

STARVATION, HUNGER AND FAMINE IN ARMED CONFLICT

AN OVERVIEW OF RELEVANT PROVISIONS OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

INTRODUCTION

This briefing note outlines the rules of international humanitarian law (IHL) most relevant to food security, starvation and the prevention of hunger and famine in situations of armed conflict.¹ These include:

- rules on the conduct of hostilities
- the responsibility of parties to conflict to ensure adequate supplies of food and water
- rules on access for humanitarian relief.

CONDUCT OF HOSTILITIES

If the IHL rules governing the conduct of hostilities are respected from the very outset of a conflict, that can play an important role in preventing a severe food crisis.²

In this regard, the following prohibitions under IHL are particularly salient:

- IHL prohibits the use of **starvation of civilians as a method of warfare**:³
 - Starvation in this context means deprivation of food, water or other things necessary for survival. The deprivation need not be so severe as to cause death; it is enough that it would cause suffering.⁴

1 Terms such as ‘food insecurity’, ‘hunger’, ‘famine’ and ‘starvation’ are not defined in IHL treaties. ‘Starvation’ is used in Article 54 of [Additional Protocol I](#) (AP I) and Article 14 of [Additional Protocol II](#) (AP II) without definition. The [commentary on Article 54\(1\), AP I](#) (p. 653, para. 2089) states that the term ‘starvation’ is “generally understood by everyone”, with the footnote: “Starvation is defined by the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary (1973) as the action of starving or subjecting to famine, i.e., to cause to perish of hunger; to deprive of or ‘keep scantily supplied with food’”. In the [commentary on Article 14, AP II](#) (p. 1456, para. 4791), starvation is described as “the action of subjecting people to famine, i.e. extreme and general scarcity of food”. ‘Starvation’ in these contexts includes deprivation of drinking water: see Art. 54(2), AP I; Art. 14, AP II; and the [ICRC Study on Customary International Humanitarian Law](#) (CIHL Study), p. 193, [commentary on customary Rule 54](#). While this briefing note focuses on access to food and water, the term ‘starvation’ and the scope of the relevant provisions of IHL may be interpreted as applying to other goods as well, such as medicines and medical equipment or blankets in conditions of extreme cold where they are necessary for survival: see CIHL Study, p. 193, [commentary](#); and Dapo Akande and Emanuela-Chiara Gillard, “Conflict-induced food insecurity and the war crime of starvation of civilians as a method of warfare: The underlying rules of international humanitarian law”, [Journal of International Criminal Justice](#), Vol. 17, Issue 4, September 2019, pp. 758–760.

2 See, for example, operative paragraph 1 of UN Security Council [Resolution 2417](#), which was adopted unanimously in 2018.

3 Art. 54(1), AP I; Art. 14, AP II; and CIHL Study, Rule 53. Starvation as a method of warfare can also constitute a war crime. See CIHL Study, pp. 580–582, 599, 603, [commentary on customary Rule 156](#); ICC Rome Statute, Art. 8(2)(b)(xxv) [IAC]; and the IHL Treaties – Amendment to the Statute of the International Criminal Court, amended Article 8 (Intentionally using starvation of civilians), 2019 [amendment](#) adding Art. 8(2)(e)(xix) [NIAC]. The definition of a ‘war crime’ for purposes of establishing individual criminal responsibility – in the International Criminal Court’s (ICC) Elements of Crimes, for instance – may be narrower than the scope of the IHL prohibition for purposes of fixing state responsibility, particularly with respect to intentional elements.

4 ICRC, *International Humanitarian Law and the Challenges of Contemporary Armed Conflicts: Building a Culture of Compliance for IHL to Protect Humanity in Today’s and Future Conflicts* (2024) ([2024 Challenges Report](#)), p. 45.

