

IMPLEMENTING IHL OBLIGATIONS TO PREVENT AND RESPOND TO SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN ARMED CONFLICT



ADVANCING WOMEN, PEACE, AND SECURITY AND GENDER
PERSPECTIVES IN INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW:
MOVING FROM ANALYSIS TO IMPLEMENTATION

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SUMMARY

Sexual violence remains a persistent feature of armed conflict despite its clear prohibition under international humanitarian law (IHL) and states' commitments under the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Agenda. Drawing on peer-to-peer discussions convened by the ICRC and DCAF, this policy brief offers **practical recommendations for defence policymakers, military commanders and planners, legal advisers, gender advisers, and training institutions**. It calls for the prevention of and response to sexual violence to be embedded across military structures, doctrine, and operations, with clear responsibilities assigned throughout the chain of command. This requires translating IHL obligations into concrete military practice through doctrine, standing orders, rules of engagement, operational plans, standard operating procedures, and training that equips personnel to prevent, recognize, and respond to sexual violence in armed conflict. The brief further underscores the need to integrate prevention into operational planning from the outset, so that risks are anticipated early and addressed through the commander's intent, force posture, mission design, and operational decision-making. Stronger collaboration between legal advisers and gender advisers could help ensure coherent, practical advice to commanders and support implementation.

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BACKGROUND

‘The topic of sexual violence is embedded within broader IHL compliance, military ethics, and professional military identity. How do we ensure that prevention of and response to sexual violence is part of how a soldier identifies as a military professional?’

— Military expert

International humanitarian law (IHL) prohibits sexual violence during both international and non-international armed conflicts. Acts of sexual violence committed in connection with an armed conflict are serious violations of IHL and can constitute war crimes. States must investigate the alleged perpetration of war crimes and, if appropriate, prosecute the suspects. Sexual violence is, moreover, prohibited by other bodies of international law, including international human rights law and international criminal law.



IHL also contains obligations that contribute to the prevention of and response to sexual violence in armed conflict. An example is the obligation for parties to a conflict to respect and ensure respect for rules of IHL, including the prohibition of sexual violence, by their armed forces and others acting on their instructions or under their direction or control. There is also the obligation to provide the wounded and sick, which include victims/survivors of sexual violence, with the medical care and attention required by their condition to the fullest extent practicable, with the least possible delay, and without discrimination.

While the international legal framework is well established, the integration of international law obligations relating to sexual violence into national legal and policy frameworks, including into military doctrine, guidelines, and procedures, is critical to ensuring prevention and the protection of victims/survivors. In 2013, for example, over 120 states endorsed a commitment to ensure that national military doctrine and training are in accordance with international law to enable more effective prevention of and response to sexual violence in conflict.¹ The UN Security Council's WPS Agenda and states' WPS National Action Plans can also be important vehicles for militaries' implementation of IHL obligations concerning sexual violence.

Despite its prohibition under international law and states' public commitments to address it, sexual violence remains endemic during wartime and is often used as a strategy or tactic of war.² At the macro level, the normalization of harmful gender attitudes and behaviours during peacetime is a factor that increases the risk of sexual violence during war.³ The proliferation of weapons is also a key causal driver for sexual violence by enabling coercion, intimidation, and physical harm.⁴ In parallel, dehumanizing rhetoric and harmful information have been amplified and accelerated by the spread of new technologies,⁵ fuelling the perpetration of all forms of violence, including sexual violence, while normalizing unsupportive community behaviours.⁶

Is there a reliable estimate of the prevalence of sexual violence in armed conflict globally?

Owing to factors including stigma, fear of retaliation, inaccessibility of services, and lack of safe reporting mechanisms, reliable quantitative data to support a global estimate of the number of victims/survivors of sexual violence in current armed conflicts remain limited. The challenges posed by underreporting are further compounded by difficulties in comparing datasets that use different methodologies. The scale and urgency of the topic, however, are clear by any measure.

Based on trends in current and historical data, and known drivers of underreporting, all front-line actors should assume sexual violence is likely to occur in armed conflict settings unless there is robust evidence to the contrary. By assuming occurrence, front-line actors – including militaries – can proactively incorporate a minimum response to prevent and address sexual violence from the outset of a crisis, rather than delaying care until a 'threshold' of individual cases is met. Even where official prevalence statistics may be limited, prevention and risk mitigation measures can still be implemented based on data from several sources, including analyses of patterns of violence using open-source information, feedback from affected communities, and figures on the uptake of health and social services. Proactive measures are key to ensuring all victims/survivors receive adequate care and, in some cases, that harm can be prevented.

