

# PEOPLE ON WAR

## Country report Bosnia-Herzegovina

**ICRC worldwide consultation on the rules of war**

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Report by Greenberg Research, Inc.

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INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

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## About the People on War project

To mark the 50th anniversary of the modern Geneva Conventions (on 12 August 1999), the ICRC launched its People on War project with the aim of building greater respect for fundamental humanitarian principles. At centre stage is a worldwide consultation giving the general public a chance to air their views on the many facets of war. The idea was that civilians and combatants alike would be able to share their experiences, express their opinions on what basic rules should apply in war, discuss why those rules sometimes break down and look at what the future holds.

With this in mind, the ICRC commissioned Greenberg Research, Inc. to design a research programme that would enable people to be heard in the most effective way possible. Under the guidance of Greenberg Research, ICRC staff and Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers carried out this consultation in 12 countries (Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cambodia, Colombia, El Salvador, Georgia/Abkhazia, Israel, the occupied territories and the autonomous territories, Lebanon, Nigeria, Philippines, Somalia and South Africa), conducting in-depth, face-to-face interviews, group discussions and national public opinion surveys. Surveys on the basis of a questionnaire only were conducted in a further five countries (France, Russian Federation, Switzerland, United Kingdom and United States) in order to reflect these people's perceptions of war.

Greenberg Research analysts then prepared a series of Country Reports on the basis of the findings. The reports open up this new, important discourse to a wider audience, while remaining conscious of the need to protect the safety of all those who participated.

By making this consultation public, the ICRC hopes to initiate a local and international debate on the humanitarian aspects of war - a debate that should be joined by the major political players, international and non-governmental organizations and aid specialists.

## Greenberg Research, Inc.

Greenberg Research is an opinion research firm that has worked for over two decades to help organizations and leaders around the world advance their goals in the face of rapid change. It specializes in using advanced methods of opinion research - surveys, focus groups and in-depth interviews - to help form strategies for political parties, corporations and non-governmental organizations.

Greenberg Research has extensive experience in Europe and the United States, but also in the Middle East, Asia, southern Africa and Central and South America. It has conducted research in war-torn, politically complex and remote settings. In its work for corporations and non-governmental organizations, it has explored a broad range of global issues, including landmines, genetic engineering, climate change, race and gender relations, trade and information technologies.

<p><b>The opinions expressed in this report are not those of the ICRC. The ICRC retained Greenberg Research, Inc. to design and oversee the People on War consultation. Greenberg Research compiled and analysed the results and is responsible for the content and interpretation.</b></p>
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## Country context

The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina was a struggle among the country's three communities for territorial control. In four years, the war claimed some 200,000 lives and — at its worst point — uprooted half the population of 4 million. Its terrible violence and the slaughter of civilians caught the attention of the international community. Fear of instability in the Balkans prompted the Western powers to intervene and, eventually, to apply the force necessary to find a tenuous peace.

The loose federation of republics that constituted Tito's Yugoslavia began to fracture during the 1980s, as uneven economic development and nationalist rivalry fuelled long-standing tensions. In the summer of 1991, the leaders of Croatia and Slovenia declared independence. The Serb-dominated federal army intervened to challenge their secession, but swift recognition of their independence by the European Union (EU) undermined the federation government's efforts to reverse the situation.

With borders in the region redrawn, the battleground shifted to Bosnia. Still a member of the federation, Bosnia was ethnically made up of Muslims (43 per cent), Croats (18 per cent) and Serbs (39 per cent). The Muslim/Croat communities were unwilling to remain in a Serb-dominated Yugoslavia.

Early in 1992, the EU supervised a referendum in Bosnia-Herzegovina on whether the territory should become an independent country, in which the three communities could co-exist. The Serbs boycotted the referendum, and Muslims and Croats voted overwhelmingly for separation.

Bosnia was recognized as a separate State by other European countries and the United States in April 1992. Bosnian Muslims immediately came under siege from militias based in Serbia and Croatia. Reports of massacres, wholesale assaults on women, and concentration camps reminiscent of World War II came to characterize an increasingly bloody conflict. United Nations (UN) negotiators struggled fruitlessly to bring the three sides to an agreement. In 1994, Muslims and Croats agreed to work together to establish a federation, although this did not end clashes between their forces.