- Using starvation as a method of warfare means provoking it deliberately. A prominent example is deprivation of food and water during sieges.⁵ Another is destroying foodstuffs and water supplies, and the means to produce and distribute them, to deprive an adversary of their sustenance value. One need not wait until civilians are actually starving, to conclude that a party is deploying starvation as a method of warfare.⁶
- The prohibition applies to starvation of civilians. It does not address starvation of armed forces. However, this does not mean that the prohibition applies only to acts taken with the specific purpose of starving civilians. At minimum, indiscriminate use of starvation as a method of warfare is also prohibited, i.e. where the deprivation of food and water or other things necessary for survival cannot be or is not directed exclusively at armed forces:⁷
 - For example, a besieging party could not justify mass starvation of civilians by claiming that its specific purpose was only to starve enemy fighters who were also in the area.
 - Furthermore, both the besieging and the besieged party must allow civilians to leave and must continue to comply with IHL rules on humanitarian relief and conduct of hostilities, including in relation to any civilians who remain.⁸
- The reference to starvation as a method of warfare does not cover all starvation caused by warfare. Acts that could cause starvation but cannot be described as the use of starvation “as a method of warfare” may still be prohibited by other rules of IHL.⁹
- It is specifically prohibited to attack, destroy, remove or otherwise render useless **objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population**:¹⁰
 - Such objects include foodstuffs, agricultural areas, crops, livestock, drinking water installations and supplies and irrigation works.¹¹ The types of objects covered by the rule are not limited to these examples. For instance, depending on the circumstances, housing, clothing or fuel could also be included, as well as certain types of energy or communications infrastructure on which objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population depend.¹²
 - The prohibition against attacking, destroying, removing, or rendering useless such objects was meant to cover all possible means, including the use of chemicals to contaminate water reservoirs or defoliate crops.¹³ Cyber operations are also covered by this prohibition. The possibility that damage or a disabling effect might eventually be repaired or reversed does not remove either from the scope of the prohibition.¹⁴
 - In international armed conflicts, the prohibition in Article 54(2) of AP I refers to acts taken “for the specific purpose of denying [the objects] for their sustenance value to the civilian population or to the adverse Party, whatever the motive, whether in order to starve out civilians, to cause them to move away, or for any other motive”.¹⁵ In non-international armed conflicts, the prohibition in Article 14 of AP II could be read as referring to acts taken for the purpose of starving civilians.¹⁶ The ICRC’s study on customary IHL formulated the relevant rule, applicable to both international and non-international conflicts, without a purpose

⁵ For a more detailed discussion of the protection of the civilian population during sieges, see ICRC, *International Humanitarian Law and the Challenges of Contemporary Armed Conflicts: Recommitting to Protection in Armed Conflict on the 70th Anniversary of the Geneva Conventions* (2019) ([2019 Challenges Report](#)), pp. 22–25.

⁶ ICRC, [2024 Challenges Report](#), p. 45.

⁷ ICRC, [2024 Challenges Report](#), pp. 45–46.

⁸ See ICRC, [2019 Challenges Report](#), pp. 22–25; ICRC, Customary IHL Study, [commentary on Rule 53](#), p. 188. Besides their obligations to civilians, the parties also have obligations to the wounded and sick and other persons *hors de combat*.

⁹ See ICRC, [2024 Challenges Report](#), p. 46.

¹⁰ Art. 54(2), AP I; Art. 14, AP II; CIHL Study, Rule 54.

¹¹ Art. 52(2), AP I; Art. 14, AP II; CIHL Study, p. 193, [commentary on customary Rule 54](#).

¹² ICRC, [2024 Challenges Report](#), p. 46.

¹³ [Commentary on Article 54](#) of AP I, para. 2101, and [commentary on Article 14](#) of AP II, para. 4801.

¹⁴ ICRC, [2024 Challenges Report](#), p. 46.

¹⁵ Art. 54(2), AP I. See also CIHL Study, pp. 189–190, [commentary on customary Rule 54](#).

¹⁶ Art. 14, AP II (“Starvation of civilians as a method of combat is prohibited. It is therefore prohibited to attack, destroy, remove or render useless, for that purpose...”).

requirement.¹⁷ In any event, the ICRC takes the view that to ensure that the prohibition is fully complied with and realizes its intended protective effect, it is essential that no action, whatever its purpose, be taken against ‘objects indispensable’ wherever the action “may be expected to leave the civilian population with such inadequate food or water as to cause its starvation or force its movement”.¹⁸