At the operational level, the prevalence of sexual violence during armed conflict may be influenced by a variety of factors, including weak command-control structure,⁷ relationship with local populations,⁸ composition of fighting forces,⁹ and the oscillation of conflict dynamics. Armed forces of states with higher training capacities and stronger military oversight, for example, are less likely to perpetrate sexual violence.¹⁰ Research suggests that restraint is linked to various factors, including the structure, composition, and motivations of armed actors.¹¹

Many armed forces have taken steps to address sexual violence in codes of conduct, doctrine, education, and/or training over the last two decades. For some, their focus is on sexual violence in armed conflict in their own territory; for others, the focus is overseas operations or as an aspect of deterrence and defence. Aside from analysis of peacekeeping contexts, however, there is little systematic lesson-sharing between states concerning approaches and lessons identified. In an effort to facilitate peer-to-peer learning and enhance the exchange of good practices at the operational level, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF) convened a full-day expert roundtable on 3 December 2025.¹² The event brought together 23 military and civilian experts from Africa, the Americas, Asia-Pacific, and Europe to discuss how doctrine and guidance, training, and military legal advisers can strengthen the implementation of IHL obligations for better prevention of sexual violence.

In this brief, the ICRC and DCAF present expert recommendations from the roundtable that can help guide militaries in their efforts to implement their obligations under IHL for better prevention of and response to sexual violence in situations of armed conflict. The brief is centred around four overarching recommendations for defence policymakers, training and education institutions, commanders and planners, and legal advisers and gender advisers.

EXPERT RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1: FOR DEFENCE POLICYMAKERS

Institutionalize the prevention of sexual violence across all levels of the chain of command to ensure consistent application of policy and doctrine

Doctrine and directives should clearly articulate responsibilities concerning sexual violence prevention and response across the whole chain of command and in all instruments that guide military action, including defence policies, command and leadership guidance, operational planning and evaluation, as well as operational orders through standing orders, rules of engagement, operational plans (OPLANs) and standard operating procedures (SOPs). National and institutional WPS and gender frameworks can also play a useful role by focusing on *how* legal obligations are implemented within security institutions.

RECOMMENDATION 2: FOR TRAINING AND EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Promote front-line prevention by bridging the gap between ‘why’ (doctrine) and ‘how’ (training)

Effective prevention of sexual violence requires that the legal prohibition against it is known, accepted, and consistently upheld by weapon bearers. This means bridging the gap between weapon bearers’ knowledge of the relevant legal obligations and their understanding of how to uphold them on the battlefield. Prevention should be incorporated into training for all units through appropriate messaging and scenario-based training that engages with group-thought and socialization processes driving the perpetration of sexual violence.

RECOMMENDATION 3: FOR COMMANDERS AND PLANNERS

Integrate the prevention of sexual violence into operational planning from day one

Preventive measures must be considered early and integrated into operational planning so as to inform the commander’s intent for any relevant mission. In developing rules of engagement, for example, consideration should be given to whether it is appropriate to authorize the use of force to prevent or halt sexual violence. The possibility that sexual violence will occur during operations should not come as a surprise to personnel at any level, but should be anticipated and addressed throughout the various stages of planning and preparation. This is particularly relevant for complex missions in areas with contact with high-risk populations (e.g. detainees or local populations living on the front lines), as well as during large-scale conflict preparedness.

RECOMMENDATION 4: FOR LEGAL ADVISERS AND GENDER ADVISERS

Strengthen collaboration to enhance the coherence and effectiveness of advice provided to commanders on the prevention of sexual violence

Legal advisers (LEGADs) and gender advisers (GENADs) bring distinct but complementary knowledge and skills. When legal authority and gender expertise are brought together in a coordinated and mutually reinforcing manner, military decision-making is better equipped to anticipate risks, uphold IHL obligations, and translate commitments into operational practice. This collaboration can ensure expertise from both domains is well integrated in the design and implementation of operations. Opportunities should be explored for LEGADs and GENADs to be trained together on gender and sexual violence and to collaborate in developing and using monitoring tools.

These recommendations are further explored in the following sections to determine how military decision-makers and experts across the chain of command can practically reduce the risks of sexual violence in war.



