Forecasting to prevent mass atrocity

January 10 2014, by Kate Mayor

As the crisis in the Central African Republic (CAR) worsens, researchers from the Atrocity Forecasting Project, including chief investigator Associate Professor Ben Goldsmith from the University of Sydney, argue that models for predicting genocide and politicide could help prevent these instances of mass violence.

The forecasting model, which uses determining factors such as political instability, state-led discrimination, infant mortality rates and neighbouring state conflicts, places CAR at the top of its list of at-risk states for genocide/politicide for the period 2011-2015. The forecasts are based on data from years up to 2010, when the project began.

"In the case of the Central African Republic, indicators like changes in the number of soldiers under arms, whether or not there was an election, and the introduction and removal of peacekeeping forces are additional factors that have it at a higher risk", said Associate Professor Goldsmith.

"Our model predicts that this combination of factors can lead to a dangerous and volatile situation in which mass atrocities against civilians are more likely to occur"

The aim of the project, which produces the longest-term predictions of its kind, is to provide an early-warning short list of countries most at risk, that will assist government and non-government bodies in identifying potential mass atrocities while providing enough time for these groups to put preventive measures in place.

"The key thing is that we can give early warning about which societies are most at risk over the coming 5 years," said Associate Professor Goldsmith.

"As far as we know, we are the only ones to rank the Central African Republic as the most at-risk country, or even have it towards the top at all."

Associate Professor Goldsmith and his team have already gained the attention of influential bodies, having given presentations on the forecasting model to relevant policy groups in Washington DC, Berlin, Paris, and Canberra, to a United Nations conference, and the International Crisis Group.

"These are groups who would actually be able to take positive action," said Associate Professor Goldsmith.

In recent months, the UN's Special Advisor on the Prevention of Genocide has issued a warning regarding CAR, while violence targeted against civilians by both sides in the civil war has continued to grow in scale and brutality.

"The findings of our model justify very close monitoring and diplomatic attention on the countries at highest risk of the sort of violence we are currently seeing in the Central African Republic"

Provided by University of Sydney

Citation: Forecasting to prevent mass atrocity (2014, January 10) retrieved 16 April 2024 from https://phys.org/news/2014-01-mass-atrocity.html

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private

study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.