

Conflict lines: Main lessons

Armed conflict – protecting vulnerable people



Summary of lesson

Preparation

The media seldom discuss the rules of international humanitarian law (IHL) that apply to conflicts they report on. This module gives the students an opportunity to view IHL as if they were directly involved in the real-life situations explored. They will analyse conflict situations to develop an understanding of the problems that displaced people and other vulnerable people caught up in conflicts face.

The students will learn about the impact of conflict by putting themselves in the shoes of those who are caught up in it. They will be challenged to develop a set of rules which they think best protect groups that most need protection. They will then compare these rules to the basic principles and rules of IHL that already exist in the form of the four Geneva Conventions and additional treaties to help protect the vulnerable, civilians, the wounded and prisoners of war. The students will discuss whether they think the current rules are fair or adequate.

1. The International Red Cross Movement is the world's largest humanitarian network.
2. The International Committee of The Red Cross (ICRC) is an impartial, neutral and independent organisation. Its exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of the victims of war and internal violence, and to provide them with assistance.

This is also the purpose of IHL. IHL is not affected by the reasons why an armed conflict starts. Whether the reasons for starting a war are legitimate or not, the parties to the conflict must obey the rules of IHL and refrain from perpetrating war crimes.

Through the extension activities, students will also have the opportunity to explore other issues such as the "war on terror", the definition of "armed conflict", and the distinction between international and non-international armed conflict.

This module gives the students an opportunity to view IHL as if they were directly involved and to develop a set of rules which they think best protect groups that most need protection.

Learning outcomes

Preparation

By the end of this lesson, the students will have discussed how conflict affects people caught up in it and how adherence to the rules can lessen the suffering of all involved. Students will be challenged to think about vulnerable groups and how the law can help protect them. Students will also learn generally about the rules of international humanitarian law (IHL) which apply when there is an armed conflict.

Through examining the case studies, students will appreciate the impact of conflict, and will understand and learn that:

- there are no right or wrong answers when discussing students' personal views, perspective is everything and situations are never just black and white
- there are different categories of vulnerable people in an armed conflict
- there are different ways of protecting vulnerable people
- the rules of IHL help protect vulnerable people.

The class exercises are designed to help students:

- empathise with those who are involved in armed conflict
- put themselves in the shoes of decision-makers
- develop their debating, analytical and presentation skills
- understand the different perspectives involved.

The extension activities are designed for students to develop their empathy, teamwork, research, analytical and presentation skills, and to understand that:

- there are different rules governing armed conflict and peacetime situations
- when there is an armed conflict, the rules of international humanitarian law apply
- there is a distinction between international armed conflict and non-international armed conflict.



Background information and legal principles/rules

Preparation

The decisions and analyses we are asking students to make in this lesson reflect those made by decision-makers such as committees that draft treaties, members of governments, United Nations (UN) bodies and international tribunals. The decisions are not easy and some of the rules of international humanitarian law are still a subject of debate.

IHL makes an important distinction between those who take an active part in hostilities and those who (for whatever reason) are not or are no longer active in combat.

“ In IHL, the term combatant refers to members of the armed forces of a party to a conflict (except medical and religious personnel). ”

It is a basic principle that the lives, and physical and mental integrity, of those who are not or are no longer taking part in hostilities must be respected. They are also entitled to humane treatment. IHL also provides that different categories of people should be treated in different ways and should benefit from different types of protection.

The key categories are:

- *combatants*
- *persons “hors de combat”*
- *civilians.*

Civilians should not be the subject of attack.

Once injured, wounded or having surrendered, *combatants* become *persons “hors de combat”* and may not be treated in a way that’s discriminatory.

In the same way, IHL distinguishes between military targets i.e. targets being used for military purposes, and non-military targets. It sets out certain rules and principles about the protection of non-military targets. Targets that do not have a military purpose should not be attacked. If such targets are located near a military target, combatants should use *proportionate* force to minimise any *collateral damage* to such *non-military targets*. (This will be covered in more detail in later modules.)

“ Hors de combat means ‘out of the fight’. ”

The 1949 Geneva Conventions

The Geneva Conventions are a set of rules designed to protect victims of war.

First Geneva Convention – protects wounded and sick soldiers on land during war.

Second Geneva Convention – protects wounded, sick and shipwrecked military personnel at sea during war.

Third Geneva Convention – applies to the treatment of prisoners of war.

Fourth Geneva Convention – protects civilians during war.

Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions

These strengthen the protections afforded by the four Geneva Conventions.

Additional Protocol I (1977) – applies to international armed conflict

Additional Protocol II (1977) – applies to non-international armed conflict

Additional Protocol III (2005) – adoption of an additional distinctive emblem, the red crystal.

Background information and legal principles/rules

Preparation

The context of these IHL treaties

IHL consists of four Geneva Conventions, three Additional Protocols and numerous other international treaties dealing with specific issues e.g. protecting cultural property and banning certain types of weapons.

The international treaties setting out rules of armed conflict developed over many years.

The events of the Second World War provided an impetus for the international community to re-affirm and further develop the principles in the 1929 Geneva Convention, resulting in the First, Second and Third 1949 Geneva Conventions. The impact of war on non-combatants during the Second World War also prompted the formulation of additional principles relating to the treatment of civilians in international wars in the Fourth 1949 Geneva Convention.

The First and Second Additional Protocols developed as a result of the changing nature of warfare following the Second World War, and, in particular, the increase in wars for national liberation and internal armed conflicts. A Third Additional Protocol was adopted in 2005, introducing an additional distinctive emblem – the red crystal emblem*.

* There are three distinctive emblems which are a sign of neutrality and protection in armed conflict: the red cross, the red crescent and the red crystal (all on a white background).

The principles of IHL

As many of the rules of IHL are based on basic principles of non-discrimination, proportionality and humanity, the students will discover the key principles set out in these international documents during the course of these lessons. The exercises will encourage the students to define their own rules to protect vulnerable groups – *civilians (including children specifically), injured soldiers and prisoners of war* – and to compare their rules with those contained in the four Geneva Conventions and the Additional Protocols.

When undertaking the extension exercises, please refer to the information in the Resources section at the end of this module for more detailed explanations of international and non-international armed conflict.

* Terms shown in italics can be used to help students build up a glossary of terms related to armed conflicts over the course of the lessons. The creation of the glossary can be an extension activity.

“ The four Geneva Conventions and the Additional Protocols are international treaties. Every state in the world has signed up to the four Geneva Conventions (but not the Additional Protocols). ”

Starter discussion

Exercises

AN INTRODUCTION TO INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW (IHL)

Resources

This introductory exercise is designed to grab the students' attention, and provoke their thoughts on conflict and the impact it has on people's lives. To make these concepts tangible for students, it may be useful to show the short film, "International Humanitarian Law – a universal code".

