

Police Brutality and Resulting Inflammation of Tensions

Introduction:

Police brutality is the excessive and unwarranted use of force by law enforcement against an individual or a group. It is an extreme form of police misconduct and is a civil rights violation. Police brutality includes but is not limited to beatings, shootings, "improper takedowns, and unwarranted use of tasers." The UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials (BPUFF) is the key international instrument that deals with police use of force.

Some examples of police brutality include:

- In 2019 police in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, killed 1,810 people – an average of five per day.
- In 2019, Kenyan police killed 122 people. Between October 2019 and January 2020, police in Iraq killed around 600 protesters.
- Between 2015 and 2018, over 500 people were fatally shot by the police in Jamaica, and over 300 shot and injured.
- Around 1000 people are killed by police in the USA every year.

Historical Pretext of the Issue:

Police Brutality has been a pertinent issue in the international community, not since only the past two or three decades, but since the birth of the modern police system itself. Cases of corruption in countries such as Brazil and Kenya, where underprivileged people are exploited for forceful and false bribes are rife to this day. However, police brutality is not only exclusive to developing countries.

The United States of America and Russia have a plethora of police brutality cases every year, with the Washington Post reporting nearly 1100 cases of police brutality in the USA in just 2018 alone. The recent surge in cases of police brutality have seen an even greater uprising in the international community. After the death of African American male George Floyd by officer Derek Chauvin, Black Lives Matter protests have swarmed the international community, and movements such as "ACAB" have made public dissatisfaction towards police forces more prominent than ever, and global reform of police forces in the international community has become more sought than the past decades, due to the excessive increase in cases of police brutality.

General Background of Police Brutality and Police Activity in Countries:

An Article by CNN reports the following about police brutality and activity in Western countries and Australia:

The United States has the most instances of police brutality out of all other G7 countries.

In 2018, around 1000 people were shot dead by the U.S police, which is 31 per 10 million people, while it was 11 people by the German police, 2 people in the UK, and in New Zealand 1 person was killed by the police.

The rate of in-custody deaths in the U.S is also double that of Australia and UK, being 12 per 100k arrests, while it is 5 and 2 per 100k arrests in Australia and UK respectively.

Black men are 2.5 times more likely to be killed by police forces than the white people in the U.S.

The U.S also has higher arrest rates with 3 people per 100 getting arrested as compared to Australia and the UK's 2 and 1.

People of black ethnicity are imprisoned at disproportionate rates in a few countries:

U.S: 12% total population to 33% prison population.

UK: 3% total population to 12% prison population.

Canada: 4% total population to 9% prison population.

Russia has had issues with police brutality due to long detentions of prisoners and torture of detainees for forceful confessions, involving LGBTQ members as well, and has reportedly had to pay more than 600 million rubles (\$9.5 million) to its citizens in compliance with European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) rulings in 2019.

Past Occurrences of Police Brutality:

United Kingdom: On 1st April 2009, during the G-20 London summit protests, a bystander Ian Tomlinson died shortly after he was pushed on the ground by a police officer.

United Kingdom: In 2019, Simeon Francis, a black man living in Birmingham was pushed to a wall and brought to the ground by the Devon and Cornwall police as he said "I can't breathe" while an officer was pressing his knee on his back, and police said he was safe and well to prison. Later next year, he was taken into custody again, where an ambulance was called at 3 am after he was found unresponsive, and he was pronounced dead at 6pm.

Syria: In 2011, when people were protesting in Syria, the police forces carried out brutal crackdowns of those protests, which not only injured a multitude of people, but killed six.

China: On January 7th, 2008, Wei Wenhua was beaten to death by police officers as he attempted to film them clashing with villagers in Hubei Province.

United Kingdom: On 4th February 2004, three catholic civilians were killed and two were wounded as they were shot by a shotgun by a policeman who was distraught over the death of his colleague. The officer was someone described as an antiterrorist officer who one a commendation for bravery.

Pakistan: An axe wielding police official killed a man in police custody in 2014, stating that he committed blasphemy by insulting companions of the Prophet Muhammad.

United States: Newark police officer Johvanny Crespo kills an unarmed black man who started driving away from Johvanny Crespo because he opened fire on him under the accusation of him having a weapon in his car. Even though Gregory Griffin, the man who was driving the car stopped his car, Johvanny got out and shot and killed him and wounded his passenger.

Main Causes of Police Brutality:

Racism:

1. Frustrations built up by the racist nature of police training academies in countries where police brutality is enacted the most frequently. Example of Derek Chauvin who was a training officer guiding a cop on his fourth day on the job when he killed George Floyd.
2. Lack of proper mechanisms during police training in their police academies to ensure that racism in the police force doesn't exist.
3. Black men are 2.5 times more likely to be killed by the police force than white men in the USA according to various studies.
4. 1 in 1000 black men and boys are killed by the police force in the U.S.
5. Despite being responsible for 2.8 million of the 10.3 million offences in 2018, and previous years as well, the U.S, black people in the U.S have a higher chance of being killed by police forces.
6. Russia has had past occurrences of police brutality against migrant workers, such as when Russian police forces rounded up and arbitrarily detained scores of Central Asian migrant workers, beating many of them, in a series of raids in mid-December 2019, as reported Human Rights Watch, and cases of police brutality against Tartarians have also surfaced in the past.

