In international law, “attacks” are acts of violence against the adversary, whether in offence or defence and in whatever territory conducted.

This definition applies to

a. any act of land, air or sea warfare which may affect the civilian population or civilian objects on land;

b. all attacks from the sea or the air against objectives on land.

Attacks on the civilian population as such, acts of violence the primary purpose of which is to spread terror among the civilian population, and indiscriminate attacks on specified categories of places and civilian objects are prohibited. Precautions must be taken in preparing and carrying out attacks and against the effects of attacks.

**LEGAL SOURCE**

| PI, 49/1 [8] |

**CASES**

| Libya, NATO Intervention 2011 [9] |

ICRC, International Humanitarian Law and the challenges of contemporary armed conflicts in 2015

Syria, Report by UN Commission of Inquiry (March 2017) [14]

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ICC, Confirmation of Charges against LRA Leader [17]

ICRC, Statement - War in Cities ; What is at Stake? [18]

Belgium, Prosecution of Terrorist Crimes in the context of Armed Conflict [19]

Iraq, The Battle for Mosul [20]

Eastern Ukraine, Attacks Against and Military Use of Schools [21]

Eastern Ukraine, OHCHR Report on the Situation: November 2016 - February 2017 [22]

Central African Republic, No Class: When Armed Groups Use Schools [23]

Kenya, Civilian Carnage [24]
Precautions against the effect of attacks

See Precautions in attack [7];

Prohibited attacks against the civilian population or intended to spread terror among the civilian population

See also Civilian population [3]; Terror [5];

OUTLINE

Chapter 9, a) attacks against the civilian population as such (including those intended to spread terror) [25]
ICRC Appeals on the Near East (C. Para. 7)

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AI, Breach of the Principle of Distinction

ICTY, The Prosecutor v. Martic (A. Paras. 8, 10-14 and 24-32)

ICTY, The Prosecutor v. Rajic (A. Paras. 51-56)

ICTY, The Prosecutor v. Galic (Paras. 16-137 and 561)


Iran, Victim of Cyber warfare

Against civilian objects

See also Civilian objects;
Chapter 9, b) attacks against civilian objects

**LEGAL SOURCE**

PI, 52/1

CIHL, 10

**CASES**

Iran/Iraq, UN SC Assessing Violations of IHL

ICTY, The Prosecutor v. Strugar (B. Paras. 223-228 and 282)

Iran, Victim of Cyber warfare

Afghanistan, Bombing of a Civilian Truck

Syria, the Battle for Aleppo

Against the civilian population by way of reprisals

See Reprisals;

Indiscriminate attacks
See Indiscriminate attack [6];

**LEGAL SOURCE**

CIHL, 11 [53]

**CASE**

ICTY, The Prosecutor v. Galic (Paras. 372-387) [54]

Iran, Victim of Cyber warfare [43]

Against non defended localities

See Non-defended localities [55];

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[1] https://casebook.icrc.org/glossary/air-warfare