The teacher might also encourage the students to begin a glossary, writing new words on the whiteboard, with their meanings worked out in class or getting inspiration from the **Glossary** at the end of this module.

For group use

Glossary

Media clip

Words marked in **bold** are resources available to the teacher in this lesson pack.

TIMINGS: 15 minutes

Objectives

- To introduce the concept of conflict, what causes conflict and the range of forms it can take
- To introduce the idea of empathy and of 'putting oneself in the shoes' of different parties to a conflict, to understand:
 - > the different perspectives
 - > the causes of a conflict

This idea is first applied to conflicts the students have been involved in and later to an international armed conflict. The students will learn that even during armed conflict, there are limits to the use of force in order to limit the suffering of those caught up in the conflict.

- To understand that different rules are appropriate in different situations (e.g. at home, school, nationally and internationally) and that different people make the rules for each situation
- To understand that violation of the rules of international humanitarian law (IHL) can cause serious consequences for vulnerable people
- To create an awareness of armed conflicts occurring throughout the world today

Starter discussion

Exercises

AN INTRODUCTION TO IHL – CLASS DISCUSSION



Resources

If media facilities are available, play **media clip** (duration X:XX)

As a short stimulus to discussion, use the initial 1minute 5 secs of the International humanitarian law-a universal code film.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jwqRo4Xkix8>

Whole film duration 14 minutes

Talk about the subject of conflict and explore the different types and severities. Ask the class to come up with situations that can lead to conflict between young people at school or at home e.g. bullying, fighting over boyfriends/girlfriends/belongings etc.

Consider the following questions:

- When there is a conflict, does everyone see the conflict in the same way?
- What can we use to control a conflict and prevent it from getting out of hand?
- what rules are there? Why do we have rules?
 - > There are different sets of rules in different circumstances – for example, the Highway Code when we are driving, banking law to protect your money in the bank and parents imposing curfews. These rules exist to help distinguish between right and wrong, to protect people and property from being hurt or damaged and to protect our human rights.
- Do the same rules apply in peacetime and in wartime? What rules might apply in wartime which are not appropriate during peacetime?
 - > Discuss the fact that soldiers are lawfully allowed to kill other soldiers in certain circumstances in wartime. What other rules might be different? In peacetime, is it acceptable to carry weapons or to attack military targets? The rules which set out what is acceptable in wartime aim to protect people and limit the impact of war. These rules make up IHL.
 - > Students may also relate to sports analogies. For example, in a boxing match, a boxer is allowed to hit the opponent but only above the waist. These rules are different to those that exist outside the boxing ring.

For group use

Media clip

Words marked in **bold** are resources available to the teacher in this lesson pack.

Starter discussion

Exercises

How do we resolve conflicts and what can make it harder to resolve conflicts?

- IHL does not contain rules for when it is legal to start a conflict and, subsequently, does not contain guidelines for resolving conflict. There is a different body of law that deals with those subjects. IHL presumes there is an armed conflict and gives a set of rules to be followed during that conflict. This separation between what makes a conflict illegal and how the parties should behave during the conflict is made for several reasons, one of which is to maintain a legal incentive not to commit war crimes. That incentive might be less effective if one party to the conflict was already considered to be violating IHL simply by being the aggressor that started the conflict
- IHL does help to resolve conflicts in that one of the principles it is based on is humanity. If the parties to the conflict respect each other as human beings, it becomes easier to find a resolution to the conflict and to avoid a spiral of atrocities, reprisals and counter reprisals.

There are more starter and filler exercises set out in the Resources section which can be used together with this discussion or in subsequent classes.



Introductory exercise

Exercises

THE REALITY OF WAR

Objectives

- To introduce the students to a real-life scenario where children are affected by an armed conflict and get them to put themselves in the shoes of these children and imagine what that would be like
- To understand the basic needs of a person in an emergency situation, for example, when the family has to leave their home quickly without plans to return
- To compare basic and immediate needs with the needs of a person over a longer period of time, understanding that the family will have more complex needs over the following years when they have reached safety



Resources

For group use

- iA.** The reality of war: case study
- iB.** Essential items
- iC.** Your suitcase

Words marked in **bold** are resources available to the teacher in this lesson pack.

PART A

TIMINGS: 5 minutes

Divide the class into groups of four. Provide each group with an A4 sheet of photos of objects and a 'suitcase'.

Handout a copy of **iA. The reality of war: case study** to each student. Give each group **iB. Essential items and iC. Your suitcase.**

The students will need to stick pictures from the essential items onto the suitcase. Not all the objects will fit – this will give the students the idea that they cannot take everything with them. The students should consider what they would be able to carry in real life.

Note for teachers

Only allow the groups a few minutes to do this activity, giving the impression of the situation being critical. You can stop them before they are finished to indicate that the decisions have to be made under extreme pressure and that they wouldn't always have the chance to take what they think they will need.

Image reference



Introductory exercise

Exercises

THE REALITY OF WAR

PART B

TIMINGS: 10 minutes

Using **iD. Basic human needs**, ask each group to think about their own everyday routine and write down a list of basic human needs thinking about why they are important. We have started the list with shelter and safety:

- shelter – need to be protected from the weather and to have somewhere to sleep
- safety – need to be protected from danger.

Other ideas could include:

Fresh uncontaminated air, meals – food and clean water, clothes, soap and other items for hygiene, transport to get to work or school, education, information on their rights, jobs, medicine, electricity/gas – for cooking/washing, heating for the winter, bed and identification documents e.g a passport.

Note for teachers

The Lebanese Red Cross supplied displaced people in Lebanon with the bare necessities to survive – food, hygiene kits and sleeping mats. However, the families had to survive without many of the other things we take for granted.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), with the help of National Red Cross and National Red Crescent Societies, also provides a service to those who have been separated from their families through conflict to help them be reunited.

<http://www.redcross.org.uk/standard.asp?id=50048>



Resources

For group use

- iA.** The reality of war: case study
- iD.** Basic human needs

Words marked in **bold** are resources available to the teacher in this lesson pack.

Exercises introduction

Exercises

HOW CAN WE PROTECT?

Teachers' guidance is given under the questions in this lesson. These are suggestions to help facilitate and direct the discussion, and teachers should be aware that the answers are not comprehensive. Students may come up with other points that are equally valid. For each case study, let the students form their own views about what rules there should be then compare them with the rules set out in international humanitarian law (IHL) at the end.

Teachers are advised to teach the **Protecting Civilians** section of this exercise first, and complete further handouts in Part 1 if time allows, then teach **Protecting Children**. The remaining sections can be taught in further lessons or given for homework.

In each part of the exercise, remind the students of the big questions:



As part of Module 1, Part 2, the students may have been asked to prepare a “Charter on the principles of warfare”. If this has been started, ask the students to add any new rules that they believe are important as they progress through this lesson.

