It refers to the legal position or condition of a person, property or place/territory under International Humanitarian Law.

Unlike human rights law, for example, under IHL the set of rules that applies to a particular situation is often dependent on the status of the persons or objects involved, and sometimes even the territory on which certain conduct is carried out.

IHL recognizes particular protections for the following categories of persons, places and objects:

a. Wounded [1], sick [2] or shipwrecked persons; [3]
b. Combatants [4];
c. Prisoners of war [5];
d. Medical aircraft [6];
e. Medical [7] and religious personnel [8];
f. Civilian persons [9];
g. Cultural property [10];
h. Civil defence personnel [11];
i. Occupied territory [12];
j. non-defended localities [13] and demilitarizd zones [14];
k. hospital [15] and safety zones [16].

IHL also uses the term when it clarifies that its application does not affect the legal status of
armed groups.

Furthermore, international humanitarian law deals with the status of public officials and judges of an occupied territory by providing that the Occupying Power may not alter their status.

See Classification of persons [17]; Protected persons [18]; Legal Status of the parties [19];

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Malaysia/Philippines, Conflict over the Sultanate of Sulu [20]

Israel, Blockade of Gaza and the Flotilla Incident [21]

European Court of Human Rights, Kononov v. Latvia [22]

United States, Jurisprudence Related to the Bombing of the U.S.S. Cole [23]

Georgia: Attacks against peacekeepers [24]

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of wounded and sick
See Wounded and sick [1]
GCI, 13 [25] (see ICRC updated Commentary [26]), 14 [27] (see ICRC updated Commentary [28])

of shipwrecked
See Shipwrecked [3]
GCI, 13 [25] (see ICRC updated Commentary [26])

of combatant
See Combatant [4]
HR, 1 [29]-3 [30]
PI, 43 [31]-47 [32]

of POWs
See Prisoner of war [5]
HR, 1 [33]-3 [30]
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of medical personnel
See Medical personnel [7]

of religious personnel
See Religious personnel [8]

of civilians
See Civilian population [35]
PI, 50 [36]
CIHL, 5 [37]

of civilian object
See Civilian objects [10]
PI, 52 [38]
CIHL, 7 [39] and 9 [40]
of civil defence personnel
See Civil defence [11]
PI, 62 [41]–67 [42]

of parties to the conflict
See Legal status of the parties [19]

of non-defended localities
See Non-defended localities [13]

of demilitarized zones
See Demilitarized zones [14]

of hospital and safety zones and localities
See Hospital and safety zones and localities [43]

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