The principle of proportionality prohibits attacks against military objectives which are “expected to cause incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians [1], damage to civilian objects [2], or a combination thereof, which would be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage [3] anticipated”.

In other words, the principle of proportionality seeks to limit damage caused by military operations by requiring that the effects of the means [4] and methods of warfare [5] used must not be disproportionate to the military advantage [3] sought.

### OUTLINE

- Chapter 4. III. 2. c) proportionality [8]
- Chapter 9, II. 6. c) dd) principle of proportionality [7]

### LEGAL SOURCE

- PI, 51/5b [8]
- CIHL, 14 [9]
ICRC, The Challenges of Contemporary Armed Conflicts

ICJ, Nuclear Weapons Advisory Opinion (Para. 43)

Israel/Gaza, Operation Cast Lead (Part I, Paras. 120-126, 230-232)

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ICTY, The Prosecutor v. Kupreskic et al. (Para. 526)

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(Paras. 28-30, 41-47)

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Cambodia/Thailand, Border Conflict around the Temple of Preah Vihear

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ICRC, Statement - War in Cities ; What is at Stake? [50]

Germany, Aerial Drone Attack in Mir Ali/Pakistan [51]

Eastern Ukraine, OHCHR Report on the Situation: November 2016 - February 2017 [52]

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Afghanistan/US, 'Mother of all bombs" [54]

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Somalia/US, Airstrikes in Somalia [56]

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suggested readings:


**Further readings:**


KNOOPS Geert-Jan Alexander, “The Duality of the Proportionality Principle


“Symposium: The International Legal Fallout from Kosovo” (articles of GAZZINI Tarcisio, HILPOLD Peter, CERONE John, FENRICK William J., BENVENUTI


**Source URL:** https://casebook.icrc.org/glossary/proportionality

**Links**

[1] https://casebook.icrc.org/glossary/civilians
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[27] https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/echr-isayeva-v-russia