The intentional and pre-meditated use of lethal force, by a State or organized armed group against a specific individual outside their physical custody. Targeted killings occur both within and outside of armed conflicts [1]. Under IHL, they are problematic as, oftentimes, those targeted are geographically far removed from hostilities, and/or not necessarily directly participating in hostilities [2] at the time they are targeted. In the context of the war on terror [3], targeted killings against suspected terrorists [4], including “unlawful combatants [5]”, have occurred regularly. Drones [6] are frequently relied on to undertake such killings.

See Armed conflict [1]; Unlawful combatants [5]; War on terror [3]; Drones [6]; Terrorism and terrorists [4].

**CASES**

- Israel, The Targeted Killings Case [7]
- UN, Statement of a Special Rapporteur on Drone Attacks [8]
- General Assembly, The use of drones in counter-terrorism operations [9]
- U.S., Lethal Operations against Al-Qa’ida Leaders [10]

ICRC, International Humanitarian Law and the challenges of contemporary armed conflicts in 2015 [12] (Paras. 60-64 [13])

Iraq/Syria/UK, Drone Operations against ISIS [14]

BIBLIOGRAPHIC RESOURCES


SASSÒLI Marco & OLSON Laura, “The Relationship Between International


**Source URL:** https://casebook.icrc.org/glossary/targeted-killings
Links