Persons assigned exclusively, whether for a permanent or temporary period, to medical purposes, namely the search for, collection, transportation, diagnosis or treatment of the wounded, sick [1] and shipwrecked [2], or to the prevention of disease, or to the administration or operation of medical units or medical transports.

Medical personnel comprises military and civilian medical personnel (doctors and paramedical personnel) including that of the Red Cross or Red Crescent [3], and civil defence [4] personnel. They are entitled to the protection and treatment stipulated by international law, may not be the object of violence, and if they fall into enemy hands are not considered as prisoners of war [5] and must be set free. However they may be retained to give medical care to prisoners of war [5], preferably those belonging to the same armed forces as themselves.

They are identified by the distinctive sign of the red cross, red crescent or red crystal [6] worn on their uniform, or on their clothing if they are duly authorized civilian medical personnel.

Members of the armed forces specially trained for employment, should the need arise, as hospital orderlies, nurses or auxiliary stretcher-bearers in the search for or the collection, transport or treatment of the wounded and sick [1] must likewise be respected and protected if they are carrying out these duties at the time when they come into contact with the enemy or fall into his hands. In the latter case they will be considered as prisoners of war [5] but will be employed on medical tasks as needed.
definition

military (permanent or temporary) medical personnel

GCI, 24 [8]-25 [9]

GCII, 36 [10]-37 [11]

civilian medical personnel assigned by a party to the conflict

GCIV, 20 [12]

PI, 8 [13]

medical personnel made available by third States or organisations to a party to the conflict

PI, 8 [13]

personnel of a National Society recognized and specifically authorized by a party to the conflict

GCI, 26 [14]

GCII, 24 [15]

PI, 8 [13]

protection
on the battlefield (including inhabitants of the combat zone): may not be attacked and may fulfil medical duties in conformity with medical ethics

GCI, 24 [16]-25 [17]

GCII, 36 [10]-37 [11]

PI, 15 [18]-16 [19]

CIHL, 25 [20]-30 [21]

once fallen in enemy hands: immediate repatriation or employment caring for POWs

GCI, 28 [22]-32 [23]

under control of the enemy: right to perform their medical mission, right not to perform acts contrary to medical ethics, right to maintain medical secret, except as required by law

PI, 15 [18]-16 [19]

PII, 10 [24]

CIHL, 26 [25]

duties

See Medical ethics / Medical duties [26]
ICRC, Appeals on the Near East [27] (C. 9 [28])

Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right of Everyone to the Enjoyment of the Highest Attainable Standard of Physical and Mental Health [29]

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ICRC Report on Yemen [30]

Lebanon, Helicopter Attack on Ambulances [31]

UK, Misuse of the Emblem [32]

British Military Court at Hamburg, the Peleus Trial [33]

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UN, Report of the Secretary-General for the World Humanitarian Summit [42]

Afghanistan, Attack on Kunduz Trauma Centre [43]

ICRC, International Humanitarian Law and the challenges of contemporary armed conflicts in 2015 [paras 152, 157, 165]

Thailand, Attack on Hospital [47]

UN, Security Council Resolution 2286 on Attacks on Hospitals [48]

Italy, Use of force against ambulances in Iraq [49]

Syria, the Battle for Aleppo [50]