- There are two possible exceptions to the prohibition:¹⁹
 - Where the specific object in question is “used by an adverse Party ... as sustenance solely for the members of its armed forces” or “if not as sustenance, then in direct support of military action”, the prohibition may not apply.²⁰ But this exception is limited: even if they are used “in direct support”, IHL specifies that “in no event shall actions against these objects be taken which may be expected to leave the civilian population with such inadequate food or water as to cause its starvation or force its movement”.²¹
 - The second possible exception can arise where a state is defending its national territory against invasion in an international armed conflict. In such circumstances, IHL permits “derogation” from the prohibition “within such territory under its own control where required by imperative military necessity”.²² The words “within such territory” refer to the preceding phrase “its national territory”, and thus confirm that the exception applies only within the state’s own national territory; it does not apply in an adversary’s territory, including occupied territory.²³
- More general rules on **distinction**, **proportionality** and **precautions** in attack provide protection to civilian objects,²⁴ including infrastructure, land and other objects that contribute to civilian food supply. Civilian objects may not be the object of attack.²⁵ The use of indiscriminate means or methods of warfare is also prohibited.²⁶

17 See CIHL Study, Rule 54. See also CIHL Study pp. 190–191, [commentary on customary Rule 54](#), which notes, with regard to international armed conflict, that most military manuals “do not indicate such a requirement and prohibit attacks against objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population as such”. The commentary makes no reference to a possible requirement of purpose in relation to non-international armed conflict.

18 ICRC, [2024 Challenges Report](#), p. 46. See Art. 54(3)(b), AP I, discussed below. See also ICRC, Customary IHL Study, [commentary on Rule 54](#).

19 These exceptions are set out in Art. 54(3) and (5), AP I, and are explained in the CIHL Study’s [commentary on customary Rule 54](#) on pp. 192–193. See also G.H. Aldrich, “Customary international humanitarian law: An interpretation on behalf of the International Committee of the Red Cross”, *British Yearbook of International Law*, Vol. 76, No. 1, 2005, p. 517, and J.M. Henckaerts, “Customary international humanitarian law: A rejoinder to Judge Aldrich”, *ibid.*, pp. 527 and 528.

20 The application of this exception in international armed conflicts is explicitly specified by Art. 54(3), AP I. Its application in non-international armed conflicts is less clear. No text similar to that of Art. 54(3), AP I appears in Art. 14, AP II. However, the wording of Art. 14 suggests that the prohibition refers to acts carried out for the purpose of starving civilians. Acts falling within the exception specified in Art. 54(3) AP I, i.e. targeting objects used “as sustenance solely for members of ... armed forces” or acts against objects used “in direct support of military action” that cannot “be expected to leave the civilian population with such inadequate food or water as to cause its starvation or force its movement”, would presumably not have the purpose of starving civilians. Acts falling within these narrowly defined circumstances may consequently be consistent with the prohibition in Art. 14, as the 1987 [commentary on Article 14](#) appears to suggest in paras 4806–4807, pp. 1458–1459. On the other hand, the 2005 CIHL Study’s [commentary on customary Rule 54](#) doubted – on p. 192 – whether this exception applied in non-international armed conflict as a matter of customary IHL, “because Article 14 of Additional Protocol II does not provide for it and there is no practice supporting it”.

21 Art. 54(3)(b), AP I. The [commentary on Article 54](#) of AP I gives examples of the use “in direct support of military action”, such as “bombarding a food-producing area to prevent the enemy from advancing through it, or attacking a food-storage barn which is being used by the enemy for cover or as an arms depot” (para. 2110 on pp. 656–657).

22 Art. 54(5), AP I and its [commentary](#), paras 2116–2123 on pp. 658–659. Such derogations are often referred to as ‘scorched earth’ practices. The references to “the vital requirements ... in defence” and “imperative military necessity” underscore the extremely limited circumstances in which such derogation might be permissible. No similar exception appears to apply in situations of non-international armed conflict: see [commentary on Article 14 of AP II](#), paras 4808–4811 on p. 1459, and the CIHL Study’s [commentary on customary Rule 54](#), pp. 192–193.

