

# PROBLEMS of today



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## Wars

Conflicts are happening around the world. We are all familiar with the problems in Afghanistan and Iraq. Fighting between the government and **militias is occurring** in Somalia and innocent civilians are being killed in the fighting or are forced to leave their homes for safer areas. This past summer we saw fighting between Israel and Lebanon in the Middle East, the area constantly troubled by the long-term Israeli-Palestinian conflict. There are different reasons for war: sometimes two groups are fighting for control of a country and sometimes their **dispute** is based on their religions. We've seen a **rise** in terrorist acts committed by people who believe they are defending their religion. The attacks in the US in September 2001 and in Britain in July 2005 are two examples – but people in Indonesia, Spain, Israel and the Palestinian territories also have suffered from terrorism.

## Environment

Environmental issues **are a concern for everyone**. Global warming is becoming a huge problem, and those in the developed nations are **contributing to**, and **will be greatly affected by**, climate change. Cutting down trees,

**Did you oversleep today? Did you forget to do your homework or fail a test? Those can seem like big problems in our lives, but people around the world often deal with bigger issues, such as illiteracy, disease, hunger and war.**

What are some of the problems facing people in other countries? Third World, or developing nations, is a term we use to describe countries that aren't as developed as those in Europe, the United States, Canada, etc. These countries share characteristics of **widespread poverty**, high **birth rates**, and undeveloped industry. Other problems include disease, hunger, **lack of** education, and human rights **issues**.

## Human rights

Human rights are basic "privileges" that everyone should receive. Not being discriminated against because of your **race, gender** or religion, and living free from **torture** are a few basic human rights. Primarily Muslim

countries like Iran are often **accused of** not granting rights to women and countries with an **indigenous population** like Australia often have conflicts over the rights of the natives versus non-natives. Countries that have problems with human rights include North Korea, Sudan and China.

## Poverty

Poverty is a worldwide problem that is the result of, and produces, many other problems. Countries with a poor educational system often have poorer residents. People living in poverty often **commit** crimes to support themselves or their families, which **leads** to unsafe cities. Poor people don't often have enough to eat, which leads to malnutrition (getting sick from not eating

the right types of food) and **starvation**. Poor countries also may not have a good **health care system**, which leads to a population that is ill and has many diseases. We see these problems in many African countries like Chad and Nigeria, as well as in Central American countries like Guatemala, South American countries like Brazil, Asian countries like Nepal, and countries closer to home like Romania.



Climate change can lead to more frequent floods as well as catastrophic droughts.

too many cars on the roads, companies that **pollute** the air and water with chemicals, a **consumer society** that produces too much waste, and the destruction of the **ozone layer** – all of this is of concern for people, animals and plants – and could soon affect the way we live. The destruction of many forests, especially in South and Central American countries like Brazil and Costa Rica, means many animals and insects are becoming **extinct**.

Pollution is a major difficulty in many large cities around the world, such as Los Angeles, California; Beijing, China; Mexico City, Mexico, and New Delhi, India. The Ivory Coast is currently **figuring out** how to clean up toxic waste that was illegally **dumped** near its capital city.

The United Nations says 2006 was the sixth warmest year **on record** and weather changes can create devastating natural disasters like tornados and hurricanes.

## Problems at home

What about some problems closer to home? All these issues can be seen here in the Czech Republic, but on a smaller level. Air pollution is a concern in Prague and land pollution **left over from mining** in the northern regions is an **ongoing** problem. No more mining also means no more jobs for many people, so unemployment is a huge problem in many areas of the country. Air pollution causes health problems, but we also contribute to our own health problems by eating bad food, not exercising, and drinking too much alcohol. We also see racial **prejudice** and discrimination in the Czech Republic, especially against the Roma population and people from Eastern European countries. Education could also become a problem if the government does not support higher education resources for all students.



Although everyone knows that water is the most precious natural resource on our planet (it covers about 70% of the Earth surface and life on Earth wouldn't exist without it), we ignore this fact by polluting our rivers, lakes, and oceans. The pollution of rivers and streams with chemical contaminants has become one of the most serious environmental problems of the past century.

## Can we help?

So who is going to solve all these problems? There is something all of us can do. Help the environment by recycling and walking instead of driving a car. Take an interest in what the government is doing to make sure they make

good decisions that could affect your future. Take care of yourself by exercising and eating right. **Treat** everyone with respect, and you'll respect yourself more too! You can also support organizations that assist countries around the world. Greenpeace deals with ecological matters; Amnesty International with human rights; the World Health Organization helps people stay healthy, and the World Food Program works to stop hunger.

Another problem troubling the Czech Republic is bribery, the practice of offering something (usually money) in order to gain some advantage. It affects many spheres of public life – from politics to everyday situations. Transparency International is an organization which tries to monitor and fight corruption in the CR and around the world.



Recent years have seen wars all around the world, for example in the Middle East, Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia.



## → Vocabulary

**to oversleep** [əʊvə'sli:p] - zaspát  
**illiteracy** [ɪ'lɪt(ə)rəsi] - negramotnost  
**widespread** ['waɪdspreɪd] - velmi rozšířený  
**poverty** ['pɒvəti] - chudoba  
**birth rate** [bɜ:θ reɪt] - porodnost  
**lack of** [læk] - nedostatek (něčeho)  
**issue** ['ɪʃu:] - záležitost, otázka  
**race** [reɪs] - rasa  
**gender** ['dʒɛndə] - pohlaví  
**torture** ['tɔ:tʃə] - týrání  
**to accuse of** [ə'kju:z] - obvinít z  
**indigenous population** [ɪn'dɪdʒɪnəs ɒpju'l(ə)ʃ(ə)n] - domorodé obyvatelstvo  
**to commit** [kə'mɪt] - spáchat  
**to lead** [li:d] - vést  
**starvation** [stɑ:'veɪʃ(ə)n] - hladovění  
**health care system** - systém zdravotní péče  
**militia** [mɪ'lɪʃə] - milice, domobrana  
**to occur** [ə'kɔ:] - odehrávat se, dojíť  
**dispute** [dɪ'spju:t] - spor

**rise** [raɪz] - nárůst  
**are a concern for everyone** [kən'sə:n] - jsou předmětem zájmu každého  
**to contribute to** [kən'trɪbjʊ:t] - přispět k (něčemu), mít podíl na  
**to be affected by** [f'ektɪd] - být ovlivněn (něčím)  
**to pollute** [pə'lu:t] - znečišťovat  
**consumer society** [kən'sju:mə sə'saɪti] - konzumní společnost  
**ozone layer** ['əʊzəʊn 'leɪə] - ozonová vrstva  
**extinct** [ɪk'stɪŋkt] - vyhynulý  
**is currently figuring out** [k'ʌr(ə)nli 'fɪgərɪŋ] - momentálně řeší  
**to dump** [dʌmp] - složit, vyspat  
**on record** - který byl kdy zaznamenán  
**left over from mining** ['maɪnɪŋ] - která zůstala po těžbě  
**ongoing** ['ɒŋgəʊɪŋ] - trvalý  
**prejudice** ['preɪdʒʊdɪs] - předpojatost, předsudek  
**to treat (sb.)** [tri:t] - chovat se (k někomu)