1. INSTITUTIONALIZE THE PREVENTION OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE ACROSS ALL LEVELS OF THE CHAIN OF COMMAND

Sexual violence is clearly prohibited under IHL, and implementation of and compliance with this prohibition are critical to ensuring protection of victims of armed conflict. Military policy and doctrine should therefore reflect these international obligations and leaders should be held accountable for these commitments.

The institutionalization of gender perspectives through policy and doctrine is fundamental to sustained prevention of and response to sexual violence in conflict.¹³ Without such institutionalization, efforts remain vulnerable to changes in leadership, shifting operational priorities, and evolving political priorities. Sexual violence prevention and response should be directed and guided through all levels of defence policy and planning — from command and leadership guidance to operational planning and evaluation tools, standing orders, rules of engagement, OPLANs, and SOPs. WPS National Action Plans and defence WPS and gender strategies, too, could be better used to outline specific actions to mitigate sexual violence and other forms of gendered harm in armed conflict, as well as prompt the revision of relevant military doctrine, manuals, and directives. From the perspective of preventing perpetration of sexual violence, codes of conduct, military values, and professional standards — where supported by disciplinary processes — are essential tools for translating abstract legal obligations into concrete expectations of conduct for military personnel.

Integrating sexual violence into Commander's Critical Information Requirements (CCIRs)

CCIRs are a standard part of structured processes for all military operational planning, also known as the Military Planning Process, which support a commander's situational understanding and awareness. Based on the information provided, commanders can then identify and approve critical information requirements to answer knowledge gaps, evaluate a situation, confirm or deny planning assumptions, and develop a successful approach to accomplish military objectives. Rather than creating parallel information streams, militaries can integrate sexual violence into their CCIRs to ensure that possible or assessed risks of sexual violence are understood as an operationally relevant and mission-critical data point of which commanders should be aware.

Even when militaries have embedded a gender perspective and/or specific instructions on the prevention of sexual violence within their doctrine, effective implementation of this doctrine is rarely monitored and/or evaluated. Effective military prevention of and response to sexual violence in conflict should be supported by robust monitoring and evaluation. Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should include evaluation of gender and sexual violence training — assessing impact, compliance, and wider operational outcomes. After-action reviews, mission evaluations, and training assessments are essential for evaluating the effectiveness of preventive measures and ensuring that commitments made in doctrine and training are translated into practice.

2. PROMOTE FRONT-LINE PREVENTION BY BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN ‘WHY’ (DOCTRINE) AND ‘HOW’ (TRAINING)

Effective prevention of sexual violence requires bridging the gap between international legal obligations and weapon bearers’ daily realities. For rules relating to sexual violence to be known, accepted, and consistently upheld in practice, training and leadership gaps must be addressed.¹⁴ This requires that militaries incorporate front-line prevention into training for all units as well as across career stages and command levels. Evidence shows that scenario-based training, for example, is particularly useful in helping units understand how to react to the disclosure of sexual violence, support victims/survivors, and address behaviours and attitudes that are contributing to perpetration.

In 2026, for example, the Swiss Armed Forces conducted a pilot of combined IHL and Human Security training for a career officers’ course at the Armed Forces College. The combined training clearly situates topics like the protection of civilians, prevention of sexual violence, and children in armed conflict within a clear legal framework, while linking legal obligations to operational decisionmaking. By deliberately bridging the legal and operational spheres, the training ensures that legal norms are understood not as abstract constraints but as practical tools that shape conduct, planning, and command responsibility in contemporary operations. At the same time, it enhances understanding of modern warfare by highlighting how adversaries can instrumentalize these violations as tactics of war, thereby strengthening participants’ ability to anticipate, identify, and counter such strategies.

Evidence from the ICRC’s Prevention of Sexual Violence Programme

Over the last decade the ICRC has conducted operational research to improve understanding of what works when it comes to preventing violations of IHL, including sexual violence. In 2022, the ICRC launched the Prevention of Sexual Violence Programme, a multicountry, multidisciplinary, and results-oriented programme that aims to prompt behavioural change for improved prevention.

Based on its engagement with state and non-state armed forces, the ICRC has found that, to be effective, discussions about prohibitions on sexual violence must be connected to the realities of the battlefield, the experiences of weapon bearers, and their own understanding of what they can do to prevent sexual violence. For example, successful prevention of sexual violence is highly contingent upon commanders’ commitments to reinforce key messages on the topic before and after training, as well as their willingness to integrate the prohibition on sexual violence in their rules, regulations, and procedures. This is complicated by training and trust gaps, whereby less than 15 per cent of all military instructors who have received training on the topic have trained their troops in turn, and less than 68 per cent of the rank and file believe their commanders would stop sexual violence if it were happening.

