

CONTACT

How does IHL address sexual violence? Is sexual violence a weapon? A method of warfare? Does it matter whether the victim is a civilian, a combatant, a fighter? A child, a man, a woman? Does IHL require specific strategies to cater for the medical and psycho-social needs of victims and survivors of sexual violence?

Rape and other forms of sexual violence are prohibited under IHL, in both international and non-international armed conflicts. International criminal law moreover provides for the individual criminal responsibility of sexual crimes' perpetrators.

Yet, sexual violence persists in contemporary armed conflicts as a devastating phenomenon with damaging consequences for victims – women, men, girls and boys – as well as their families and whole communities. Strengthening the implementation of the legal framework remains a challenge to bridge the gap between the law and the reality on the ground.

IHL rules protecting persons against sexual violence can be found in [The Law](#) chapters on [Civilian population](#), [Combatants and POWs](#) and [Criminal repression](#).

Related case studies in [The Practice](#):

- [Women and Sexual violence](#)
- [UN, Report of the Secretary-General on Women and Peace and Security](#)
- [Somalia: Deeply Flawed Rape Inquiry](#)
- [Colombia – Sexual violence](#)
- [Syria: Detention and Abuse of Female Activists](#)
- [Central African Republic, Coup d'Etat](#)
- [ICC, The Prosecutor v. Lubanga](#)
- [Democratic Republic of Congo, Involvement of MONUSCO](#)
- [Mali, Conduct of Hostilities](#)
- [Colombia/ICC, Situation in Colombia, Interim Report](#)
- [Sudan, Report of the UN Commission of Enquiry on Darfur \[Paras 333-358\]](#)
- [Democratic Republic of the Congo, Conflict in the Kivus \[Part III, paras 16, 35-37\]](#)
- [Georgia/Russia, Human Rights Watch's Report on the Conflict in South Ossetia \[Paras 87-89\]](#)
- [Democratic Republic of Congo, Fighting with the M 23 Group](#)
- [Philippines, Armed Group Undertakes to Respect Children](#)
- [Central African Republic: Sexual Violence by Peacekeeping Forces](#)
- [Central African Republic, Report of the UN Independent Expert, July 2016](#)
- [ICC, Confirmation of Charges against LRA Leader](#)
- [International Criminal Court, Trial Judgment in the Case of the Prosecutor V. Jean-Pierre Bemba Gombo](#)
- [Geneva Call and the Chin National Front](#)

Related notions in [A to Z](#):

- [Rape and sexual violence](#)
- [Crimes against Humanity](#)
- [Women](#)

To go further:

- [E-briefing on sexual violence](#)
- [ICRC workshop on sexual violence](#)
- [Podcast of the conference 'Sexual violence in armed conflict: Underlying causes and prevention strategies'](#)
- [Resolution on Sexual violence and gender-based violence](#) adopted at the 32nd International Conference