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Under IHL, the category of civilians is opposable to that of “combatants [1].” In an international armed conflict [2], all persons who are not combatants are civilians. Persons with civilian status may not be directly targeted in attacks. Civilians who directly participate in hostilities [3], however, lose that protection for the duration of their participation in hostilities. In non-international armed conflicts [4], there is no combatant status. Members of armed groups [5] with a continuous fighting function may, according to doctrine, be targeted like combatants. All other persons must not be directly targeted. The civilian population [6] is a term that refers to groupings of civilian persons. The presence of some combatants within the general civilian population does not render the civilian population as a whole targetable.

IHL contains certain rules applicable to civilians who accompany the armed forces.

See Civilian population [6];

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HR, 13 [7]

GCI, 13/4 [8] (see ICRC updated Commentary [9])

GCII, 13/4 ^[10] (see ICRC updated Commentary ^[11])

GCIII, 4(A)(4) ^[12]

PI, 23/6 ^[13]

CASES

ICRC, International Humanitarian Law and the challenges of contemporary armed conflicts in 2015 [paras 242 ^[14], 252 ^[15]]

Iraq, Forced displacement and deliberate destruction ^[16]

Central African Republic, Report of the UN Independent Expert, July 2016 ^[17]

Iraq: Situation of Internally Displaced Persons ^[18]

ICC, Confirmation of Charges against LRA Leaders ^[19]

ICRC, Statement - War in Cities ; What is at Stake? ^[20]

International Criminal Court, Trial Judgment in the Case of the Prosecutor V. Jean-Pierre Bemba Gombo ^[21]

Iraq, The Battle for Mosul ^[22]

Iraq, Crimes by Militia Groups ^[23]

Kenya, Civilian Carnage ^[24]

Georgia: Attacks against peacekeepers ^[25]

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[3] <https://casebook.icrc.org/glossary/direct-participation-hostilities>

[4] <https://casebook.icrc.org/glossary/non-international-armed-conflict>

[5] <https://casebook.icrc.org/glossary/armed-groups>

[6] <https://casebook.icrc.org/glossary/civilian-population>

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[14] <https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/icrc-international-humanitarian-law-and-challenges-contemporary-armed-conflicts-2015#challenges-2015-para242>

[15] <https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/icrc-international-humanitarian-law-and-challenges-contemporary-armed-conflicts-2015#challenges-2015-para252>

[16] <https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/iraq-forced-displacement-and-deliberate-destruction>

[17] <https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/central-african-republic-report-un-independent-expert-july-2016>

[18] <https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/iraq-situation-internally-displaced-persons>

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