Training plays a decisive role in shaping the mentalities, behaviours, and professional identities that determine how armed forces address sexual violence, both internally and externally, in both peace and conflict. Training environments, formal and nonformal, are spaces in which professional identity can be formed, reinforced, and internalized. Leadership buy-in, however, is critical to ensuring training content is absorbed and actioned. When accompanied by visible leadership commitment, engagement, and enforcement, training can reshape deeper troop identities as ‘communities of service’, grounded in shared responsibility, discipline, and respect, making the prevention of and response to sexual violence a matter of professional integrity. Integrating sexual violence prevention and response in armed conflict into training indicators and operational evaluation processes can also further reinforce command accountability and support continuous collective improvement. Together, these practices contribute to countering individualized misconceptions about why sexual violence is occurring and shifting the focus towards addressing the root causes of this harm.

3. INTEGRATE THE PREVENTION OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE INTO OPERATIONAL PLANNING FROM THE OUTSET

Effective prevention of sexual violence requires reframing sexual violence as an operational risk and its prevention as being part of the responsibility of commanders, rather than as external to military operations or limited to individual criminal misconduct. Clear articulation of responsibilities across the chain of command, including in rules of engagement, operational planning, and detention procedures, is essential. Prevention should be incorporated early in mission design to ensure it informs commander intent and operational execution.

It is essential to connect the prevention of and response to sexual violence to the language and priorities that guide military decision-making. This can be done by, for example, explaining how sexual violence fuels instability, erodes civilian trust in security forces, weakens local cooperation, and can disrupt intelligence and information flows. Framing sexual violence in armed conflict as a phenomenon that undermines mission success, destabilizes operational environments, threatens civilian resilience, and risks ‘moral injury’ to personnel can make its prevention and response more intelligible and actionable within military planning processes.

In addition to direct risks of sexual violence, commanders must consider the indirect or secondary protection risks that military activities, force posture, or troop deployments may generate for the civilian population. For example, the location and disposition of military positions, bases, checkpoints, or troop concentrations may alter civilian movement patterns and coping mechanisms. As a result, civilians – and particularly those who may have specific vulnerabilities – may deliberately avoid routes or areas situated near military objectives out of fear of being affected by hostilities or becoming collateral damage in the event of an attack against those positions. This may push them to rely on more isolated, less secure, or otherwise higher-risk routes and areas to carry out their daily activities, thereby increasing their exposure to sexual violence and other forms of abuse.

Using sex – and age-disaggregated data to inform operational planning

Sex – and age-disaggregated data can help to enhance sexual violence prevention during operational planning processes. Once data is collected, analysed, and integrated into planning, it should be communicated in an actionable manner to both commanders and relevant personnel involved in the operation. Disaggregated data can, for example, enable armed forces to detect trends and assess differential impacts on women, men, girls, and boys, and tailor preventive measures accordingly. Data collection and use can be enhanced using practical instruments such as reporting cards and gender analysis tools, as well as early-warning and threat-analysis tools. These provide structured methodologies for assessing risks, vulnerabilities, and power dynamics within operational environments.

Context-specific information gathering on the civilian population, including sex – and age-disaggregated data, must be exclusively for the purpose of compliance with IHL obligations regarding the protection of civilians. In addition, a lack of specific data on civilians in the theatre of operations does not preclude generalized guidance from commanders using evidence-based trends and patterns regarding the inequalities and risks facing women and girls in conflict-affected contexts. Key trends of gender inequality are well documented, and corrective measures based on general trends should be further explored. Data collection must be accompanied by clear survivor-centred protocols that ensure appropriate protection of victims/survivors and witnesses of sexual violence in ways that prioritize their needs and well-being and reinforce their autonomy.

Integrating such considerations into operational planning, force disposition, and civilian harm-mitigation measures could contribute to a more comprehensive prevention approach. This can be accomplished through practical measures such as integrating gender analysis into intelligence, early warning, and threat assessment and collecting and/or using sex – and age-disaggregated data. Operational tools to mitigate sexual violence risks can also include mixed patrols as well as proactive engagement with local communities and leaders. Military personnel can ensure systemic availability of medical referral pathways and response tools.

