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].
United States of America, The Death of Osama bin Laden

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

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