NATO intervened, imposing a "no fly zone" over Bosnia and establishing "safe areas", which would be defended by United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) and air power if attacked. Events of 1995, however, highlighted the reality of "safe areas". When Sarajevo came under sustained shelling by the Serbs in May, NATO failed to respond. Two months later, in one of the worst massacres of the war, 8,000 Muslim men and boys were killed in the town of Srebrenica. Over the following weeks joint Bosnian-Croat and Bosniac units retook a large swathe of territory, uprooting more than 100,000 Serbs from their homes. NATO began to bomb Serb gun positions across Bosnia.

As Croats and Muslims swept across Bosnia, pressure mounted on the Bosnian Serbs to negotiate. In late 1995 NATO and the UN were able to broker a cease-fire and in November the Dayton Agreement was signed. Under them, Bosnia-Herzegovina was defined as a State with two separate entities: a Muslim-Croat federation given 51 per cent of the territory, and a Serb entity with the remaining 49 per cent. NATO troops under a UN mandate (IFOR) were dispatched to patrol the dividing line.

NATO-led peacekeepers (SFOR) remain in Bosnia-Herzegovina today and it is unclear whether the fragile peace will endure without the continued presence of international troops. Meanwhile, the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina are struggling, with the aid of the international community, to build a new nation.

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## Country methodology

The findings in this report are based on an extensive consultation carried out by the ICRC in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The project was overseen by a multinational research team from Greenberg Research, with the participation of two local partners, Medium and PULS, established research firms in Belgrade and Zagreb. With their help and guidance, ICRC staff and members of the Red Cross organizations in the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Republika Srpska carried out a range of research activities. These were as follows:

- Twelve intensive **focus group** (FG) discussions were organized in Banja Luka, Mostar and Sarajevo. In each area, ICRC/Red Cross representatives organized the following groups: ex-soldiers, family members of the missing (women), mothers who raised children during the war, and journalists. The participants were recruited from throughout each entity by ICRC staff, based on guidelines provided by Greenberg Research. The local partner research companies, Medium and PULS, recruited the professional moderators, who facilitated the discussions using guidelines prepared by Greenberg Research. The focus group discussions were held in Banja Luka from 8-10 December 1998, in Mostar from 11-13 December, and in Sarajevo on 14 and 15 December.
- Sixty **in-depth interviews** (IDI) were conducted with a broad range of people who had experienced the war in different roles, including ex-soldiers, family members of missing persons, students, current members of the armed forces, displaced persons, detainees and medical staff. The in-depth interviews took place between early December 1998 and January 1999.
- In addition, ICRC staff and members of the local Red Cross organizations conducted a **nationwide quantitative survey** of 1,482 respondents, selected using a stratified, multistage cluster sampling method. The sample was stratified to ensure representation (about 500 interviews) from each of the principal conflict-affected geographic areas or ethnic/religious groups. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, that meant 1,482 interviews (approximately 500 from Republika Srpska, and 500 each from the Bosniac and Croat areas of the Federation). The local research companies trained staff and oversaw the administration of the sample design. In this survey, 31 per cent of respondents described themselves as Serbs, 17 per cent as Croats and 43 per cent as Bosniacs or Muslims. Seven per cent described themselves as of "mixed" or "other" origin and 1 per cent did not know or refused to answer the question. The quantitative survey was conducted between 15 February and 5 March 1999.

Percentages reported here are subject to a sampling error of +/- 3.5 percentage points (at a 95 in 100 confidence level). Results in smaller segments, such as the 500 interviews for particular areas, are subject to an error of +/- 6.3 percentage points.<sup>1</sup>

- Greenberg Research commissioned a **parallel national quantitative survey** of 1,500 respondents carried out by Medium and PULS. The aim of the parallel survey was to assess the quality of the ICRC's own research and to identify potential areas of bias. While the parallel study points to areas of overstatement or understatement in the responses to key questions on the rules of war, the findings of the two studies are quite similar. These studies provide a unique glimpse into the war experience and attitudes towards the rules of war.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> These estimates are based on population values of 50 per cent. Obviously, many reported percentages are lower or higher than that; higher percentages would have a smaller sampling error. For example, a reported percentage of 90 per cent for the total population would have a sampling error of +/- 2.2 percentage points.

<sup>2</sup> Where relevant, footnotes will highlight where the parallel research suggests a modification of the assessment offered in the main body of the report.

