Besides State responsibility [1] for violations [2] of international law, individuals may be held criminally responsible for international crimes (i.e., war crimes [3], crimes against humanity [4], and genocide [5]).

Each member of the armed forces is directly responsible for breaches [6] he or she commits and can be held individually responsible before a criminal court for violations of the laws of war. The principle of individual criminal responsibility for war crimes can be dated back to the Lieber Code and is a long-standing rule of customary international law. Not only is it possible to hold accountable individuals who actually commit a war crime, but different forms of individual criminal responsibility allow persons who attempt, assist, facilitate, aid, abett, plan or instigate the commission of a war crime to face accountability for their actions. Finally, the law of armed conflict assigns responsibility to military commanders who order their subordinates to violate IHL or who fail to prevent or repress [7] such violations.

See International Criminal Law [8]; War crimes [3]; Grave breaches [9]; Accused [10]; Command responsibility [11]; Repression of breaches [7]; Violations [2];
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GCI, 49 [28] (see ICRC updated Commentary [29])

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PI, 75/4(b) [34], 85 [35], 86 [36]

PII, 6/2(b) [37]

BIBLIOGRAPHIC RESOURCES

Suggested readings:

(Remark: for manuals on International Criminal Law, see International Criminal Law [8])


**Further readings:**


**Source URL:** https://casebook.icrc.org/glossary/individual-criminal-responsibility

**Links**

2. https://casebook.icrc.org/glossary/violations
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