Suggestion!

These lessons can be taught as a class or stations can be set up with one of the case studies/stories on each station. Smaller groups of students can move from station to station discussing the various case studies and coming up with suggested rules.

Exercise 1

Exercises

PROTECTING CIVILIANS

TIMINGS: 15 minutes

Objectives

- To appreciate that civilians are victims of war and need to be protected
- To learn that making rules which require those involved in fighting to distinguish between soldiers and civilians, and civilian objects and military objectives, will protect and limit the suffering of civilians (the principle of distinction)

International humanitarian law (IHL) rules covered in this exercise

- Parties to a conflict must distinguish between the civilian population and combatants in order to spare the civilian population and property.
- Neither the civilian population nor any individual civilians shall be the object of attack. Attacks shall be solely against military objectives.
- Parties to a conflict and members of their armed forces do not have an unlimited choice of methods and means of warfare. It is prohibited to employ weapons or methods of warfare of a nature which would cause unnecessary civilian losses or excessive suffering.

A case study of Ashraf

Hand out copies of **1A. Protecting civilians: case study** and **1B. Protecting civilians: worksheet** to each student. Read through Ashraf's account of being shot and then, as a class, discuss the questions on **1B. Protecting civilians: worksheet**.

Image reference



Resources

For group use

- 1A.** Protecting civilians: case study
- 1B.** Protecting civilians: worksheet

For use by the teacher

Protecting civilians:
teacher resource

Words marked in **bold** are resources available to the teacher in this lesson pack.

Protecting civilians: teacher resource

Exercises

A case study of Ashraf

Q1. What category of people does Ashraf fall into?

Teacher note:

Ashraf is a civilian. The definition of a civilian under IHL is a person that is not a combatant (i.e. not a member of the armed forces of a party to the conflict).

Q2. What rules of war would you introduce to protect people like Ashraf and why?

Teacher note:

Civilians are protected from attack as long as they do not participate in hostilities. Targeting civilians is a war crime.

During armed conflict, civilians are often unintentionally wounded or killed. The sad truth of war is that where civilians are caught up in fighting between combatants, it is likely that there will be civilian casualties. Not every civilian casualty constitutes a war crime. It may be a war crime if an attack leads to civilian deaths and the number of civilian deaths expected are excessive in relation to the military advantage anticipated.

Q3. How do you distinguish between civilians and soldiers? Discuss use of uniforms and clearly displaying weapons etc.

Teacher note:

Combatants wear uniforms and carry their arms openly. They are not allowed to abuse the protection offered to civilians by pretending to be civilians.

Civilians are only protected as long as they do not participate in hostilities. Civilians lose their protection from attack for as long as they participate in hostilities. While they are participating in the fighting, they are under an obligation to carry arms openly.

Protecting civilians: teacher resource

Exercises

A case study of Ashraf

Q4. What might be the consequences of the distinction between civilians and combatants not being clear?

Teacher note:

Where fighters hide among civilians and pretend to be civilians, they put the civilian population at risk.

Under IHL, combatants have a duty to distinguish themselves from the civilian population. In a situation where civilians are attacked, the soldiers that carry out that attack bear responsibility for this violation of the law and can be criminally prosecuted for it. However, one must remember the fighters hiding among the civilian population are abusing the protection civilians enjoy and, therefore, also bear a degree of responsibility for any civilian casualties.

Q5. Discuss other ways in which civilians are at risk in a conflict.

Teacher note:

Civilians could become displaced (refer to the introductory exercise: the reality of war), get cut off from basic necessities (i.e. shelter, food, water, medical care etc.), become a victim of abuse (reprisal attacks, rape etc.) or could be used as human shields. There are a number of rules of IHL that offer protection against these dangers. Most, however, are in the form of a prohibition of certain actions, not obligations to provide facilities (such as food, shelter, water and protection).

Exercise 2

Exercises

PROTECTING HUMANITARIAN ACTIVITIES IN ARMED CONFLICT, INCLUDING MEDICAL FACILITIES AND PERSONNEL

Resources

TIMINGS: 15 minutes

Objectives

To learn that:

- the red cross, red crescent and red crystal emblems (shown below) are recognised and protected under international and national laws, and in times of war, they may be displayed on certain vehicles and buildings, and on certain people
- it is illegal to attack protected objects and people, and to abuse the protection the emblems provide – for example, to use the emblem to ambush soldiers
- the emblems are used in times of conflict by military medical personnel, and their transportation and facilities, and are also used by the organisations of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement
- for the law to work, it must also be practical and easily applicable by certain people who carry out a specific humanitarian function in armed conflict.

IHL rules covered:

- The wounded and sick shall be collected and cared for by the party to the conflict which has them in its power.
- Protection covers medical personnel, establishments, transportation and equipment.
- The emblem of the red cross, red crystal or red crescent is a sign of such protection and must be respected.

Handout **2A.** and **2B. Photo Cards** and **2C. Protecting humanitarian activities in armed conflict including medical facilities and personnel: worksheet** to the students. Look at the pictures. Discuss what is happening in each picture.

For group use

- 2A.** Protecting humanitarian activities in armed conflict including medical facilities and personnel: photo card 1a
- 2B.** Protecting humanitarian activities in armed conflict including medical facilities and personnel: photo card 1b
- 2C.** Protecting humanitarian activities in armed conflict including medical facilities and personnel: worksheet

For use by the teacher

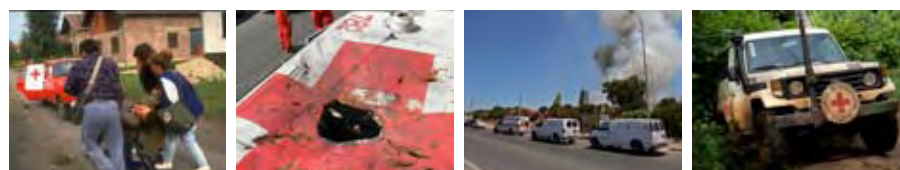
Protecting humanitarian activities in armed conflict including medical facilities and personnel: teacher resource

Words marked in **bold** are resources available to the teacher in this lesson pack.

The protective emblems are:



Image reference



Teacher resource



Protecting humanitarian activities in armed conflict including medical facilities and personnel: teacher resource

Q1. Are the vehicles or the people in the pictures in any danger?

Teacher note:

Encourage the students to discuss the fact that there are signs of conflict or violence in the pictures. The close proximity of the people and vehicles in the images to this would indicate that there might be danger.

Q2. Do you think that ambulances and other vehicles carrying wounded civilians should be protected? Why?

Teacher note:

Civilians are protected under international humanitarian law (IHL) so ambulances carrying them should also be protected. From an ethical point of view, the students may think that it is reasonable to protect those who are wounded generally. Ambulances and medical personnel need to be able to gain access to conflict areas to carry out their humanitarian function, therefore, it is especially important that they are protected from attack.

