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A “demilitarized zone” is an area, agreed upon between the parties to an armed conflict ^[1], which cannot be occupied or used for military purposes by any party to the conflict.

Demilitarized zones can be established by a verbal or written agreement in times of peace or during an armed conflict.

The subject of the agreement is normally an area which fulfills the following conditions:

- a. all combatants as well as mobile weapons and mobile military equipment have been evacuated;
- b. no hostile use is made of fixed military installations or establishments;
- c. no acts of hostility are committed by the authorities or by the population; and
- d. all activity linked to the military effort has ceased.

The agreement should define and describe, with precision, the limits of the demilitarized zone and, if appropriate, lay down the methods of supervision.

Police forces ^[2] may be stationed in demilitarized zones to maintain order.

There are detailed rules for the creation and recognition of demilitarized zones, and for agreement upon the distinctive sign to be displayed there.

The concept of a demilitarized zone is not far removed from those of hospital zones and localities ^[3], neutralized zones ^[4], and hospital and safety zones and localities ^[5].

See Neutralized zones ^[4]; Hospital and safety zones and localities ^[3];

OUTLINE

Chapter 9, 13. Zones created to protect war victims against the effects of hostilities ^[6]

LEGAL SOURCE

PI, 60 ^[7]

PI, 85/3(d) ^[8]

CIHL, 36 ^[9]

CASES

Sri Lanka, Jaffna Hospital Zone ^[10]

Sri Lanka, Conflict in the Vanni [Paras 12-16] ^[11]

Case Study, Armed Conflicts in the former Yugoslavia (para 14) ^[12]

Bosnia and Herzegovina, Constitution of Safe Areas in 1992-1993 ^[13]

Netherlands, Responsibility of International Organizations (paras 2.4 and 2.6) ^[14]

ECHR, Isayeva v. Russia (paras 16 and 186) ^[15]

BIBLIOGRAPHIC RESOURCES

Suggested readings:

BOUVIER Antoine, “Zones protégées, zones de sécurité et protection de la population civile”, in BOUSTANY Katia & DORMOY Daniel, *Perspectives humanitaires entre conflits, droit(s) et action*, Brussels, Bruylant, 2002, pp. 251-269.

LAVOYER Jean-Philippe, “International Humanitarian Law, Protected Zones and the Use of Force”, in BIERMANN Wolfgang & VADSET Martin (eds), *UN Peacekeeping in Trouble: Lessons Learned from the former Yugoslavia*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 1998, pp. 262-279.

OSWALD Bruce M., “The Creation and Control of Places of Protection During United Nations Peace Operations”, in *IRRC*, No. 844, December 2001, pp. 1013-1036.

SANDOZ Yves, “Localités et zones sous protection spéciale”, in *Quatre études du droit international humanitaire*, Geneva, Henry-Dunant Institute, 1985, pp. 35-47

TORELLI Maurice, “Les zones de sécurité”, in *RGDIP*, Vol. 99/4, 1995, pp. 787-848

Further readings:

LANDGREN Karen, “Safety Zones and International Protection: A Dark Grey Area”, in *International Journal of Refugee Law*, Vol. 7/3, 1995, pp. 436-458.

PATEL Bimal N., “Protection zones in international humanitarian law”, in *The Indian Journal of International Law*, Vol. 39/4, 1999, pp. 689-702.

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[9] https://www.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_rul_rule36

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[11] https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/sri-lanka-conflict-vanni#para_12

[12] https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/case-study-armed-conflicts-former-yugoslavia#para_14

[13] <https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/bosnia-and-herzegovina-constitution-safe-areas>

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[15] https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/echr-isayeva-v-russia#para_16