4. STRENGTHEN GENAD-LEGAD COLLABORATION TO ENHANCE COHERENCE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF ADVICE PROVIDED TO COMMANDERS ON THE PREVENTION OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Across contexts, the effectiveness of doctrine to prevent sexual violence depends heavily on institutional capacity and the credibility of relevant expertise within military structures. LEGADs and GENADs bring distinct but complementary knowledge and skills. When legal authority and gender expertise are brought together in a coordinated and mutually reinforcing manner, military decision-making is better equipped to anticipate risks, uphold IHL obligations, and translate commitments into operational practice. Both should therefore play a role in ensuring gender perspectives are integrated into planning processes from the start and have broad access to commanders and planning teams, including various battle rhythm meetings, to influence decision-making processes.

Combining LEGAD-GENAD expertise in the theatre of operations

LEGADs and GENADs are often siloed, which can hinder their ability to inject complementary expertise during the planning and conduct of operations for better prevention of sexual violence. In some contexts, militaries have made concerted efforts to reinforce LEGAD-GENAD collaboration by adapting their organizational models and even physical spaces. In the Netherlands, for example, LEGADs and GENADs share offices, which fosters regular dialogue and cooperation. Additionally, all special advisers – including LEGADs and GENADs – are part of a Special Advisory Group or Commanders Advisory Group where advice to commanders is discussed and pre-coordinated.

In Switzerland, the Swiss Armed Forces' Human Security (HUMSEC) Advisor also acts as a GENAD and covers all concerns related to civilians, including the reciprocal effects between civilians and military operations as well as the importance of engaging civilians as a disaggregated entity rather than a homogeneous group. To enhance LEGAD/GENAD coordination, the HUMSEC Advisor participates in two to three sync meetings per year with the IHL team and J9 Joint Operations Command, where current projects and training needs are discussed. This is combined with regular exchanges and consultations on topics of shared interest, including the prevention of sexual violence.

Given their specific role, authority, access to senior command, and position within military structures, LEGADs can be well placed to identify legal and operational risks, including those arising from patterns of military presence, detention practices, or interactions with local communities. They also play an important role in reinforcing legal obligations and reminding commanders of the legal consequences they will face if their troops perpetrate sexual violence (i.e. the 'stick approach'). It is therefore critical that LEGADs be better trained on gender and the prevention of sexual violence.

With appropriate gender training, LEGADs can support the early integration of sexual violence prevention and response considerations into operational planning and civil-military cooperation. This role becomes especially important in contexts where sexual violence prevention and response are not perceived as central to the mission mandate and GENADs are unevenly integrated into command structures. LEGADs' proximity to commanders and planning teams, as well as their established authority within military decision-making processes, allows LEGADs to raise concerns related to sexual violence in terms that resonate with command responsibility, legal compliance, and operational risk.

GENADs and Gender Focal Points can also play a key role in supporting gender mainstreaming within military practice, but their ability to influence operations depends heavily on the quality of their training and their institutional standing. The composition of gender expertise also matters. In many armed forces, GENAD roles are predominantly occupied by women, which can inadvertently reinforce the perception that gender perspectives — and by extension sexual violence — are primarily 'women's issues'. This perception can undermine efforts to embed gender considerations as a shared military and mission-critical responsibility.

CONCLUSION

Preventing and responding to sexual violence in armed conflict requires sustained commitment across all levels of the chain of command. Senior leaders must continue to integrate relevant IHL obligations into military doctrine, orders, and directives. At the same time, trainers and commanders play a fundamental role in influencing behavioural and norm change to prevent sexual violence long before frontline units reach the battlefield.

Integrating prevention and response measures from the earliest stages of operational planning requires complementary gender and legal expertise. This includes incorporating assessments of sexual violence risks into operational monitoring and evaluation frameworks. Systematic evaluation of both training and operational outcome — particularly the efficacy of preventive measures — is essential and should be treated as a component of due diligence. Together, these measures can anchor prevention and response to sexual violence within routine military practice, strengthening the protection of conflict-affected communities.



