

The Ukraine Airplane Shoot-down Due to Neglecting the Sustainable Development Goals

A couple of weeks ago, a Ukraine airplane was unintentionally shot down by the Iranian army. Unfortunately, its 176 passengers died following a 2-year political tension between the USA and Iran, and the standoff was at its climax during the days, leading to this grave incident. Similarly, in the past, many aircrafts have been shot down by gunfire or missile attacks. Although mortalities caused by airplane shoot-downs consisted only a small part of fatal injuries compared to other mechanisms, they need more attention because they are mainly preventable and otherwise their international traumatic stress and grief are tremendous. However, we are going to demonstrate that these types of incidents could be preventable if intercountry differences and disputes are resolved, according to internationally endorsed rules and multilaterally signed agreements and conventions. This military attack on civilian airplanes and possibly the ones that occurred previously can be against two specific targets of the sustainable development goals (SDG).

The target 16.10 of SDG emphasizes protecting fundamental freedoms through international agreements.^[1] A bold example of such agreements was the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which was signed between Iran and the P5 + 1 (the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council—plus Germany) in 2015. The United Nations Secretary-General has recently emphasized the importance of JCPOA as one of the most important achievements of multilateral diplomacy in human history, and he asked all parties to abide by their commitments under the deal.^[2] Three years later and in May 2018, however, the US government withdrew fully from the JCPO.^[3] In the next step, a series of unilateral, harsh, and unprecedented economic sanctions were followed which limited Iran's access to basic needs. This new embargo is ongoing and has caused numerous and multidimensional damages on the entire lives in the affected side. References to the resulting limitation in access to quality health care, and in turn to the otherwise avoidable negative impact on well-being, have been made in a number of recent publications^[4] and by the officials at international organizations.^[5,6]

Such adverse outcomes seem to have been anticipated by experts who convened and composed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In Article 25 of this Declaration, endorsement was made on the right of all nations to benefit from an adequate standard of living with respect to basic needs.^[7] According to this Article, basic needs include food, clothing, housing, medical care, and necessary social services. Perhaps, due to their considerable impact on health and well-being, the Article

emphasizes that at no circumstances, restrictions should be tolerated in these areas.

The timeline of incidents leading to the noted embargo and ending by the shoot-down of the Ukrainian Airplane seem to be also against the Target 16.3 of SDG. This target focuses on promoting the rule of law at national and international levels, and on ensuring equal access to justice for all.^[1] This means when disagreements arise internationally, all parties should abide by global conventions, and do not take laws in their own hands. Rather, the matters under dispute should be referred to a worldwide panel of neutral judicial bodies, and those involved be patient and give adequate chance for the matters to be resolved in a more civilized manner. This process does not seem to have been followed in the series of actions and counteractions ending by the attack on a civilian aircraft.^[2,8] About 150 years ago, Rudolf Virchow said: "Medicine is a social science, and politics nothing but medicine at a larger scale."^[9] This sheds light to the other side of the story: policies, including the ones pursued as SDG targets, could remedy unhealthy circumstances only if they are applied, and if applied at a right dose, at the right time, and at the right place. Otherwise, the world might be far from a better place to live.

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Access this article online

Quick Response Code:



Website:
www.archtrauma.com

DOI:
10.4103/atr.atr_11_20

How to cite this article: Fayaz-Bakhsh A, Salamati P. The Ukraine airplane shoot-down due to neglecting the sustainable development goals. *Arch Trauma Res* 2020;9:1-2.

Submitted: 10-02-2020, **Revised:** 22-02-2020,

Accepted: 03-03-2020, **Published:** 27-03-2020.