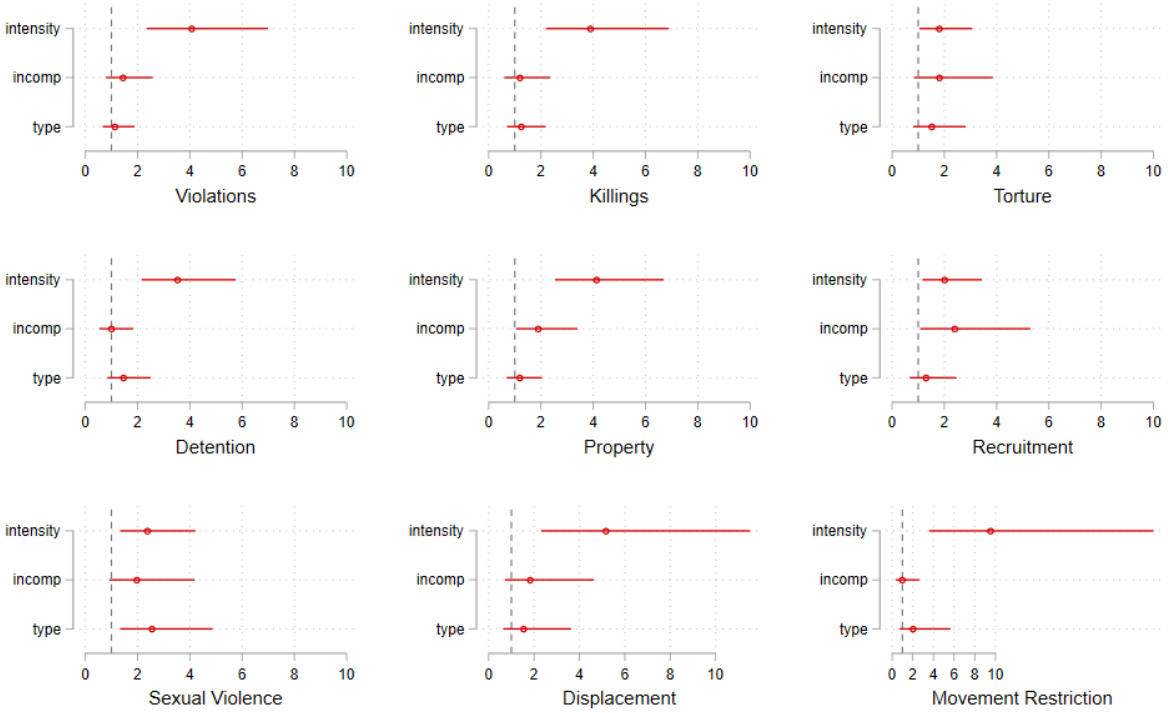


Figure A4: Intensity, Incompatabilities, and Internationalization



The polychoric correlation between the measures of sexual violence in the RHRV dataset and the SVAC dataset using reports from Amnesty International is .90.

The tetrachoric correlation between a dummy variable that takes a value of 1 when the RHRV Amnesty data records rebel killings as systematic and zero otherwise and a dummy variable that takes a value of 1 when the OSV dataset records 50 or more killings and zero otherwise is .53.

Comparison with Existing Datasets

One way to assess the validity of the RHRV is to compare it to other efforts to collect information on rebel abuses. The dataset that is most like the RHRV is the SVAC (Cohen and Nordås, 2014), which uses the same underlying sources, similar coding processes, and ordinal measures. The SVAC measures sexual violence committed by rebel groups and governments from 1989 to 2015 using State Department, Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International reports. The dataset includes separate variables that measure sexual violence based on each source. This allows for a relatively direct comparison between the RHRV and SVAC data. The SVAC ordinal scale ranges from 0 (no evidence of sexual violence) to 3 ("massive" or "systematic") while the RHRV dataset ranges only from 0 to 2. The polychoric correlation between the sexual violence variables, coded from the State Department reports for the years in which the datasets overlap, is .94, indicating a high level of consistency between the two data sources.

