In an international armed conflict, protected civilians may be interned, i.e., subjected to non-criminal detention based on the serious threat that their activity poses to the security of the detaining authority. Therefore, internment is a security measure, and cannot be used as a form of punishment. This means that each interned person must be released as soon as the reasons which necessitated his/her internment no longer exist. Furthermore, the decision to intern is to be made on an individual basis, and entire groups of civilians may not be collectively interned.

The Fourth 1949 Geneva Convention provides extensive protection for civilian internees during international armed conflicts.

See Internment; Assigned Residence; Detainees; Detention; Protected Persons;
decision of internment: individual administration decision

reasons for internment: imperative security reasons; not punishment

treatment of civil internees
Women internees

PI, 76 [28]

Children internees

PI, 77/4 [29]

release of civil internees

GCIV, 132 [30]
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- **Israel, Cheikh Obeid et al. v. Ministry of Security** [35]
- **ICRC, Iran/Iraq, Memoranda** [36]
- **US, The Schlesinger Report** [37]
- **IACmHR, Coard v. US (Paras. 52-59)** [38]
- **Case Study, Armed Conflicts in the Former Yugoslavia (Para. 12)** [39]
- **ICRC/South Lebanon, Closure of Insar Camp** [40]
- **US, The Taguba Report** [41]
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- **Bangladesh/India/Pakistan, 1974 Agreement** [42] (Arts 3-11 [43] and 13-15 [44])
Case Study, Armed Conflicts in the Former Yugoslavia [45] (18 [45] and 21 [46])

United Kingdom, The Case of Serdar Mohammed (High Court Judgment) [47]

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Suggested readings:


DROEGE Cordula, “Transfer of Detainees: Legal Framework, Non-Refoulement


REICHEL Daniel, “L’internement et le rapatriement des militaires soviétiques...”


**Source URL:** https://casebook.icrc.org/glossary/civilian-internees

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