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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 ^[1] or sea warfare ^[2] which may affect the civilian population ^[3] or civilian objects ^[4] on land;
- b. all attacks from the sea or the air against objectives on land.

Attacks on the civilian population ^[3] as such, acts of violence the primary purpose of which is to spread terror ^[5] among the civilian population ^[3], and indiscriminate attacks ^[6] on specified categories of places and civilian objects ^[4] are prohibited. Precautions ^[7] 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

[10] (Paras. 210 [11], 211 [12])

ICTY, The Prosecutor v. Radovan Karadzic [13]

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

Iraq/Syria/UK, Drone Operations against ISIS [15]

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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]

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OLASOLO Héctor, *Unlawful Attacks in Combat Situations: from the ICTY's Case Law to the Rome Statute*, Leiden, M. Nijhoff, 2008, 288 pp.

ROSEN Richard D., "Targeting Enemy Forces in the War on Terror: Preserving Civilian Immunity", in *Vanderbilt Journal of Transnational Law*, Vol. 42, No. 3, May 2009, pp. 683-777.

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]

LEGAL SOURCE

PI, 51/2 ^[26]

CIHL, 2 ^[27]

DOCUMENT

ICRC Appeals on the Near East ^[28] (C. Para. 7 ^[29])

CASES

AI, Breach of the Principle of Distinction ^[30]

ICTY, The Prosecutor v. Martić ^[31] (A. ^[31] Paras. 8 ^[32], 10-14 ^[33] and 24-32)

ICTY, The Prosecutor v. Rajić ^[34] (A. ^[34] Paras. 51-56 ^[35])

ICTY, The Prosecutor v. Galić ^[36] (Paras. 16-137 ^[37] and 561 ^[38])

ICTY, The Prosecutor v. Strugar ^[39] (A. ^[39] and B. ^[40], Paras. 220-222 ^[41] and 280-288 ^[42])

Iran, Victim of Cyber warfare ^[43]

Against civilian objects

See also Civilian objects ^[4];

OUTLINE

Chapter 9, b) attacks against civilian objects ^[44]

LEGAL SOURCE

PI, 52/1 ^[45]

CIHL, 10 ^[46]

CASES

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ICTY, The Prosecutor v. Strugar ^[48] (B. Paras. 223-228 ^[48] and 282 ^[49])

Iran, Victim of Cyber warfare ^[43]

Afghanistan, Bombing of a Civilian Truck ^[50]

Syria, the Battle for Aleppo ^[51]

Against the civilian population by way of reprisals

See Reprisals ^[52];

Indiscriminate attacks

See Indiscriminate attack ^[6];

LEGAL SOURCE

CIHL, 11 ^[53]

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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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conflicts-2015

[11] <https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/icrc-international-humanitarian-law-and-challenges-contemporary-armed-conflicts-2015#challenges-2015-para210>

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[22] <https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/eastern-ukraine-ohchr-report-situation-november-2016-february-2017>

[23] <https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/central-african-republic-no-class-when-armed-groups-use-schools>

[24] <https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/kenya-civilian-carnage>

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<https://www.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Article.xsp?action=openDocument&documentId=4BEED9920AE0AEAEC12563C>

[27] https://www.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_rul_rule2

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[29] <https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/icrc-appeals-near-east#sectionC>

[30] <https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/amnesty-international-breach-principle-distinction>

[31] <https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/icty-prosecutor-v-martic>

[32] <https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/icty-prosecutor-v-martic#para8>

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[34] <https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/icty-prosecutor-v-rajic>

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[41] https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/icty-prosecutor-v-strugar#part_b_para_220

[42] https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/icty-prosecutor-v-strugar#part_b_para_280

- [43] <https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/iran-victim-cyber-warfare>
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- [54] https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/icty-prosecutor-v-galic#para_372
- [55] <https://casebook.icrc.org/glossary/non-defended-localities>