We can also partially compare the RHRV measure of killings to the Uppsala Conflict Data Program's one-sided violence (OSV) dataset (Pettersson and Öberg, 2020; Eck and Hultman, 2007). The OSV dataset counts the number of civilians killed by rebel forces outside of combat, if the number of victims exceeds 24. Making a direct comparison between these variables is difficult because of the quite different ways they are measured. The RHRV measure is ordinal, while the OSV measure is a count that only takes a value of 25 or greater and is otherwise missing. Second, the OSV measure excludes rebel-group year observations with fewer than 25 killings, while the RHRV violation measure seeks to measure allegations that fall below this threshold. Despite these differences, we can make some rough estimates of the degree to which the variables predict each other. To do so, we first created dummy variables for each. For the RHRV measure of killings, we created a dummy variable that takes a value of "1" if the RHRV records systematic killings by a rebel group in a particular year, and a value of "0" otherwise. For the OSV measure, we created a dichotomous variable that takes a value of "1" if the OSV records 50 or more killings of civilians by rebel groups in a year, and a value of "0" otherwise. In a logistic regression using the RHRV dichotomous measure as the response variable and the dichotomous OSV measure as the predictor with robust standard errors and observations clustered on the conflict dyad, the coefficient is positive and statistically significant ($z = 7.89$). This suggests that, while there are important differences in how these variables are measured, they are both capturing more systematic and numerous killings of civilians by rebel groups.

Research Best Practices and Suggestions

One of the most challenging aspects of coding violations was distinguishing between those coded as "1" and those coded as "2", especially given that human rights reports rarely provide precise numbers of victims. Here we note that researchers should be advised to keep this difficulty in mind when using the data. In particular, it may be worthwhile investigating if the three category variable should be collapsed into a binary variable, with violations coded in the RHRV as "1" and "2" grouped together, indicating simply that there is evidence in the reports that the violation in question did or did not occur. This approach may be more appropriate depending upon the research question being addressed, or as a robustness check.

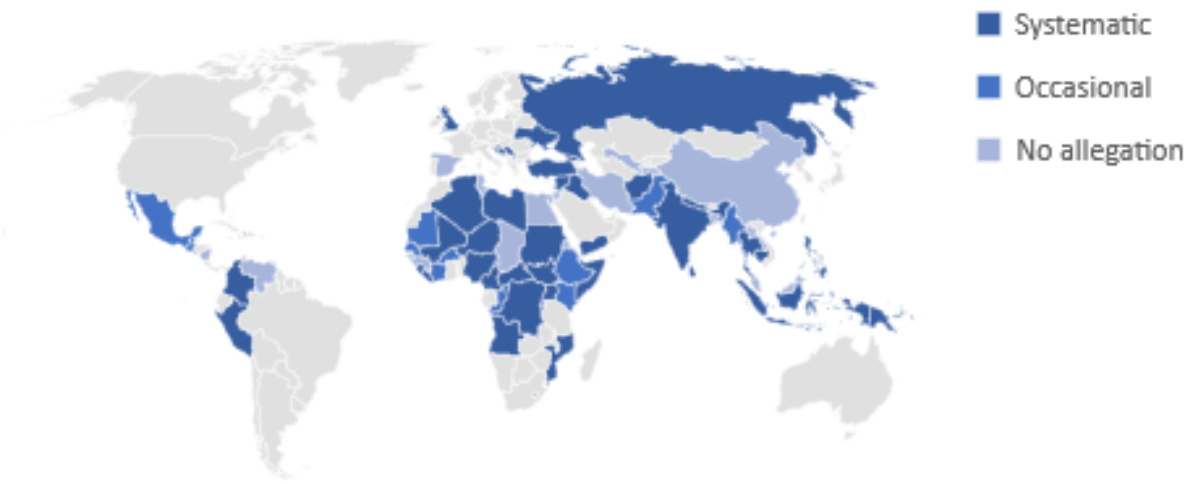
Note as well that earlier reports often have much less detail and information than do later reports. Researchers may want to consider limiting their analyses to later years to ensure the level of reporting is roughly comparable across years.