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## Executive summary

Bosnia-Herzegovina has a special prominence in the ICRC's consultation on the rules of war and international humanitarian law. Perhaps as in no other armed conflict in the post-World War II period, the spotlight has focused on the breakdown of the rules that are intended to protect civilians from the ravages of war. No doubt more civilians were killed or uprooted during the violent conflicts in Rwanda, Afghanistan and Angola than were in Bosnia-Herzegovina. However, the pursuit of "war criminals", the trials in The Hague, the press attention to "ethnic cleansing", and the intensive involvement of the international community in Europe's backyard have all made Bosnia-Herzegovina a special case. For many, it is here that the Geneva Conventions faced and likely failed their toughest test – failing to impose on the combatants limits that would have protected millions of civilians across the Balkans from the full impact of the war.

The high-profile breakdown of the rules of war in Bosnia-Herzegovina is all the more striking because both combatants and civilians are highly aware of the Geneva Conventions and fully supportive of norms that protect civilians in war. The limits did not give way because the Conventions or the norms were unknown or foreign to the participants. They broke down under the pressure of nationalist passions and hatred. They also broke down because a range of other wartime considerations diminished and superceded them. The rules of war have not been repudiated in the minds of those who have experienced this conflict. They were overwhelmed in large part by the rules on the ground, which created powerful exceptions, amendments or suspensions whereby millions of civilians joined the front lines.

The conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina is one of the most internationalized in the world. It may not have begun that way, but the participants now view the international community with its various treaties as active players in the war and in their future. When asked whether there is anything that combatants should not be allowed to do, nearly everyone interviewed – whether family members of the missing or journalists in the focus groups, displaced people or soldiers during in-depth interviews — almost immediately cite international conventions. According to the survey, four out of five ordinary citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina are familiar with the Geneva Conventions. The Conventions are not the only basis for the limits in war — indeed, strong norms operate on all sides — but the internationalization of the conflict is a powerful ingredient in the war. The international community became a party to the conflict itself and the Geneva Conventions helped shape attitudes and behaviour inside and outside the theatre of war.

The main findings of the consultation are presented below:

**Mobilized for war.** The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina involved the whole of society and left its mark on nearly everyone who lives there. More than 60 per cent of the population, according to the survey, lived in areas where the war took place, nearly half of whom were forced to move during it. The war mobilized the whole of society: according to the ICRC survey, three-quarters of the population supported a side. Fully 29 per cent participated as soldiers, carrying a gun.

**The war's toll.** The violence of this war took a heavy toll: 53 per cent lost contact with family members; 44 per cent were forced to leave their homes and live elsewhere. A sizeable portion of the population experienced the war in its most direct forms: 14 per cent came under enemy control. Nearly a third of the soldiers (29 per cent) report being wounded in the conflict and almost one in ten (9 per cent) were imprisoned.

- For the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the dominant words describing the war experience are "horrible" (72 per cent) and "hateful" (44 per cent). Nationalist sentiment, hatred and the need for reciprocity greatly contributed to the civilian toll in this war.
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- The war enveloped all the communities of Bosnia-Herzegovina. A third of both Serbs and Bosniacs (31 per cent and 30 per cent, respectively) say a close family member was killed. The Serbs report the highest incidence of being forced to leave their homes (54 per cent).<sup>3</sup> A near majority (45 per cent) of Croats lost contact with a close relative; more than a third (36 per cent) were forced to leave home; and 18 per cent report the death of a close family member.
- The Bosniac community experienced the highest level of injuries related directly to the war: 18 per cent of the total Bosniac population were wounded in the fighting, 10 per cent were imprisoned, 7 per cent were tortured and 5 per cent know somebody who was raped. In each instance, the percentage was two or three times that for the other communities.
- In important respects – serious damage to property (including looting), loss of family members and being forced to leave home – combatants and civilians experienced the war with similar intensity.

**The role of norms.** What is so striking about this war is the vast disjunction between norms and practices.

- Nearly three-quarters of those consulted (73 per cent) volunteered that soldiers should not be allowed to do certain things in fighting their enemy.
- Over three-quarters (76 per cent) of the people say these limits should be observed, not because failure to do so may lead to future problems, but simply because they are “wrong”. Those who see the limits as normative say attacks on civilians are wrong primarily because they are “against human rights” (57 per cent). Throughout the in-depth research, people talked about a concept of “humanness” and being differentiated from animals.

