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Home > Hostages

Hostages are persons who, irrespective of their status ^[1], have been detained ^[2] under circumstances in which death or injury to themselves or those close to them, or continued unlawful detention is threatened, in order to compel a third party to do or to abstain from doing any act in exchange for the release or safety of the hostage or others threatened. Carrying out, or threatening to carry out, an act of hostage-taking is prohibited under international humanitarian law and constitutes a grave breach ^[3] in international armed conflicts and a war crime ^[4] in non-international armed conflicts.

See Detention ^[2]; Status ^[1]; Grave breaches ^[5]; War crimes ^[4];

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common 3/1(b) ^[6] (see ICRC updated Commentary ^[7])

GCIV, 34 ^[8]

GCIV, 147 ^[9]

PI, 75/2(c) ^[10]

CIHL, 96 ^[11]

CASES

ICTY, *The Prosecutor v. Radovan Karadzic* ^[12]

Iraq, *The Battle for Mosul* ^[13]

BIBLIOGRAPHIC RESOURCES

Suggested reading:

SALINAS BURGOS Hernan, “The Taking of Hostages and International Humanitarian Law”, in *IRRC*, No. 270, May-June 1989, pp. 196-216

Further reading:

PIERNAS Carlos, “The Protection of Foreign Workers and Volunteers in Situation of Internal Conflict, with Special Reference to the Taking of Hostages”, in *IRRC*, No. 287, March-April 1992, pp. 143-172.

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Links

[1] <https://casebook.icrc.org/glossary/status>

[2] <https://casebook.icrc.org/glossary/detention>

[3] <https://casebook.icrc.org/casebook/doc/glossary/grave-breaches-glossary.htm>

[4] <https://casebook.icrc.org/glossary/war-crimes>

[5] <https://casebook.icrc.org/glossary/grave-breaches>

[6]

<https://www.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Article.xsp?action=openDocument&documentId=BAA341028EBFF1E8C12563CD>

[7] <https://ihl->

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[8]

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[9]

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[10]

<https://www.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Article.xsp?action=openDocument&documentId=086F4BB140C53655C12563CD0>

[11] https://www.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_rul_rule96

[12] <https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/icty-prosecutor-v-radovan-karadzic>

[13] <https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/iraq-battle-mosul>