Current international law contains no definition of terrorism. The term comprises various acts and kinds of behaviour ranging from what everyone certainly regards as illegal to what some regard as illegal and others as legal. From the point of view of international humanitarian law, terrorism is only covered when committed within the framework or as part of an armed conflict[1]. It does not apply to attacks against combatants[2] and military objectives[3] provided that the acts of violence it entails are perpetrated by combatants[2] or members of armed groups[4] and that the means used are lawful. Conversely, attacks on the civilian population[5] and civilian objects[6], by whatever means and for whatever reasons, are prohibited.

Between the extremes of legitimate acts of war against combatants[2] and military objectives[3], and the prohibition of acts of terrorism against the civilian population[5] and civilian objects[6], there is a wide range of controversial action.

See War on Terror[7];
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DOCUMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ICRC, International humanitarian law and the challenges of contemporary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CASES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom and Australia, Applicability of Protocol I [Reservation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States, The Schlesinger Report [16]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICTY, The Prosecutor v. Boskoski [Paras 184-190] [17]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States, Status and Treatment of Detainees Held in Guantanamo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naval Base [18]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
United States, The September 11 2001 Attacks [19]

United States, Use of Armed Drones for Extraterritorial Targeted Killings [20]

United States of America, Holder v. Humanitarian Law Project [21]

General Assembly, The use of drones in counter-terrorism operations [22]

U.S., Lethal Operations against Al-Qa’ida Leaders [23]

United States of America, The Death of Osama bin Laden [24]

Syria, Press conference with French President Francois Hollande and Russian President Vladimir Putin [25]

ICRC, International Humanitarian Law and the challenges of contemporary armed conflicts in 2015 [paras 70 [26], 71 [27], 73-79 [28]]

United States, Jurisprudence Related to the Bombing of the U.S.S. Cole [29]

USA, Guantánamo, End of "Active Hostilities" in Afghanistan [30]

USA, Jawad v. Gates [31]

Iraq/Syria/UK, Drone Operations against ISIS [32]
Israel/Palestine, Accountability for the Use of Lethal Force [33]

Belgium, Prosecution of Terrorist Crimes in the context of Armed Conflict [34]

Iraq, The Battle for Mosul [35]

Kenya, Civilian Carnage [36]

Syria: Attacks on Oil Infrastructure [37]

Syria: Medical support for ISIS [38]

Somalia/Kenya, Al-Shabab Attacks [39]

BIBLIOGRAPHIC RESOURCES

Suggested readings:


LIETZAU William, “Combating Terrorism: The Consequences of Moving from Law Enforcement to War”, in WIPPMAN David & EVANGELISTA Matthew


PETIT Françoise Camille, “Terrorisme et droit international humanitaire : quelles


RUBIN Alfred P., “Applying the Geneva Conventions: Military Commissions,


TIGROUDJA Hélène, “Quel(s) droit(s) applicable(s) à la ‘guerre au terrorisme’ ?”, in *AFDI*, Vol. 48, 2002, pp. 81-102.


VEUTHEY Michel, “Le droit international humanitaire face à la guerre contre le terrorisme”, in DOUCET Ghislaine (ed.), *Terrorisme, victimes et responsabilité pénale internationale*


Source URL: https://casebook.icrc.org/glossary/terrorism-and-terrorists

Links
[37] https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/syria-attacks-oil-infrastructure
[38] https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/syria-medical-support-isis
[40] http://www.ridi.org/adi