NOTES

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- 2** UN Secretary General, *Conflict-Related Sexual Violence: Report of the Secretary-General*, S/2025/389 (2025).
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- 11** ICRC, *Engaging with State Armed Forces to Prevent Sexual Violence: A Toolkit for ICRC Staff on How to Engage State Armed Forces in Dialogue on Preventing Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict*, ICRC, Geneva, February 2020, <https://www.icrc.org/en/publication/4400-engaging-state-armed-forces-prevent-sexual-violence-toolkit-icrc-staff-how-engage>. '59% of 177 armed actors engaged in conflicts in twenty African countries from 2000 to 2009 were found not to have engaged in rape or other forms of sexual violence.' R. Nordås, 'Sexual violence in African conflicts', PRIO/CSCW Policy Brief No. 1, Peace Research Institute Oslo, Oslo, 2011, <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/missing-peace/Ragnhild-Nordas.pdf>.
- 12** The expert roundtable constitutes part of DCAF's project to 'move gender and IHL from analysis to implementation' and advance the integration of gender perspectives and WPS commitments into IHL, supported by the Government of Liechtenstein. This project has established a new IHL Community of Practice for WPS to foster dialogue and collaboration across sectors, is convening a series of expert roundtables, and will develop a repository of model language and good practice aiming to inform the revision of military doctrine.
- 13** For wider guidance on the institutionalization of a gender perspective in military operations, see ICRC, Swedish Red Cross, and Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations, *International Humanitarian Law and a Gender Perspective in the Planning and Conduct of Military Operations*, ICRC, Geneva, 2024, <https://shop.icrc.org/international-humanitarian-law-and-a-gender-perspective-in-the-planning-and-conduct-of-military-operations-pdf-en.html>, https://www.icrc.org/sites/default/files/2025-07/Promising_Pathways_PSVP_2024.pdf.
- 14** For more information on how gaps in the training of military trainers, as well as in trust between commanders and their troops, can pose a challenge to the effective prevention of sexual violence, see ICRC, *Promising Pathways for the Prevention of Sexual Violence*, ICRC, Geneva, 2024: https://www.icrc.org/sites/default/files/2025-07/Promising_Pathways_PSVP_2024.pdf.

GLOSSARY

Gender: The roles, behaviours, activities, attributes, and norms that a given society at a given time considers appropriate for men and women. These attributes, opportunities, and relationships are socially constructed and learned through socialization processes. They are context – and time-specific and changeable.

Gender perspective: An approach which takes into consideration how a particular situation impacts the needs of men, women, boys, and girls, as well as considers how particular experiences affect them differently.

Sex: The biological and physiological characteristics (chromosomes, hormones, reproductive organs) of male, female, or intersex individuals.

Sexual violence: An act of a sexual nature committed against any person under circumstances that are coercive. These include force, threat of force, or coercion caused, for example, by fear of violence, duress, detention, psychological oppression, or abuse of power, as well as situations where the perpetrator takes advantage of a coercive environment or a person's incapacity to give genuine consent. Examples of sexual violence include, but are not limited to, rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, and enforced sterilization. When committed in the context of, and in connection with, an armed conflict, sexual violence is a violation of IHL.

Victim/survivor: The combined term 'victim/survivor' acknowledges that individuals who have been affected by sexual violence may self-identify differently, depending on their unique experiences and socio-cultural environments. In some contexts, for example, greater emphasis is placed on the term 'victim' as a legal designation that acknowledges a violation was committed; it also recognizes that not all individuals will survive the experience of sexual violence. Others may find this term disempowering or stigmatizing, and instead prefer to be referred to as 'survivors', which highlights their strength and resilience.

RESOURCES

Legal resources

- [Checklist: Domestic Implementation of IHL Prohibiting Sexual Violence](#) (ICRC, 2020)
- [Report: International Humanitarian Law and a Gender Perspective in the Planning and Conduct of Military Operations](#) (ICRC, NCGM and Swedish Red Cross, 2024)
- [ICRC Commentary on the Fourth Geneva Convention: Article 27\(2\)](#) (regarding sexual violence) (ICRC, 2025)

Policy briefs

- [How Does Stigma Impact Victims/Survivors of Sexual Violence During Armed Conflict?](#) (ICRC, 2024)

Operational evidence

- [Promising Pathways for the Prevention of Sexual Violence](#) (ICRC, 2023 and 2024)
- [Engaging with State Armed Forces to Prevent Sexual Violence: A Toolkit for ICRC Staff](#) (ICRC 2021)
- [SSR and Conflict-Related Sexual Violence: Understanding the impacts of peacetime GBV capacity-building](#) (DCAF, 2024)

Other publications

- [Beyond prevalence: new approaches to measuring sexual – and gender-based violence prevention in conflict settings](#) (ICRC blog, 2024)



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ICRC

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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