23 Art. 54(5), AP I and its [commentary](#), paras 2119 and 2123 on pp. 658–659.

24 Arts 48, 51(4), 51(5)(b), 52(2), and 57, AP I; CIHL Study, Rules 7 to 15.

25 Art. 52, AP I; CIHL Study, Rules 7, 8, 9 and 10.

26 Art. 51(4)(b) and (c), AP I; CIHL Study, Rules 11 and 71.

- IHL prohibits or restricts the use of a broad range of weapons that can have a widespread and long-lasting adverse impact on food security. These include prohibitions against the use of **poison and biological and chemical weapons**,²⁷ restrictions on the use of **herbicides** as a weapon,²⁸ and prohibitions and restrictions on the use of **anti-personnel mines**,²⁹ **cluster munitions**³⁰ and **nuclear weapons**.³¹
- No part of the **natural environment** may be attacked, given its underlying civilian character, unless, in specific circumstances, a part of it has become a military objective.³² The use of methods or means of warfare that are intended, or may be expected, to cause widespread, long-term and severe damage to the natural environment is also prohibited.³³ The natural environment includes natural objects that are or may be the result of human intervention, such as foodstuffs, agricultural areas, drinking water and livestock.
- **Dams, dykes and nuclear plants** are considered civilian objects and consequently enjoy general protection from attack; furthermore, even if they could, in certain circumstances, become military objectives, these objects may not be the object of attack if such attacks may cause the release of dangerous forces that would cause severe losses among the civilian population.³⁴ Besides the direct loss of lives, the release of dangerous forces might cause the contamination of land and water supplies, destroy livestock, and affect atmosphere and climate, and thus increase the risk of food insecurity and famine among the civilian population.
- IHL imposes significant restrictions in relation to **sieges** and encirclements. Civilians must not be trapped in sieges, and both parties must allow civilians to leave a besieged area. For any civilians, or wounded or sick persons, who remain, IHL rules on starvation and on relief operations are designed to ensure – in combination – that they are not deprived of supplies essential to their survival.³⁵
- Naval **blockades** are prohibited if their purpose is to starve the civilian population or deny it other objects essential for its survival. Even a blockade that does not have this purpose will be prohibited if the damage to the civilian population is, or may be expected to be, excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated from it.³⁶ Furthermore, IHL requires states to permit free passage of food and other essential supplies where necessary to the civilian population of the blockaded territory.³⁷
- The prohibition against **pillage**, and other rules concerning public and private property, can also play a role in restricting or prohibiting the destruction, exploitation, or seizure of food and water and of property used for producing and distributing food and water.³⁸

27 CIHL Study, Rules 71 to 74; and, among others: Art. 23(a), [Hague Regulations](#); the [Biological Weapons Convention](#); and the [Chemical Weapons Convention](#).

28 CIHL Study, Rule 76.

29 CIHL Study, Rules 81 to 83; Protocol on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Mines, Booby-Traps and Other Devices as amended on 3 May 1996 ([Protocol II to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons](#)); and the [Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty](#). See also the Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War ([Protocol V to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons](#)).

30 CIHL Study, pp. 249–250, [commentary on customary Rule 71](#); and the [Convention on Cluster Munitions](#).

31 International Court of Justice, [Advisory Opinion on the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons](#); and the [Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons](#).

32 Art. 52(1), AP I; CIHL Study, Rules 7 and 43a. See also ICRC, [Guidelines on the Protection of the Natural Environment in Armed Conflict](#), 2020.

33 Arts 35(3) and 55(1), AP I; CIHL Study, Rule 45.

34 Art. 56(1), AP I; Art. 15, AP II; CIHL Study, Rule 42.

35 [Commentary on Article 54 of AP I](#), paras 2092 to 2096; CIHL Study, p. 188, [commentary on customary Rule 53](#); ICRC, [Challenges Report 2019](#), pp. 22–25. There is some debate on whether, in addition, the overall effects of a siege on the civilian population are subject to a requirement of proportionality: see, for example, Gloria Gaggioli, “[Are sieges prohibited under contemporary IHL?](#)” (30 January 2019); Maxime Nijis, “[Humanizing siege warfare: Applying the principle of proportionality to sieges](#)”, *International Review of the Red Cross (IRRC)*, Vol. 102, No. 914, December 2021, pp. 683–704.

36 [San Remo Manual on International Law Applicable to Armed Conflicts at Sea](#), Rule 102; CIHL Study, p. 189, [commentary on customary Rule 53](#).

