International humanitarian law gives children general protection as civilian persons \[1\] taking no part in hostilities and special protection as particularly vulnerable beings. That special protection is conferred by numerous rules, *inter alia* on:

(a) the treatment of new-born babies on the same footing as the wounded \[2\];

(b) a child’s right to care \[3\] and aid;

(c) the reception of children under the age of fifteen years in hospital and safety zones and localities \[4\];

(d) the reunion of families dispersed \[5\] by an international \[6\] or internal armed conflict \[7\];

(e) the temporary evacuation \[8\] of children for imperative reasons of their safety, especially from a besieged or encircled area;

(f) the prohibition, in case of occupation \[9\], of compelling protected persons \[10\] under the age of eighteen years to work;

(g) the protection of the child’s cultural environment and of their education \[11\];
(h) the protection of the rights of children arrested, detained or interned;

(i) the prohibition of applying the death penalty to children under the age of eighteen years at the time the offence was committed;

(j) the protection of the family and the inviolability of the status of child;

(k) the prohibition of recruiting children under the age of fifteen years into the armed forces;

(l) the protection of orphans or children separated from their parents.

### CASES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Study</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South Sudan: Medical Care Under Fire</td>
<td>[17]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Republic of Congo, Involvement of MONUSCO</td>
<td>[18]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mali, Conduct of Hostilities</td>
<td>[19]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging Non-state Armed Groups on the Protection of Children</td>
<td>[20]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines, Armed Group Undertakes to Respect Children</td>
<td>[21]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia, the fate of Children in the conflict</td>
<td>[22]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia, Traditional Law and IHL</td>
<td>[23]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Central African Republic: Sexual Violence by Peacekeeping Forces

USA, Jawad v. Gates


ICC, Confirmation of Charges against LRA Leaders

Colombia Peace Agreement

UN/Colombia, Human Rights Committee Clarifications and Concluding Observations (2016)

Eastern Ukraine, Attacks Against and Military Use of Schools

Central African Republic/Democratic Republic of Congo/Uganda, LRA attacks

Central African Republic, Coup d'Etat

Central African Republic, No Class: When Armed Groups Use Schools

Somalia, IHL violations in Somalia's long-running armed conflict

South Sudan, AU Commission of Inquiry on South Sudan
Chapter 8, Special protection of children

Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict

Suggested readings:


PLATTNER Denise, “Protection of Children in International Humanitarian Law”, in IRRC, No. 240, June 1984, pp. 140-152.


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Links
[8] https://casebook.icrc.org/glossary/evacuation
[12] https://casebook.icrc.org/glossary/detention
[16] https://casebook.icrc.org/glossary/armed-forces