Q3. What about if they are carrying wounded soldiers – should people involved in the fighting be treated differently? Why?

Teacher note:

- *The term hors de combat can be discussed here. The students may have come across this term in Module 1 and understand that it means “out of the fight”. Once wounded, injured or having surrendered, combatants become hors de combat and may no longer be made the object of attack (provided they do not participate further in hostilities).*
- *If wounded soldiers are treated humanely by one side, that side will also benefit from its soldiers being treated humanely too.*

Q4. Should military medical personnel such as doctors and nurses also be protected? Why?

Teacher note:

- *According to IHL, it is a war crime to knowingly fire at a medic wearing a clear emblem during armed conflict.*
- *There are two categories of military medical personnel:*
 - (i) *full-time medical staff (these do not take part in hostilities and therefore are protected all the time)*
 - (ii) *part-time medics (these do not take part in hostilities but are protected while they are carrying out their medical function i.e. assisting the wounded and injured).*
- *Medical staff are there to alleviate the suffering of the wounded. Targeting them would be inhumane and would serve no military purpose.*

Teacher resource



Protecting humanitarian activities in armed conflict, including medical facilities and personnel: teacher resource

Q5. Who/what else should be protected?

Teacher note:

For example, buildings such as hospitals, other facilities necessary for the survival of the civilian population, objects that contain dangerous forces (e.g. if attacked, might cause excessive harm to the civilian population such as nuclear and chemical plants, dams etc.) and members of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) who are giving aid or otherwise helping in a country.

Q6. What ideas do you have for protecting these groups of people? How can you help ensure that ambulances and buildings such as hospitals are protected from attack? Is there anything in the pictures that might help you decide? Anything that might signify protection?

Teacher note:

- *The purpose of this question is to introduce the red cross, red crescent and red crystal emblems, and how they are used to indicate the protected status of a person, vehicle or building. The emblems are a way of making protected facilities and persons easily recognisable.*
- *The emblem of a red cross with arms of equal length on a white background is the visible sign of protection under the 1949 Geneva Conventions. Its purpose, in armed conflict, is to protect sick and wounded victims of war, and those authorised to care for them. As such, it is the emblem of the armed forces' medical services. It is a sign that help is available to those who need it.*
- *It can also be used to indicate that the person or object on which the emblem is displayed is connected with the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.*
- *In many countries with a predominantly Muslim population, the red crescent emblem is used instead.*
- *In peacetime, National Red Cross and National Red Crescent Societies are authorised by their governments to use the emblem to promote their activities.*
- *In 2005, an additional protective emblem – the red crystal – was established. It has equal status and meaning to the red cross, red crystal and red crescent emblems.*
- *None of the emblems has any religious or political significance.*
- *It must be possible for civilians and combatants to trust the neutrality and impartiality of the emblems. That is why their unauthorised use is forbidden under both international and national law.*

Teacher resource



Protecting humanitarian activities in armed conflict including medical facilities and personnel: teacher resource

Q7. What would happen if the emblems were misused, for example, to ambush soldiers? Should misuse of the emblems be punishable?

Teacher note:

It is illegal to misuse the emblems. Misuse of the emblems is punishable as a war crime. Although war is awful, if the wounded can be helped then the suffering can be limited. The role of medical personnel is to help people and not to fight in the conflict. Misuse of the emblems puts those offering assistance (such as Red Cross personnel and medical staff) at risk.



Exercise 3

Exercises

PROTECTING SOLDIERS

TIMINGS: 15 minutes

Objectives

To understand:

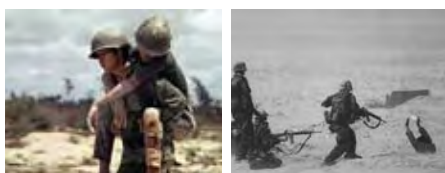
- in what situations combatants enjoy protection from attack
- that international humanitarian law (IHL) protects *persons hors de combat* and prisoners of war as vulnerable people
- how IHL provides this protection.

IHL rules covered in this exercise

- *Persons hors de combat* and those who do not take a direct part in hostilities are entitled to respect for their lives, and for their moral and physical integrity. They shall, in all circumstances, be protected and treated humanely without any adverse distinction.
- It is forbidden to kill or injure an enemy who surrenders or who is otherwise *hors de combat*.
- The wounded and sick shall be collected and cared for by the party to the conflict which has them in its power. Protection also covers medical personnel, establishments, transportation and equipment. The emblem of the red cross, red crescent or red crystal is the sign of such protection and must be respected.
- Captured combatants and civilians under the authority of an enemy party are entitled to respect for their lives, dignity, personal rights and convictions. They shall be protected against all acts of violence and reprisals. They shall have the right to correspond with their families and to receive relief.
- No one shall be subjected to physical or mental torture, corporal punishment, or cruel or degrading treatment.

Handout **3A. Protecting soldiers: photo card** and **3B. Protecting soldiers: worksheet** to the students. Look at the pictures. Discuss what is happening in each picture.

Image reference



Resources

For group use

- 3A.** Protecting soldiers: photo card 2a
- 3B.** Protecting soldiers: worksheet

For use by the teacher

Protecting soldiers: teacher resource

Words marked in **bold** are resources available to the teacher in this lesson pack.

Protecting soldiers: teacher resource

Exercises

Protecting soldiers: teacher resource

Q1. Do you think that when you become a soldier, you should give up all rights to be treated well? Or do you think soldiers should be protected in certain situations? What types of situations? What about if they are injured, unable to fight and require medical attention? What if they are still participating in the fighting?

Teacher note:

All combatants have a right to protection once they are hors de combat. Hors de combat literally means “out of the fight”. This could be when they are wounded, surrendering or taken prisoner, and they abstain from participation in hostilities or attempts to escape. The term hors de combat does not extend to combatants that are just not participating in fighting at that moment (e.g. resting, retreating etc.) When they are hors de combat, they are granted special protections under international humanitarian law (IHL).

It is forbidden to kill or wound an enemy who is surrendering or who is hors de combat.

Apart from their protection from attack, the sick and wounded enjoy further protection. Parties to the conflict must search and care for all sick and wounded. And only medical reasons may dictate the order of treatment (i.e. military medics must treat the most serious cases first, regardless of whether the patient is on their side or the enemy's).

Q2. What about when they have been taken prisoner by the other side? Would they be vulnerable or in danger at this point?

Teacher note:

Ask the students if they were prisoners, how would they want to be treated? Should they be treated as if they had committed a crime (fighting for your armed forces is not a crime in many circumstances)?

Prisoners and detainees are in the hands of the party they were just fighting. They might be the target of revenge or reprisals. They might also have sensitive information that their captors would like to get hold of.