37 [San Remo Manual on International Law Applicable to Armed Conflicts at Sea](#), Rule 103; CIHL Study p. 189, [commentary on customary Rule 53](#).

38 CIHL Study, Rules 50 to 52; and, among others: Arts 23(g), 28, 46, 47, and 55, [Hague Regulations](#); Arts 33 and 55, [Fourth Geneva Convention](#); and Art. 4(2)(g), AP II.

ENSURING ADEQUATE SUPPLIES OF FOOD AND WATER

Certain rules of IHL reflect a broader assumption that each party to an armed conflict has primary responsibility for ensuring that the basic needs of the population under its control are met, including adequate supplies of food and water.

For states, such an obligation can be seen as a more general corollary of state sovereignty.³⁹ It is also recognized in international human rights law.⁴⁰ The application of such an obligation in the context of armed conflict, for both states and non-state armed groups, can also be inferred from the object and purpose of IHL, and from the broader obligation to treat humanely persons who are in the power of a party to armed conflict.⁴¹

IHL provisions that expressly impose positive legal obligations to ensure the availability of food and water accordingly focus mainly on situations where such responsibilities are less likely to be recognized or fulfilled in practice. These include occupation, in relation to the whole population of an occupied territory,⁴² and detention, in relation to persons deprived of their liberty or freedom of movement wherever they are held (prisoners of war, civilian internees, and criminal detainees and prisoners).⁴³

The assumption that each party has a responsibility to ensure the basic needs of the population under its control is also reflected in the rules on access for humanitarian relief, described in more detail below.

³⁹ Felix Schwendimann, “The legal framework of humanitarian access in armed conflict”, *IRRC*, Vol. 93, No. 884, December 2011, pp. 993–1008, and particularly p. 996.

⁴⁰ See, for example, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, Arts 3 and 25; *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, Art. 6 and Human Rights Committee, *General Comment no. 36*, paras 26 and 64; *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, Art. 11, and Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, General Comments Nos 12 and 15.

⁴¹ Tristan Ferraro, “Relief schemes and the delivery of humanitarian activities in situations of armed conflict: The ICRC’s perspective”, in Fausto Pocar (ed.), *The Additional Protocols 40 Years Later: New Conflicts, New Actors, New Perspectives* (International Institute of Humanitarian Law, Sanremo, 2018), pp. 192–203, and particularly 194. See also more generally, “Aide Memoire: For the consideration of issues pertaining to the protection of civilians in armed conflict”, annexed to UN Security Council Presidential Statement *S/PRST/2018/18* (21 September 2018), Part I.A. referring to “the responsibility of parties to armed conflict to ... respect, protect, and meet the basic needs of civilians within their effective control”; and UN General Assembly Resolution *46/182* (1991), Annex (“Guiding Principles’ on Humanitarian Assistance”), para. 4. The Resolution and Guiding Principles are reaffirmed annually: see, for example, UN General Assembly Resolution *76/124* (2021), Preamble. The preamble to UN Security Council Resolution *2417* (2018) also refers to “the parties’ obligations related to ... meeting the basic needs of the civilian population within their territory or under their effective control” and reaffirms “the primary responsibility of States to protect the population throughout their whole territory”.

⁴² Art. 55, Fourth Geneva Convention.

⁴³ Art. 7, Hague Regulations; Arts 25–32 and 125, *Third Geneva Convention*; Arts 76, 85, 87, 89–92 and 142, Fourth Geneva Convention; Art. 5(1)(b), AP II; CIHL Study, Rule 118. See also Art. 39, *Fourth Geneva Convention*, on the obligation to provide support to nationals of an adversary who remain in a state’s own territory, and to their dependents, if security measures prevent them from supporting themselves.

ACCESS FOR HUMANITARIAN RELIEF

Humanitarian relief is an important means of preventing and addressing hunger in conflict-affected areas when the needs of the population have not been met, or would not be met otherwise.⁴⁴ IHL rules on access for humanitarian relief again assume that parties to conflict have primary responsibility for ensuring that adequate supplies of food, water and other necessities are available to populations under their control; however, these rules also recognize that parties may not always be able or willing to meet these needs.

