

A New Discipline: Humanitarian Diplomacy and Its Principles

Before 1990, human rights violations were seen as the internal affairs of individual states; thus, human rights violations in a state were not considered as issues requiring foreign intervention. However, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, human rights violations went beyond being the internal affairs of individual states, and became a current issue of international law. In this regard, another problem has arisen. The notion of humanitarian intervention regarding human rights violations committed within the sovereignty borders of a country has brought along the implementation of military sanctions. The intervention of dominant actors of the system in the internal affairs of failed states with “military sanctions” under the name of humanitarian intervention has gone so far as to violate the sovereignty rights of these countries, and this situation has led to an increasing reaction among the international community.

Although military intervention and humanitarian intervention are different notions, *humanitarian intervention*, as of its essence, subsequently brings along *military intervention*. Operations aimed at Kosovo in 1999 were humanitarian interventions implemented without a United Nations Security Council resolution, however, they were not condemned. The use of the notion in this way has led to the re-discussion of humanitarian intervention since the Cold War. The insufficiency of the UN and its reluctance for countries in the Security Council to take responsibility in the period which started with the occupation of Kuwait by Iraq in 1990 and continued with the Rwandan genocide in 1994 brought the notion of *humanitarian intervention* into discussion. Within the scope of these incidences, whether it is called military intervention or humanitarian intervention, it is seen that such processes intervene in the sovereign rights of states and incite conflicts rather than stopping them. Even though it is not an alternative to such interventions, humanitarian diplomacy proposes to make attempts to find solutions to problems by means of negotiations and at the same time, relieve affected people while negotiations are still continuing.

In its classic meaning, diplomacy is a specific and official activity by educated experts with regard to the broad field of war and peace issues governing functions related to the state. Humanitarian diplomacy is persuading opinion leaders and decision makers to act, at all times, in the interests of vulnerable people, and with full respect for fundamental humanitarian principles. According to the IFRC, humanitarian diplomacy is persuading opinion leaders and decision makers to act, at all times, in the interests of vulnerable people, and with full respect for fundamental humanitarian principles. In this definition, “at all times” means the active participation of people and organizations engaging in humanitarian diplomacy activities in situations preventing and overcoming potential crises. The negotiation process includes the people of that country through organizations or individual representatives. The first book written on humanitarian diplomacy is “*Humanitarian Diplomacy: Practitioners and Their Craft*”, which was edited by Larry Minear and Hazel Smith and published in 2007. Larry Minear and Hazel Smith define humanitarian diplomacy as follows:

“The humanitarian diplomacy concept mainly includes activities carried out by humanitarian organizations. The important point here is that these organizations need to obtain the space from political and military authorities within which to function with integrity. These activities comprise such efforts as arranging for the presence of humanitarian organizations in a given country, negotiating access to civilian populations in need of assistance and protection, and monitoring assistance programs. Additionally, they also aim to promote respect for international law and norms, support indigenous people and institutions, and engage in advocacy at a variety of levels in support of humanitarian objectives.”

According to the Humanitarian Diplomacy Policy Report published by the IFRC, humanitarian diplomacy actors are decision makers and opinion leaders. Decision makers are international, national and local mechanisms. Internationally active organizations are large humanitarian aid organizations such as the EU, the Turkish Red Crescent, the Red Cross and Oxfam, and the UN in particular. Nationally, organizations acting in cooperation with state mechanisms and autonomous institutions are included in this structure. NGOs and opinion leaders are included in local mechanisms.

The major difference between the diplomacy implemented in favor of humanitarian interests and classic diplomacy is its implementation without military or political domination of a government or state authority. The major common ground between humanitarian diplomacy and classic diplomacy is their alleged

agreement on international humanitarian laws, human rights and refugee rights laws and their acts in accordance with these practices.

In this regard, significantly compulsory norms and rules have been created regarding human rights and humanitarian law in recent years. Many states have signed and adopted humanitarian law and human rights agreements, and also become a party to conventions developed by the UN. However, this structure which exists in the humanitarian area does not have compulsory rules in other international systems in general terms. The lack of a compulsory authority in case of non-compliance with such rules allows for the easy violation of these agreements by states. Since no sanction is imposed on the states which are dominant in the international system, international humanitarian law, human rights, and refugee law are violated in practice.

The failure/inability of states to implement humanitarian or human rights laws duly in case of humanitarian crises is experienced in many cases. Therefore, it can be concluded that no or very little punishment is imposed on persons or organizations depreciating and violating international humanitarian legal norms.

Implementation and Actors

The negotiations carried out in the field and at the table by those engaging in humanitarian diplomacy activities and this process cannot be suitably defined within the sphere of classic diplomacy. Whereas classic diplomacy mostly covers political, military and commercial relationships, humanitarian diplomacy places the human at the center within the scope of the international humanitarian law and prioritizes humanitarian law. Humanitarian principles are built on such fundamental factors as impartiality without making discrimination based on religion, race, identity and nationality, neutrality without being against or on the side of any actor in conflicts, and independence without depending on any state or any political actor. Humanitarian aid organizations function with this principle while carrying out their tasks in regions of armed conflict.

Currently, more than \$20 million dollars are spent every year to cover the needs of people affected by humanitarian crises including natural disasters, armed conflicts, and other conflict situations. In order to cover the needs of such people, 250,000 humanitarian aid workers engage in relief works for vulnerable civilians in areas affected by natural disaster or armed conflict.

Becoming routine for over a century, relief and protection activities for civilians affected by armed conflicts have been carried out under humanitarian principles created by people who work actively on this issue and distinguish humanitarian aid from political interests. This century of humanitarian diplomacy implemented within the framework of humanitarian operations is based on the principles of independence, impartiality and humanity principles.

Humanitarian diplomacy is a discipline which includes humanitarian aid, humanitarian assistance, human rights and humanitarian law. Although they look very similar, humanitarian aid and humanitarian assistance represent different concepts and situations. Whereas humanitarian aid is intended to cover urgent basic needs during conflicts and natural disasters, humanitarian assistance is intended to support a country in areas from education to health, infrastructure to agriculture within the limits of the natural resources of that country. It can be said that humanitarian diplomacy is the roof complementing humanitarian aid and humanitarian assistance. Organizations and persons who intend to start humanitarian diplomacy activities take the first step to ensure lasting peace by organizing regional and international meetings at first to create awareness among the international community about the country in need of the aid, and using the tools they have to make the humanitarian crisis occurring in the conflict area known to the world.