**Attacking non-combatants.** Despite widespread acceptance of these norms, significant minorities in Bosnia-Herzegovina indicate openness to attacks on civilians, if they would weaken the enemy.

- A considerable number – 17 per cent – say it is acceptable to attack civilians who voluntarily give food and shelter to enemy combatants – a situation which could only be seen as “normal” in this war.
- About a third of the public here accept as “part of war” (and not “wrong”) military initiatives that target civilian populations in order to weaken the enemy overall: 32 per cent accept depriving the civilian population of food, medicine, water or electricity.
- There is broad acceptance of landmines in Bosnia-Herzegovina: 40 per cent say it is acceptable to plant them to stop the movement of enemy combatants, even though civilians may step on them accidentally.

The soldiers, many of the families of the missing, and journalists take it for granted that this war was about civilians. Few defend or describe the killing or torture of civilians, but many describe the primary methods of warfare as including intimidation or expulsion of civilian populations, practices that often lead to atrocities on the ground.

<sup>3</sup> Although this question was asked in the context of the war in Bosnia, it is likely that the percentages given also reflect people's experiences resulting from the armed conflicts in other republics of the former Yugoslavia and the impact of the Dayton Agreement.

**Explaining the war on civilians.** The most important aspect of this consultation is the explanation of why there is such a vast gap between the norms that limit wartime behaviour and practices on the ground. This section highlights the report's main findings.

- When asked why combatants would harm civilians, the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina point to hatred of the other side (28 per cent), a sentiment that leads people to lose all sense during war (25 per cent), exacerbated by the belief that the other side is doing the same thing (31 per cent). In effect, people say the limits disintegrated because of the intense nationalist sentiment, as expressed in war.
- The soldiers are the starting point, according to the in-depth research. In all three communities, they are defined as "our soldiers", the real soldiers who defended the community from the "aggressors". Across all communities, people say their soldiers were required to do whatever was necessary to save their communities. If it concerns their own soldiers, people are much more willing to relax or suspend the limits in war.
- From the survey, it becomes apparent how serious the implications of "sidedness" are for international humanitarian law. Those who support a side in this conflict – in Bosnia-Herzegovina, more than three in four people – are much more likely than those who do not to accept attacks on non-combatants.
- The people see this as a war that unites civilians and soldiers in defence of their communities. This view creates a conceptual legitimacy for the idea that civilians and combatants are joined in the same fight – whether they are defending their community under attack or trying to force the surrender or expulsion of a community. In either case, civilians and soldiers are united.
- Many people describe "non-normal" people — psychopaths, extreme nationalists (sometimes young and immature) who, full of hate, were driven to excess in the context of this war.
- In Bosnia-Herzegovina, those who have experienced the war most intensely are the most willing to see the status of non-combatants compromised. The war is an embittering experience that has increased the threat to international humanitarian law.

**Internationalization of the war.** The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina has been internationalized. People see international forces as playing a major, even predominant, role in the conflict and in the country's future. International institutions – from the ICRC and UNHCR to the UN, NATO, UNPROFOR, IFOR, SFOR – are considered to be as much a part of recent history as the various governments and armies.

- The Geneva Conventions are widely recognized in Bosnia-Herzegovina: 80 per cent of those surveyed have heard of them, of whom 89 per cent can offer a roughly accurate account of their meaning.
- Knowledge of the Geneva Conventions declines when the central challenge – the war on civilians – is addressed: 61 per cent say there are laws barring soldiers from attacking the enemy in populated villages and towns. One in four say there are no laws that prohibit such attacks on civilians.

- All the communities accept that some rules are so important that, if broken, the violators should be punished (82 per cent). Support for war-crimes prosecution is strongest among the Bosniacs (91 per cent), but over 70 per cent of Croats and Serbs are also in favour.
- The ICRC or the Red Cross is known by nearly everyone in this war zone: 91 per cent could correctly identify the red cross on a white background. The ICRC/Red Cross is seen as an institution that, in the first instance, protects vulnerable groups such as women, children, the elderly and sick (43 per cent). However, many think the organization protects all people in trouble (24 per cent); 18 per cent associate it with protecting prisoners and the wounded; 11 per cent see it as protecting hospitals and medical institutions and workers.
- People think the UN played the biggest role during the war in trying to stop attacks on civilian populations (56 per cent).
- People are ambivalent about the role of the international community in the war: significant numbers (42 per cent) say UNPROFOR made things better for civilians during the war; 39 per cent say it made things better for them personally. Only about 13 per cent say UNPROFOR made things worse, but 40 per cent say it made no difference either for civilians or themselves.
- While over half of those surveyed say that “safe areas” are a good idea (52 per cent think they are a good idea compared with 36 per cent who think they are a bad idea), people are more cautious about their impact on civilians’ welfare. Only 38 per cent say that they made things better, 20 per cent that they made things worse and fully 33 per cent that they made no difference.
- Serb respondents expressed deep cynicism about the role of the international community. For many of the Serbs and Croats consulted, the “safe areas” symbolized the international community’s partiality.