Prisoners are entitled to respect and must be treated humanely.

Protecting soldiers: teacher resource

Exercises

Protecting soldiers: teacher resource

Q3. How can we protect soldiers in these situations?

Teacher note:

The protective emblems were discussed above. There are also other well-known symbols and signs used to express an intention to surrender or negotiate, such as placing your hands up or using the white flag. Although these signs are well known throughout the world and are often used, they do not have the same status as the red cross, crescent and crystal which have been formally agreed in international treaty law.

Rules could be imposed on parties to a conflict to treat all prisoners humanely and to respect their lives, dignity, personal rights and convictions, as well as protect them from violence and reprisals. With regard to how this can be enforced, the teacher can bring up the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and its right of access into the camps to make impartial inspections, make records of the prisoners of war (PoWs), and let the PoWs have contact with their families etc.

Q4. How could you persuade the soldiers in your armed forces to follow these rules?

Teacher note:

The students may come up with moral and ethical arguments as to why these rules should be followed. There is also the argument of reciprocity – there is more likelihood that the soldiers will be treated well, in turn, should they be captured.

IHL has rules which protect the wounded and PoWs of all parties to a conflict, setting out how such people should be treated and the basic rights they have. The Red Cross has a role in inspecting prison camps and communicating the whereabouts of wounded soldiers and PoWs.

PoWs have the right to be visited by delegates of the ICRC.

Exercise 4

Exercises

LANDMINES

TIMINGS: 15 minutes

International humanitarian (IHL) rules covered in this exercise

- IHL restricts the use of some weapons in war because they are indiscriminate or because they cause unnecessary suffering, such as chemical and biological weapons. However, IHL does not specifically ban anti-personnel landmines. More than 80 per cent of states worldwide (156 of 193), including the UK, are party to the Ottawa convention that prohibits the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines.

Background

Between 1975 and 2002, anti-personnel landmines killed and wounded thousands of Angolans. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) opened its first physical rehabilitation centre in Huambo in 1979 to help Angolan mine victims, now officially estimated at numbering 80,000.

In the outskirts of Kuito, Angola, 13-year-old Candre Antonio (pictured below) set off a mine near his home. Candre's father had planted the landmine as he feared for the safety of his family.

Give each student the **4A. Landmines: fact sheet**. Read through and discuss the questions on **4B. Landmines: worksheet** with the class.

Image reference



Resources

For group use

- 4A.** Landmines: factsheet
- 4B.** Landmines: worksheet

For use by the teacher

Landmines: teacher resource

Words marked in **bold** are resources available to the teacher in this lesson pack.

Landmines: teacher resource

Exercises

Landmines: teacher resource

Q1. Have the students heard of landmines? What are they?

Landmines are sometimes referred to as “anti personnel” landmines. What does the term “anti-personnel” mean? Are there different types of landmine? Are there any particular conflicts where they know landmines have been used?

Teacher note:

- *Landmines are bombs, sometimes hidden in the ground, which explode when pressure is put on them. Other anti-personnel mines are not hidden in the ground but are scattered from the air or by artillery. These include ones known as “butterfly mines” because of their shape. They often attract children because of their toy-like appearance.*
- *Examples of conflicts where landmines have been used are: Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, China, Egypt and Iran. Other anti-personnel mines such as the “butterfly mines” have been used in Iraq, Somalia, Sudan and Vietnam.*
- *Millions of active mines are scattered over the territory of more than 70 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East and the American continent.*
- *Once laid, some landmines can remain active for up to 50 years.*

Q2. Why do armies use landmines?

Teacher note:

Armies use landmines for a variety of reasons. One of the main uses is to deny an area of land to their opponent.

Landmines: teacher resource

Exercises

Landmines: teacher resource

Q3. Do you think that landmines should be allowed? Why?

Teacher note:

- *Landmines are indiscriminate, killing civilians and soldiers alike. Should there be a responsibility to use weapons which discriminate so as not to cause unnecessary deaths or excessive suffering to civilians?*
- *There are two types of landmine: anti-vehicle and anti-personnel landmines. Civilians are as likely to be injured by landmines as combatants. This may depend on where the landmines are placed.*
- *Landmines often remain undetected, and can continue to kill and injure civilians long after the conflict is over.*
- *Mining of agricultural land has led to malnutrition, and even famine and starvation. Mines laid along roadsides have prevented the safe return of refugees and displaced people to their homes and delivery of aid to those in need.*
- *Millions of people must choose between three evils: cultivating their land in fear, starving or fleeing their homes.*

Q4. In what ways could deaths of civilians by landmine be prevented?

Teacher note:

- *The students might suggest that anti-personnel landmines should be banned with an appropriate penalty for using them. What would such a penalty be?*
- *Students may also suggest fencing off an area which is known to be mined, putting up signs to warn people and educating people about landmines.*

If the class is interested in further stories about children who have been affected by landmines, read the story about Alina, a ten-year-old girl who lives in Pakistan and is a landmine victim, at <http://www.redcross.org.uk/standard.asp?id=96557>

Exercise 5

Exercises

PROTECTING CHILDREN

TIMINGS: 20 minutes

Suggestion!

If Module 1, Part 2 has been taught to the class and the teacher feels that the subject of child soldiers has been adequately covered, move directly on to the next section.

Objectives

- To empathise with those who have been child soldiers
- To understand the definition of a child soldier and the rules set out in international humanitarian law (IHL) to protect children from being recruited as child soldiers
- To consider what can be done to help child soldiers recover from their time as a child soldier

IHL rules covered in this exercise:

- It is a war crime to recruit children under 15 to fight and parties to a conflict must take all possible measures to prevent children under 15 from actively participating in the fighting.
- Recruiting or using children under the age of 15 to directly participate in hostilities is a war crime under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.
- When recruiting children between 15 and 18 years old into the armed forces, governments should give priority to the oldest.

Give each student the **5A. Protecting children: case study**.

Read through Helen's story and discuss the questions on **5B. Protecting children: worksheet** with the class.

Image reference



Resources

For group use

- 5A.** Protecting children: case study
- 5B.** Protecting children: worksheet

For use by the teacher

Protecting children: teacher resource

Words marked in **bold** are resources available to the teacher in this lesson pack.

Protecting children: teacher resource

Exercises

A case study of Helen

Q1. Do you think children are usually involved in wars?

Teacher note:

There are many examples of conflicts where children (under 15 years) have been actively recruited to take part in the fighting. The problem is most critical in African countries, (e.g. Sierra Leone, Liberia, Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda) but it also occurs in various Asian countries and in parts of Latin America, Europe and the Middle East. Children are conscripted into national armies but also into rebel groups and other armed militias.

Q2. Why do they participate?