Peak Violations by Country

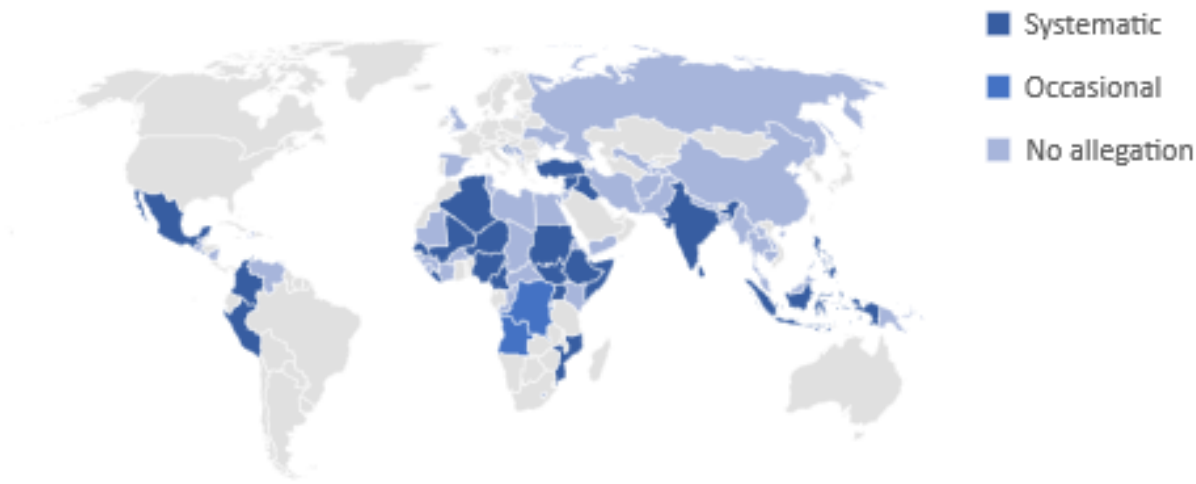
The following maps depict the peak levels of each rebel group violation by country for the time period 1990-2018.[1]

[1] Map plots powered by Bing © Australian Bureau of Statistics, GeoNames, Microsoft, Navinfo, TomTom, Wikipedia

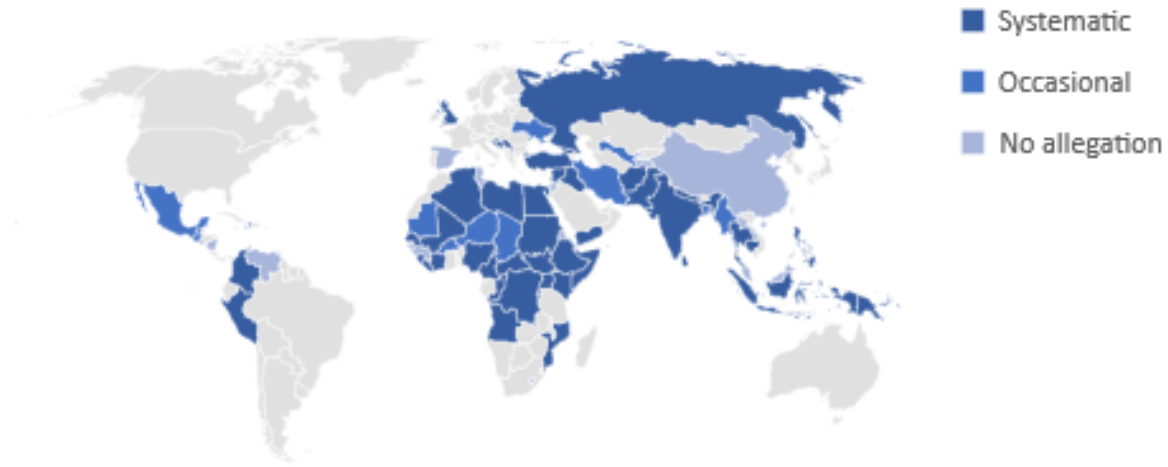
Detentions and Disappearances, 1990-2018



