The following persons are protected by international humanitarian law:

- a. wounded, sick and shipwrecked members of the armed forces who have ceased to take part in the hostilities;
- b. prisoners of war;
- c. civilian persons who because of a conflict or occupation are in the power of a Party whose nationality they do not possess;
- d. medical and religious personnel;
- e. parlementaires;
- f. civil defence personnel;
- g. personnel assigned to the protection of cultural property.

“Protected persons” in this website refers to persons who are protected under the fourth Geneva Convention.

The basic definition of protected persons under the fourth Geneva Convention is the following:

"Protected persons" are civilians who find themselves in the hands of a party to the conflict of which they are not nationals.

The fourth Convention excludes the nationals of some States from the category of protected persons, because presumably their State of origin can protect them through the ordinary diplomatic means that apply in times of peace and continue to apply during an armed conflict:
a. First, in the own territory of a party to the conflict, the category of protected persons excludes nationals of a co-belligerent (allied) or neutral State as long as the State of nationality maintains normal diplomatic representation with the State in whose hands they are in.

b. Second, in occupied territory, the category of protected persons excludes only nationals of a co-belligerent (allied) State provided that the State of nationality maintains normal diplomatic representation with the Occupying Power. The nationals of neutral states remain protected persons in occupied territory.
Former Yugoslavia, Special Agreements Between the Parties to the Conflicts

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