Teacher note:

- *Children may choose to fight – for example, they may want revenge for the death of their families or they may see it as a badge of honour.*
- *Children may not have a choice in being recruited to fight, in the same way that Helen in the story became involved.*

Q3. Do you think children should participate or should they be protected? Why?

Teacher note:

Consider whether a child should be able to fight. There are arguments that they are too young to make the decision and that they should be protected. Children as young as six were soldiers in Sierra Leone during the conflict. Technically, the students are children – should they be allowed to fight if they want to or if they are drafted?

Q4. How would you protect children?

Teacher note:

- *Make rules limiting the age that a government may take a child, and advertise these and the punishment for non-compliance.*
- *Consider if there should be rules that protect children who are taking part in hostilities from attack. If children are protected, could this encourage use of children as human shields or increase their use as soldiers? They would be a protected group but could still attack and, therefore, paradoxically could put more children at risk of being recruited as child soldiers. IHL does not give any special protection to children once they are participating in hostilities. However, special measures must be taken to protect child soldiers in detention, such as keeping them separate from adult detainees.*
- *Recruiting or using children under the age of 15 to directly participate in hostilities is a war crime under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.*

Protecting children: teacher resource

Exercises

A case study of Helen

Q5. At what age do you think children should be allowed to become a soldier?

Teacher note:

- *The students may argue that they are the same age as the oldest children and that they are perfectly able to make such decisions. Where do they think the boundary should lie?*
- *When recruiting children between 15 and 18, governments should give priority to the oldest.*

After the civil war in Sierra Leone finished, Helen had no education or skills to make a living and was scarred by her time as a child soldier. She says:

“After the war ended, I had nobody to care for me. When I was with the rebels, I gave birth to a baby and I had to make ends meet. I was doing commercial sex work to survive.”

Q6. What could you do to help Helen make a better life for herself? What schemes could you set up?

Teacher note:

- *After the experiences she has been through, she is likely to need services such as counselling and support. Many of the girls were raped, and many of the children lost their families and did not have time to grieve about it. They may also need to come to terms with their own actions during the conflict.*
- *Many of these girls have babies and require childcare facilities.*
- *These children have not had the chance to attend school. They need help to go to high school or learn a trade so that they are able to support themselves.*
- *They may need help withdrawing from drugs.*

Helen is one of the fortunate ones in Sierra Leone who has been helped by the Sierra Leone Red Cross through a scheme for children involved in conflicts. The scheme provides counselling support, skills training and a start-up kit of essential tools and equipment to learn a trade. Staff also help people like Helen to find apprenticeships to help them become independent.

Exercise 6

Exercises

CLASS DISCUSSION

TIMINGS: 10 minutes

Groups can share the rules they have decided are important in each scenario. These can be used to create a group “Charter on the principles of warfare” or be added to one they may already have started in Module 1.

Round up the session by discussing any points which were not covered in the lesson.

Compare the rules of international humanitarian law (IHL) with those that the students thought were fair during the class. Is there anything they would change about their rules?

The students should understand that the rules which currently apply to parties to a conflict were agreed upon by all states (who have signed up to the four Geneva Conventions) and represent a negotiated, rather than an ideal, position.

Ask each group to come up with one important thing that they have remembered from the lesson. These can be combined as a basis for group posters to reinforce the learning.

Resources



INTRODUCTORY EXERCISE

For group use

- iA. The reality of war: case study
 - iB. Essential items
 - iC. Your suitcase
 - iD. Basic human needs
-

EXERCISE 1

For group use

- 1A. Protecting civilians: case study
 - 1B. Protecting civilians: worksheet
-

EXERCISE 2

For group use

- 2A. Protecting humanitarian activities in armed conflict including medical facilities and personnel: photo card 1a
 - 2B. Protecting humanitarian activities in armed conflict including medical facilities and personnel: photo card 1b
 - 2C. Protecting humanitarian activities: worksheet
-

EXERCISE 3

For group use

- 3A. Protecting soldiers: photo card 2a
 - 3B. Protecting soldiers: worksheet
-

EXERCISE 4

For group use

- 4A. Landmines: factsheet
 - 4B. Landmines: worksheet
-

EXERCISE 5

For group use

- 5A. Protecting children: case study
 - 5B. Protecting Children: worksheet
-

Lesson flowchart



15 mins Starter discussion including media clip

5 mins **The Reality of War – Part A**

10 mins **The Reality of War – Part B**

15 mins **Protecting civilians**

15 mins **Protecting medical facilities and personnel** (optional)

15 mins **Protecting soldiers** (optional)

10 mins **Landmines** (optional)

20 mins **Protecting children**

10 mins **Class discussion**

iA. The reality of war: case study



The reality of war



© ICRC / M.Kokic / Ib-e-00405

Background

Conflict forced these two children to leave their home in Yatir, in the South of Lebanon, with their father, Hassan Mohammed Abadi. When they left, they had had very little sleep and had been under fire for 12 days and nights.

Put yourself in the Abadi family's position. You are about to leave your home and you do not know whether you will return. You can only take what fits into the suitcase you have been given. What do you need to survive while you are travelling and when you reach your destination? You have only a few minutes to decide what you will take with you as the conflict is getting closer.

iB. Essential items



iC. Your suitcase



iD. Basic human needs



Mr Abadi and his children

Mr Abadi and his children were helped by others to survive and finally found refuge in a school on Mount Lebanon, near Beirut. The picture on **Handout iA: The reality of war: case study** shows their living conditions. Consider how you would feel now that you are safe but are reliant on the charity of others to survive. Would you be:

- happy/relieved to be safe
- ashamed not to be independent and unable to look after your family without reliance on others
- worried about the future
- upset about the loss/disappearance of friends and family who may have been killed in the fighting?

Humans have basic needs. One of them is shelter. Imagine again that you are a part of the Abadi family and you have found shelter in the school. Apart from shelter and safety, what other needs do you have?

How long might the Abadi family have to stay in the school? Do you know? Would they know?

Will their needs change if they have to stay there for a long period of time? How might they change? What else might they need? Think about what their longer term needs might be.

Long-term basic needs

To help you, think about your own everyday routine. Write down a list of basic human needs and think about why they are important. We have started the list with shelter and safety:

1. **Shelter** _____
2. **Safety** _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____



1A. Protecting civilians: case study



A case study of Ashraf



© CICR/THIBAUT, Emiliano

Ashraf's story

Ashraf was hit by a bullet while he was playing in the streets with his brother during a military operation in his neighbourhood of the West Bank town of Nablus in December 2006.

Ashraf explains what happened that day:

"I was playing football. I was with my little brother. I looked to the right. I saw something was happening. I saw a white bus. In front of the bus, there were four soldiers. They started shooting. I tried to get away. My little brother pushed in front of me. I tried to make him go back into the house. I was shot here but I managed to get back into the house."