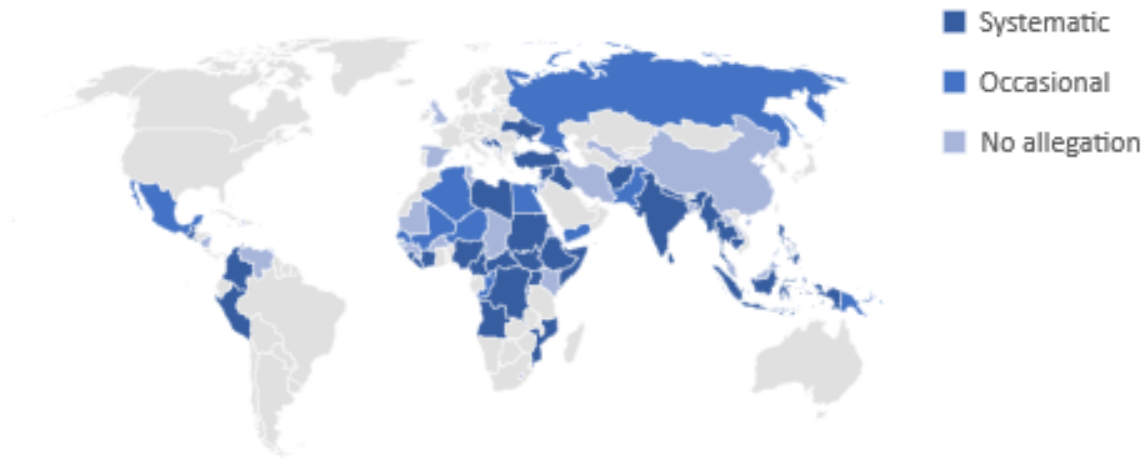
Forced Displacement, 1990-2018



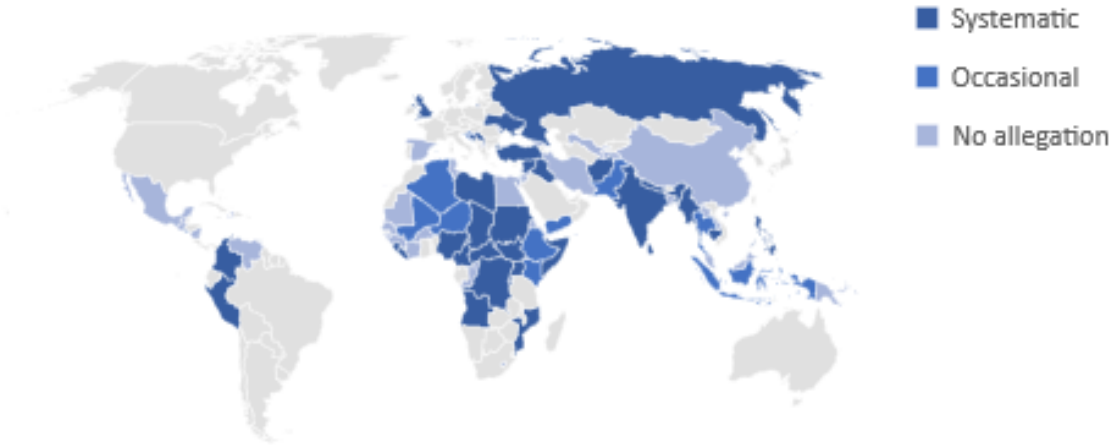
Unlawful or Arbitrary Killings, 1990-2018



