



RAFTO

FACT SHEET, THE RAFTO PRIZE 2021

Who are Human Rights Data Analysis Group (HRDAG)?

HRDAG is a non-profit organization that applies scientific methods to analyse human rights violations around the world. The organization consists of a small group of experts in fields such as computer science, software development and statistics, and is located in San Francisco, USA. HRDAG's project partners have included human rights organizations, investigative journalists, truth commissions, international criminal tribunals and United Nations missions. The organization has published findings on conflicts in countries such as Syria, Colombia, Chad, Kosovo, Guatemala, Perú and East Timor and has provided testimony in international war crime trials and truth commissions.

How does HRDAG work?

The exact scope of human rights crimes can in many cases be difficult to measure or verify based on the accessible data and statistics. Reports and lists are often deficient, have wrong categorizations or contain overlapping data. The organization has specialized in producing unbiased results by using technical and scientific expertise to analyze the invaluable data collected by its partners. With this data, HRDAG uses rigorous quantitative methods and machine learning tools to understand patterns of violence, and make statistical estimates of events that are not in the data. The data they use come from various sources, for example: individual testimonies, legal depositions, probability surveys, administrative records from morgues and cemeteries, exhumation reports, operational records from a prison and official customs and immigration records.

The Kosovo Case

One example of how HRDAG work, is their work in relation to the Kosovo War (1998-1999). During the war, large numbers of Kosovo Albanians fled the borders of Kosovo. HRDAG, together with partners, examined possible reasons for the extensive migration. Through statistical analysis they were able to confirm that the migration was a result of ethnic cleansing of Albanians in certain regions of Kosovo, by the Serbian authorities. Official numbers counted 4400 deaths, meanwhile HRDAGs' analysis estimated that around 10 000 Kosovo Albanians were killed between March and June 1999. These numbers have since been confirmed by a census in 2011. Based on these findings, HRDAG provided testimony in the war crimes trials of Slobodan Milošević in 2002.

Website: hrdag.org | Twitter: [@hrdag](https://twitter.com/hrdag) | Facebook: [/humanrightsdatanalysisgroup](https://www.facebook.com/humanrightsdatanalysisgroup)

Timeline – HRDAG’s projects from 1991-2021

1991 El Salvador: Founder Patrick Ball creates a database of human rights violations in El Salvador. The documentation showed that 100 officers were guilty of human rights violations, and they were subsequently forced to resign.

1999 Guatemala: The Guatemalan Commission for Historical Clarification Report utilizes statistical analysis from HRDAG to prove that the army had committed acts of genocide.

2002 Kosovo: Patrick Ball testifies at The International Court of Justice in the trial of Slobodan Milošević. Statistical analysis shows correlation between migration and Yugoslavian government activity.

2003 Peru: With assistance from HRDAG the Peruvian Truth Commission Report estimates the total amount of victims killed during the 1980-2000 civil war.

2004 Sierra Leone: The Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Report is published. HRDAG finds that one rebel group was responsible for 80% of the violations reported to the commission.

2006 East Timor: The Commission for Accompaniment, Truth, and Reconciliation for East Timor is published. The report utilizes analyses from HRDAG to determine the number of deaths caused by Indonesian occupation.

2013 Guatemala: HRDAG testifies in the trial of Guatemalan general José Efraín Ríos Montt. Their estimates show that between 1982 and 1983, 5.5% of the Maya Ixil people were killed (in contrast to 0.7% of the general population). The judges cite HRDAG analyses as evidence that Montt was responsible for genocide against the Maya Ixil people.

2015 USA: HRDAG develops a tool for analysis of police violence and homicides. They conclude that 10 % of all homicides in the US are caused by police. In addition, HRDAG documents that data analysis utilized by both police and courts is racially biased.

2016 Chad: Former president and dictator of Chad, Hissène Habré is convicted of torture, war crimes and crimes against humanity. The judges cite HRDAG analyses in their decision. HRDAG presents evidence that mortality rates amongst political prisoners in the country are up to 500 times higher than amongst non-political prisoners. The mortality rates are up to five times higher than the worst Japanese POW situations during World War Two.

2016 Syria: In collaboration with Amnesty International, HRDAG estimates that 25% of deaths in Syrian prisons had not been reported.

2017 Mexico: HRDAG have together with two partner organizations, created a machine-learning model to predict which counties in Mexico have the highest probability of unreported hidden graves. The predictions help advocates to bring public attention and government resources to search for the disappeared in the places where they are most likely to be found.

2021: HRDAG recently published the article: *“Lies, Damned Lies and Official Statistics”*, which examines how different government officials undermined attempts at accurate and transparent data collection, and how different governments use selective definitions to limit what “counts” as a death due to Covid-19.