Ashraf's father explains one of the effects of conflict on his family:

"Whether we are home at night, or at work during the day, we are constantly worried about our children. Whether they are at home or at school, you are always worried that soldiers could come and open fire, and hit one of the children."

1B. Protecting civilians: Worksheet



A case study of Ashraf

Read through the case study, look at the picture then answer the following questions based on what you think is happening in each image.

Q1. What category of people does Ashraf fall into?

Q2. What rules of war would you introduce to protect people like Ashraf and why?

Q3. How do you distinguish between civilians and soldiers?
Discuss use of uniforms and clearly displaying weapons etc.

Q4. What might be the consequences of the distinction between civilians and combatants not being clear?

Q5. Discuss other ways in which civilians are at risk in a conflict



2A. Photo card 1a



Protecting humanitarian activities in armed conflict including medical facilities and personnel: photo card 1a



Cynthia Johnson/Getty Images



©ICRC/J Bjorgvinsson

2B. Photo card 1b



Protecting humanitarian activities in armed conflict, including medical facilities and personnel: photo card 1b



© CICR/GUTMAN, Amnon



Teri Pengilley/BRC

2C. Humanitarian worksheet



Protecting humanitarian activities in armed conflict including medical facilities and personnel: worksheet

Look at the pictures then answer the following questions based on what you think is happening in each image.

Q1. Are the vehicles or the people in the pictures in any danger?

Q2. Do you think that ambulances and other vehicles carrying wounded civilians should be protected? Why?

Q3. What about if they are carrying wounded soldiers – should people involved in the fighting be treated differently? Why?

Q4. Should military medical personnel such as doctors and nurses also be protected? Why?

Q5. Who/what else should be protected?

2C. Humanitarian worksheet



Protecting humanitarian activities in armed conflict including medical facilities and personnel: worksheet

Look at the pictures then answer the following questions based on what you think is happening in each image.

Q6. What ideas do you have for protecting these groups of people?
How can you help ensure that ambulances and buildings such as hospitals are protected from attack? Is there anything in the pictures that might help you decide? Anything that might signify protection?

Q7. What would happen if the emblems were misused, for example, to ambush soldiers? Should misuse of the emblems be punishable?



3A. Photo card 2



Protecting soldiers: Photo Card 2



© CICR/s.n.



Todd Buchanan/Getty Images

3B. Protecting soldiers: worksheet



Protecting soldiers: worksheet

Look at the pictures then answer the following questions based on what you think is happening in each image.

Q1. Do you think that when you become a soldier, you should give up all rights to be treated well? Or do you think soldiers should be protected in certain situations? What types of situations? What about if they are injured, unable to fight and require medical attention? What if they are still participating in the fighting?

Q2. What about when they have been taken prisoner by the other side? Would they be vulnerable or in danger at this point?

Q3. How can we protect soldiers in these situations?

Q4. How could you persuade the soldiers in your armed forces to follow these rules?



4A. Landmines: factsheet



A factsheet about landmines



©ICRC/S. Sutton

International humanitarian (IHL) rules covered in this exercise

IHL restricts the use of some weapons in war because they are indiscriminate or because they cause unnecessary suffering, such as chemical and biological weapons. However, IHL does not specifically ban anti-personnel landmines. More than 80 per cent of states worldwide (156 of 193), including the UK, are party to the Ottawa convention that prohibits the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines.

Between 1975 and 2002, anti-personnel landmines killed and wounded thousands of Angolans. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) opened its first physical rehabilitation centre in Huambo in 1979 to help Angolan mine victims, now officially estimated at numbering 80,000.

In the outskirts of Kuito, Angola, 13-year-old Candre Antonio (above) set off a mine planted by his father near his home. Candre's father had planted the landmine as he feared for the safety of his family.

4B. Landmines: worksheet



Landmines: worksheet

Read through the fact sheet, look at the picture then answer the following questions based on what you think is happening in each image.

Q1. Have the students heard of landmines? What are they? Landmines are sometimes referred to as “anti personnel” landmines. What does the term “anti-personnel” mean? Are there different types of landmine? Are there any particular conflicts where they know landmines have been used?

Q2. Why do armies use landmines?

Q3. Do you think that landmines should be allowed? Why?

Q4. In what ways could deaths of civilians by landmine be prevented?



5A. Protecting children: case study



A case study of Helen*



Anthony Teun Voeten (ICRC)

Background

Helen was a child soldier like those pictured above. Read Helen's story:

"I was caught with my parents," she explains. "I was so young, I can't remember my age. My parents were killed, and I was taken away and gang-raped. The men who took me threatened to kill me if I left and forced me to carry a gun. This went on for three years."

Helen, who was no more than 11 or 12 at the time of the attack, was given cocaine to eat to desensitise her to the horrors she was about to live through.

She remembers: *"I was given drugs so I never valued human beings. They were just like chickens running around. Even when I was killing people, I didn't realise what I was doing. I remember one woman who lived quite near here. I shot her but she took a long time to die. I still think about it."*

* This is not Helen's real name.

5B. Protecting children: worksheet



A case study of Helen

Read through the case study, look at the picture then answer the following questions based on what you think is happening in each image.

Q1. Do you think children are usually involved in wars?

Q2. Why do they participate?

Q3. Do you think children should participate or should they be protected? Why?

Q4. How would you protect children?

Q5. At what age do you think children should be allowed to become a soldier?

5B. Protecting children: Worksheet



A case study of Helen

After the civil war in Sierra Leone finished, Helen had no education or skills to make a living and was scarred by her time as a child soldier. She says:

"After the war ended, I had nobody to care for me. When I was with the rebels, I gave birth to a baby and I had to make ends meet. I was doing commercial sex work to survive."

Q6. What could you do to help Helen make a better life for herself?
What schemes could you set up?

Helen is one of the fortunate ones in Sierra Leone who has been helped by the Sierra Leone Red Cross through a scheme for children involved in conflicts. The scheme provides counselling support, skills training and a start-up kit of essential tools and equipment to learn a trade. Staff also help people like Helen to find apprenticeships to help them become independent.



Glossary



Armed conflict

Armed conflict is said to exist when there is an armed confrontation between the armed forces of states (international armed conflict), or between governmental authorities and organised armed groups or between such groups within a state (non-international armed conflict). Other situations of violence, such as internal disturbances and tensions, are not considered to be armed conflicts.

Additional Protocol I

A treaty adopted in 1977 that supplements the protection provided by the four Geneva Conventions and is applicable in international armed conflicts. It imposes additional constraints on the way in which military operations may be conducted and further strengthens the protection for civilians.

Additional Protocol II

A treaty adopted in 1977 that supplements the protection provided by the four Geneva Conventions and is applicable in non-international armed conflicts of higher intensity than the situations covered by Article 3 common to the four Geneva Conventions. Additional Protocol II covers non-international armed conflicts that take place on the territory of a State between the armed forces of that State and the dissident armed forces or organised armed groups that operate under responsible command and that control part of the State's territory, with the ability to conduct sustained and concerted military operations.