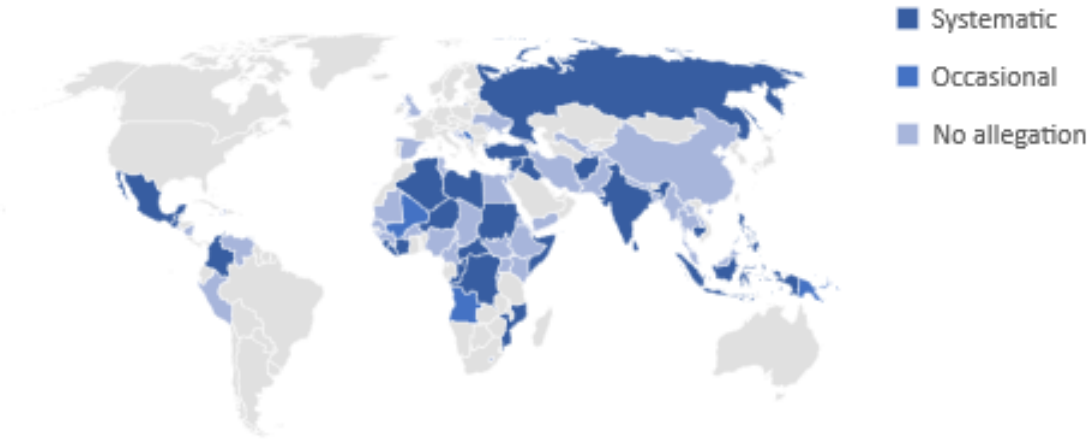
Property Violations, 1990-2018



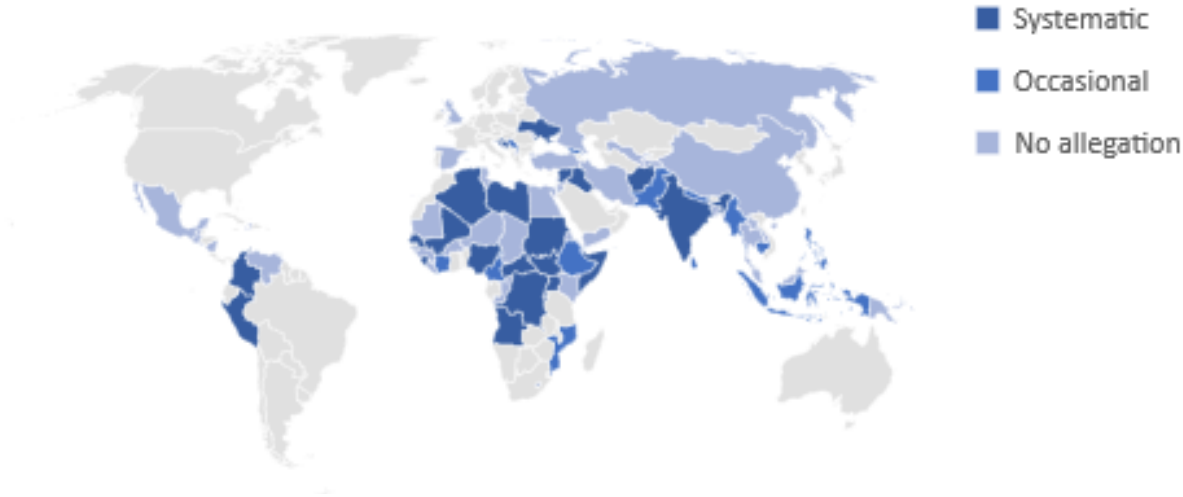
Forced Recruitment, 1990-2018



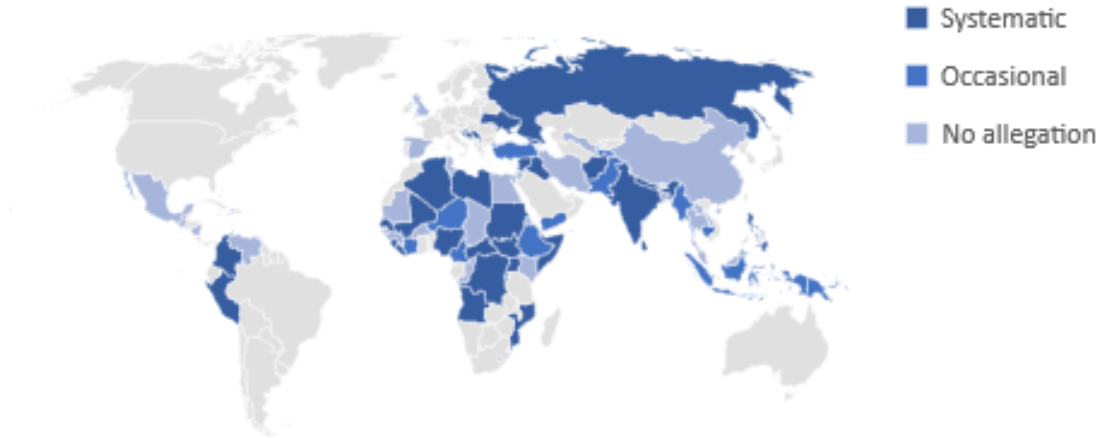
Restriction of Movement, 1990-2018



Sexual Violence, 1990-2018



Torture, 1990-2018



Inter-Coder Reliability

The article and codebook describe the coding process in detail. Two coders were assigned to each rebel-government dyad. Each coder first coded the relevant texts independently. These codings were then compared by the research team, which decided on a final coding for each variable for each dyad-year. Tables A5-A12 compare the initial codings of the two coders. These are quite similar for all eight allegations. Table A13 lists the percentage of cases for each violation in which the two coders independently assigned the same value. The percentage of identical initial codings ranges from 81.2 percent to 92.1 percent, resulting in an average of 87.4 percent. The reconciliation process during coding meetings thus focused on the relatively small percentage of variable values for which there were discrepancies between the initial codings of the two coders.

Table A5: Unlawful or Arbitrary Killings

		Coder 2		
		No Allegation	Occasional	Frequent
Coder 1	No Allegation	626	65	27
	Occasional	33	249	47
	Frequent	27	53	322

Table A6: Torture