Sectarian Causes:

1. Officers often discriminate on the basis of religion due to the same shortcomings that give them trouble in combating racism within their forces.
2. Sectarianism causes more cases of police brutality in countries with more religious problems and division such as the United Kingdom, where catholics are often subject to police brutality, and Pakistan, where the Shia-Sunni divide is extremely problematic.

Militarization of Police:

1. Militarization of police gives them further means and encouragement of excessive and extremely often, unwarranted force, where the police enact police brutality on civilians for no apparent reason. Jose Guerena was an ex-navy seal, who was killed by a SWAT team sent to his house under suspicion of drug possession, where he was shot dead with 60 bullets in his body, due to a trigger shot by the SWAT team itself, and it was later found that no drugs were in his possession.

2. Militarization of police changes the mindset of the police officers from “peace officials” to soldiers due to the excessive amount of dangerous weapons that they possess, which is wrong as they work in friendly environments rather than in battlefields surrounded by enemies.

Effects of Police Brutality:

Police Brutality has been directly linked to negative impacts on the mental health of victims causing long term problems that include anxiety, depression etc. If police brutality is brought forth by racial discrimination for example the presence of police brutality cases against African-American individuals within America, it leads to further marginalized communities which increases the social divide and causes a different perception of states (if federal issue) or the country (if a country issue; as in under government supervision).

Solutions to the issue discussed can include building social protection systems under the International Labor Organization and World Bank (remember that these solutions can only be brought up by countries that allow media transparency and UN investigation etc). In case of detention of protesters, the victims can also be introduced to newer problems like living in abysmal conditions without sanitation etc. Many protesters have been detained from the Black Lives Matters protests in New York and have been detained even though they were protesting peacefully.

Police brutality is not only present in prominent countries and is faced on often higher levels in countries for example Trinidad where the Trinidadian PM said "How can the population be expected to have confidence in the police, one of the most important institutions in a democracy, when they continue to operate above the law by terrorising and murdering citizens who depend on them for assistance and protection,".

This proves that police cannot be always termed as a body bound by law in certain countries and calls for stricter law enforcement to keep the body in check. In smaller countries police brutality causes a halt in development as police are kept responsible for security management of projects being made under federal or national order. This prevents development to a certain extent as investors cannot trust police and often additional security is required which cannot be arranged leading to abandoned projects.

General effects would cover vulnerability of citizens and breakdown of social order in cases of extremity. Major human rights violations can also be recorded for example in some parts of the world, police forces are known for the brutality with which they operate. In Kosovo, for instance, the Serbian police functioned as a kind of paramilitary organization, responsible for numerous atrocities. In countries such as Brazil and Mexico, the police are known for all kinds of gross human rights violations: endemic brutality, torture, extrajudicial killings, and even disappearances. This causes deaths at a mass scale and the question on the power of police arises.

Should police be given powers to intervene without government order?

Should police be held accountable to hold citizens in detention?

Should employment in the sector be given by a new standard that encompasses their past history with individuals from different communities?

Summarizing, the effects can be broken down into:

1. Human rights violations and breakdown of social order
2. Halt in development of under-developed areas
3. Increase in marginalized communities
4. Greater powers to police forces that can compromise federal powers and accountability of the state for its actions.
5. Deterioration of health of victims that can include mental health with problems like anxiety, depression and stress and physical health problems for example malnutrition in camps, loss of hygiene in case of detention, severe wounds through torture etc.

The EU:

All countries present within the EU including the UK have extensive training camps for police and various countries for example the UK, Germany and New Zealand do not allow for police to carry guns without merit. These countries do not support intervention of police troops without government order. These countries also have marginalized communities but can promote the cause of building greater social security.

Russia and Allies :

Russia and allies including China do not allow for media transparency and the only way they can solve police brutality is by law enforcement agencies under police which is supported by all of these countries. These countries do not allow for investigation within their countries and hence all cases that would need to be solved should be solved and worked forward by greater federal power.

These countries can also be allied with other countries that are promoters of peaceful police use by offering concessions of federal powers that does not compromise stance but still further solves the issue.

USA and NATO :

The USA can promote the cause of investigations of human rights violations within their country. The USA can implement solutions that allow for media transparency and for social protection systems to be formed. The USA however cannot increase federal powers to the extent that all police matters be kept to states. Major contention lies in the involvement of the world community in the cases of police brutality within the country that the US can allow in certain cases but cannot be done by the Russian bloc. This can be the major contention to campaign on for USA and Nato members that can either side with the United States of America or hold it accountable to form their peace bloc.

