The armed forces of a belligerent taking part in an [international armed conflict] consist of all organized armed forces, groups and units which are under a command responsible to that party for the conduct of its subordinates, even if that party is represented by a government or authority not recognized by an adverse party. The armed forces may also comprise paramilitary forces or armed law enforcement agency. Such armed forces must be subject to an internal disciplinary system which must enforce compliance with international humanitarian law. Members of such armed forces (other than [medical personnel] and [chaplains]) are [combatants].

See [Combatants]; [Dissemination]; [Enlistment]; [Combatants]; [Prisoners of war]
UN/Colombia, Human Rights Committee Clarifications and Concluding Observations (2016) [11]
International Criminal Court, Trial Judgment in the Case of the Prosecutor V. Jean-Pierre Bemba Gombo [12]
Eastern Ukraine, Attacks Against and Military Use of Schools [13]
Iraq, Crimes by Militia Groups [15]
Central African Republic, No Class: When Armed Groups Use Schools [16]

ICRC, Interpretative Guidance on the Notion of Direct Participation in Hostilities [17]

Suggested reading:


ROSAS Allan, The Legal Status of Prisoners of War: A Study of International Humanitarian Law Applicable in Armed Conflicts
Source URL: https://casebook.icrc.org/glossary/armed-forces

Links
[1] https://casebook.icrc.org/glossary/international-armed-conflict