		Coder 2		
		No Allegation	Occasional	Frequent
Coder 1	No Allegation	1,041	40	14
	Occasional	34	72	23
	Frequent	28	37	172

Table A7: Detentions and Disappearances

		Coder 2		
		No Allegation	Occasional	Frequent
Coder 1	No Allegation	997	37	13
	Occasional	42	119	31
	Frequent	43	47	130

Table A8: Property Violations

Coder 2

		No Allegation	Occasional	Frequent
	No Allegation	1,038	50	32
Coder 1	Occasional	44	62	35
	Frequent	51	17	128

Table A9: Forced Recruitment

		Coder 2		
		No Allegation	Occasional	Frequent
	No Allegation	1,029	29	12
Coder 1	Occasional	15	111	30
	Frequent	21	29	179

Table A10: Sexual Violence

		Coder 2		
		No Allegation	Occasional	Frequent
	No Allegation	1,201	19	11
Coder 1	Occasional	12	37	17
	Frequent	16	17	120

Table A11: Forced Displacement

		Coder 2		
		No Allegation	Occasional	Frequent
	No Allegation	1,232	4	17
Coder 1	Occasional	12	14	8
	Frequent	25	2	92

Table A12: Restriction of Movement

		Coder 2		
		No Allegation	Occasional	Frequent
	No Allegation	1,221	7	29
Coder 1	Occasional	9	4	0
	Frequent	17	3	114

Table A13: Percentage of Identical Coding Decisions

Violation	Percentage
Unlawful or Arbitrary Killings	81.2
Torture	87.2
Detentions and Disappearances	84.5
Property Violations	83.3
Forced Recruitment	89.5
Sexual Violence	92.1
Forced Displacement	90.8
Restriction of Movement	90.8