Additional Protocol III

A treaty adopted in 2005 that supplements the protection provided by the four Geneva Conventions by establishing a new emblem: the red crystal. This new emblem, like the red cross and red crescent, is a symbol of the protection granted to the medical and religious services of armed forces and to the components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

Anti-personnel landmine

A mine designed to be set off by the presence, proximity or contact of a person and that is capable of incapacitating, injuring or killing one or more persons. (Mines designed to be detonated by the presence, proximity or contact of a vehicle instead of a person, and that are equipped with anti-handling devices, are not considered to be anti-personnel mines.)

Article 3 common to the four Geneva Conventions

A provision that appears in each of the four Geneva Conventions, it applies to non-international armed conflicts. A "Convention in miniature", the Article contains a set of fundamental international humanitarian law (IHL) rules that aim to protect people who are not or who are no longer taking an active part in hostilities. It also includes an explicit reference to the right of an impartial humanitarian body, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), to offer its services to the parties to a conflict. The rules contained in common Article 3 are considered to be customary IHL and represent a minimum standard from which belligerents should never depart.

Civilian

Any person who is not a combatant. When civilians take a direct part in fighting, they lose their protection from attack. (When there is any doubt about a person's status, he or she shall be considered to be a civilian.)

Glossary



Combatant

The term 'combatant' in international armed conflicts refers to members of the armed forces of a party to the conflict (except medical and religious personnel) who are entitled to take a direct part in hostilities. Combatants are obliged to distinguish themselves from civilians and to respect international humanitarian law. If combatants fall into the hands of their enemy, they are considered to be prisoners of war.

Four Geneva Conventions

Four treaties adopted in Geneva in 1949, which form the basis of modern international humanitarian law and are universally accepted. As of 2006, they had been acceded to by every state in the world. The four Geneva Conventions provide protection for different categories of people during **armed conflict**: the wounded and sick of the armed forces in the field (first Geneva Convention), the wounded, sick and shipwrecked of the armed forces at sea (second Geneva Convention), **prisoners of war** (third Geneva Convention) and the **civilian** population (fourth Geneva Convention).

Hors de combat

A term whose literal meaning is "out of the fight". It describes **combatants** who have been captured or wounded, or who are sick or shipwrecked, or who have laid down their arms or surrendered, and are no longer in a position to fight.

Human rights law

A set of international rules, established by treaty and custom, whose purpose is to protect the lives and human dignity of individuals from the arbitrary behaviour of governments. Human rights law applies to everyone at all times and in all circumstances.

International humanitarian law (IHL)

A body of international law that consists of treaty and customary rules that seeks, in times of armed conflict, to limit the suffering caused by war by protecting people who are not or who are no longer taking part in hostilities, and by restricting the methods and the means of warfare that may be employed (also known as the 'law of war' or the 'law of armed conflict').

Internally displaced people

The 1998 United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement define internally displaced people as "people who have been forced to move from their home or place of habitual residence because of war or a situation of generalised violence, persecution, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who (unlike 'refugees') have not crossed an internationally recognised state border".

Internal conflict

See non-international armed conflict.

International armed conflict

An international armed conflict is said to exist when armed force is used by at least two states against each other even if one of the states does not recognise that it is at war. A state of occupation or a war of national liberation also constitutes an international armed conflict.

Glossary



International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

An impartial, neutral and independent organisation whose exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and the human dignity of victims of conflicts and other situations of violence, and to provide them with assistance. The ICRC directs and coordinates international relief activities in situations of armed conflict. It also endeavours to prevent suffering by promoting and strengthening international humanitarian law and universal humanitarian principles.

International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

An international humanitarian movement whose mission is to protect life and human dignity, and to prevent and alleviate suffering without any discrimination on the basis of sex, nationality, race, religion, class or political affiliation. The Movement is made up of the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Legitimate

When something is in accordance with the rules (e.g. in accordance with international humanitarian law or national laws) or is justifiable or able to be defended by logic.

Legality

Being in accordance with the rules or allowed by law.

Non-international armed conflict

The use of armed force between governmental authorities and organised armed groups or between such groups within a state.

Non-combatant

A **civilian** or a **combatant** who is *hors de combat*.

Principle of distinction

A rule of international humanitarian law requiring the parties to a conflict to distinguish between civilians and **combatants**, and between civilian objects and military objectives, when planning or carrying out an attack.

Principle of proportionality

A rule of international humanitarian law that requires that the expected civilian deaths, injuries to civilians and damage to civilian objects incidental to an attack on a military objective must not be excessive compared to the military advantage anticipated from that attack.

Situations of internal violence

Serious disruptions of internal order, characterised by riots or isolated and sporadic acts of violence, through which individuals or groups of individuals openly express their opposition, discontent or demands. The term also covers situations of internal tension in which, even in the absence of any acts of violence, the state resorts to practices such as mass arrests of opponents and the suspension of certain human rights, often with the intention of preventing the situation from deteriorating into one that would qualify as internal disturbances. Situations of internal violence do not constitute **armed conflict**.

State

A sovereign political entity in international law or a “country”. All states are party to the four **Geneva Conventions**.

Basic rules of international humanitarian law in armed conflicts



This text has been prepared for dissemination purposes and does not serve as a substitute for the complete provisions of the international agreements.

- 1.** *Persons hors de combat* and those who do not take a direct part in hostilities are entitled to respect for their lives, and for their moral and physical integrity. They shall, in all circumstances, be protected and treated humanely without any adverse distinction.
- 2.** It is forbidden to kill or injure an enemy who surrenders or who is *hors de combat*.
- 3.** The wounded and sick shall be collected and cared for by the party to the conflict which has them in its power. Protection also covers medical personnel, establishments, transportation and equipment. The emblem of the red cross, red crescent or red crystal is the sign of such protection and must be respected.
- 4.** Captured combatants and civilians under the authority of an enemy are entitled to respect for their lives, dignity, personal rights and convictions. They shall be protected against all acts of violence and reprisals. They shall have the right to correspond with their families and to receive relief.
- 5.** Everyone shall be entitled to benefit from fundamental judicial guarantees. No one shall be held responsible for an act he or she has not committed. No one shall be subjected to physical or mental torture, corporal punishment, or cruel or degrading treatment.
- 6.** Parties to a conflict and members of their armed forces do not have an unlimited choice of methods and means of warfare. It is prohibited to employ weapons or methods of warfare of a nature to cause unnecessary losses or excessive suffering.
- 7.** Parties to a conflict shall at all times distinguish between the civilian population and combatants in order to spare civilian population and property. Neither the civilian population nor individual civilians shall be the object of attack. Attacks shall be directed solely against military objectives.