In general international law, a sanction can be defined by an action carried out by one or more states toward another one to force the latter to comply with its legal obligations. In domestic law, a sanction relates to the penalty annexed to a violation of a law as a mean of enforcing it.

In IHL more particularly, the term ‘sanctions’ may be applied:

- a. to the sanctions applicable to civilian internees and prisoners of war responsible for breaches of the laws, regulations and general orders to which they are subject;
- b. to the sanctions applicable to persons who have committed war crimes or other breaches of international humanitarian law; or
- c. to the sanctions applicable to commanders responsible for failure to act.

See Disciplinary sanctions; Violations; Breaches; State responsibility; Individual criminal responsibility.
Chapter 6 - Combatants and Prisoners of War, III. Treatment of prisoners of war, h) punishment for acts committed prior to capture

Chapter 8 - The Protection of Civilians, IV. Special rules on Occupied Territories, 6. Protection of persons deprived of liberty, c.) civilian internees

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GC I, Art 49 (see ICRC updated Commentary)

GC II, Art 50 (see ICRC updated Commentary)

GC III, Art. 82 18-108, 129

GC IV, Art 146

P I, Art. 85(1)

CIHL, Rules 100 102, 157 and 158

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United States, Johnson v. Eisentrager [29]

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