IHL therefore recognizes the need for humanitarian relief in certain circumstances.⁴⁵ It provides that impartial humanitarian organizations may offer to carry out humanitarian activities.⁴⁶ Humanitarian relief may be most urgently required when the basic needs of the civilian population are not being fulfilled, but IHL does not require that an acute food or other crisis already exists before offers of humanitarian relief can be made and accepted.⁴⁷ Relief efforts can be more effective if impartial humanitarian organizations are able to assign personnel and have materials in place well before the situation develops into a severe food crisis.⁴⁸

Humanitarian relief activities are generally subject to the consent of the conflict party concerned.⁴⁹ However, consent must not be refused on arbitrary or unlawful grounds.⁵⁰ When a party to conflict is unable itself to guarantee the availability of food of adequate quality and in sufficient quantities, resulting in the starvation of the population under its control, refusal to consent would constitute an unlawful denial of access under IHL.⁵¹

When consent is obtained, the parties to an armed conflict, and all other states concerned, must allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief, subject to their right of control.⁵² Humanitarian personnel delivering relief are civilians and may not be the object of attack.⁵³

Parties must ensure that the manner in which they conduct hostilities is compatible with their obligations to ensure the supply of food, water and other essential items to populations under their control and to allow and facilitate humanitarian relief.⁵⁴

⁴⁴ See *ICRC Challenges Report 2015*, “Humanitarian access and assistance”, pp. 26–30.

⁴⁵ CIHL Study, Rule 55; Arts 10, 23, 30, 59, 108–109, Fourth Geneva Convention; Arts 70–71, AP I; Art. 18(2), AP II. See also *San Remo Manual on International Law Applicable to Armed Conflicts at Sea*, Rule 103.

⁴⁶ See, for example, Article 3 common to the 1949 Geneva Conventions, and Common Article 9/9/9/10; CIHL Study, Rule 55.

⁴⁷ Ferraro, footnote 31, pp. 195–196.

⁴⁸ Ferraro, p. 196.

⁴⁹ Common Article 9/9/9/10; Art. 18(2), AP II.

⁵⁰ See CIHL Study, p. 197, *commentary on customary Rule 55*; Ferraro, pp. 200–201.

⁵¹ See CIHL Study, p. 197, *commentary on customary Rule 55*; Ferraro, p. 201. See also *commentary on Article 70*, AP I, para. 2805 and *commentary on Article 18*, AP II, para. 4885. Article 8(2)(b)(xxv) of the *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court*, in describing the war crime of starvation in international armed conflict, refers among other elements, to “wilfully impeding relief supplies as provided for under the Geneva Conventions”, and the (not yet in force) amendment adding *Article 8(2)(e)(xix)* to the list of war crimes applicable in non-international armed conflict similarly refers to “willfully impeding relief supplies”.

⁵² Art. 23, Fourth Geneva Convention; Art. 70(2), AP I; CIHL Study, Rules 55 and 56. Ferraro, pp. 201–203.

⁵³ CIHL Study, Rules 1 and 31.

⁵⁴ ICRC, *2024 Challenges Report*, pp. 47–48.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

- [Commentary on Article 54 of Additional Protocol I](#)
- [Commentary on Article 14 of Additional Protocol II](#)
- Study of Customary International Humanitarian Law, Rules [53](#), [54](#) and [55](#)
- ICRC, [International Humanitarian Law and the Challenges of Contemporary Armed Conflicts: Building a Culture of Compliance for IHL to Protect Humanity in Today's and Future Conflicts](#) (2024)
- ICRC [Statement to the UN Security Council Open Debate on Conflict and Food Security](#) (11 March 2021)
- ICRC [Q&A and lexicon on humanitarian access](#) (2014)
- UN [Security Council Resolution 2417](#) (2018) [on armed conflict and conflict-induced food insecurity and the threat of famine]
- UN [Security Council Resolution 2573](#) (2021) [on protection of objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population.]

MISSION

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is an impartial, neutral and independent organization whose exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence and to provide them with assistance. The ICRC also endeavours to prevent suffering by promoting and strengthening humanitarian law and universal humanitarian principles. Established in 1863, the ICRC is at the origin of the Geneva Conventions and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. It directs and coordinates the international activities conducted by the Movement in armed conflicts and other situations of violence.

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