Across all communities, people say the international community ended the war when it chose to intervene. This belief helped create among the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina a sense that they were powerless to control their own destinies.

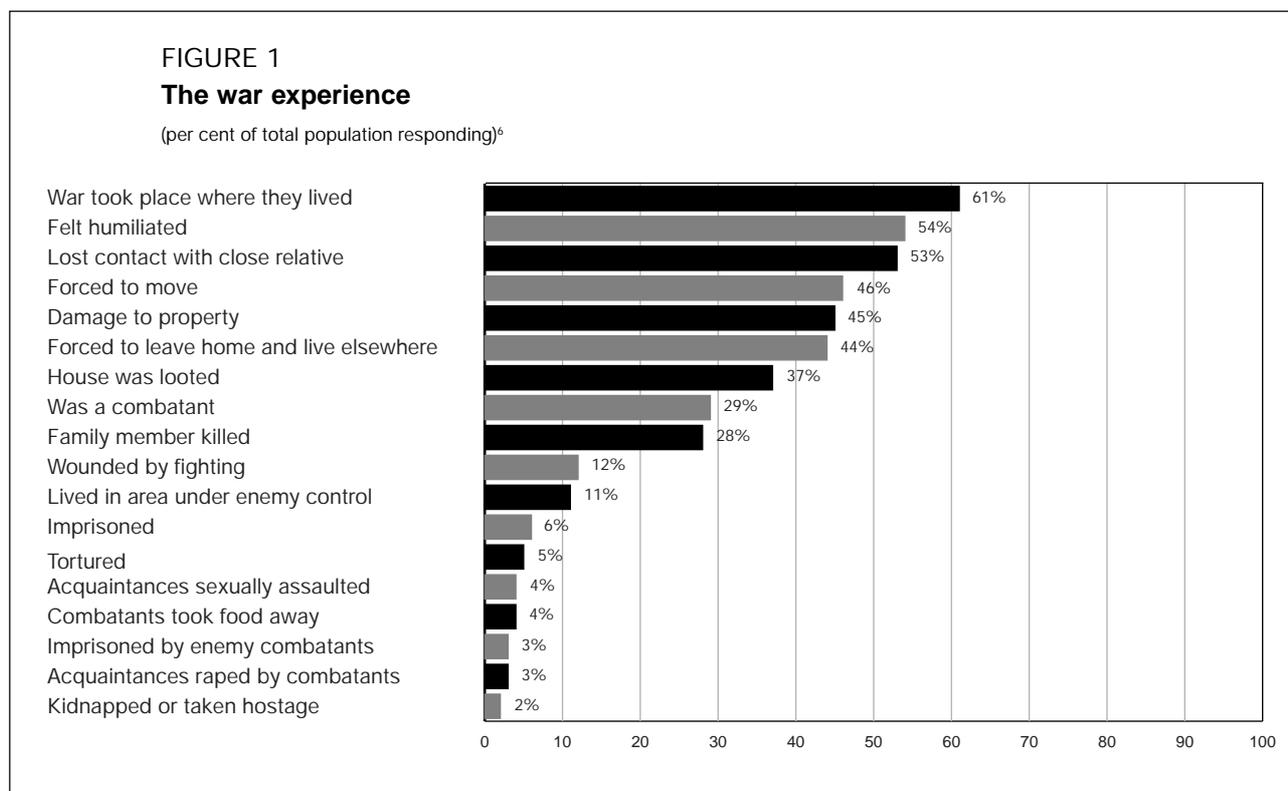


## The war experience

The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina involved the whole of society and left its mark on nearly everyone who lives there. There was little opportunity to escape the conflict or view it from a distance. Over 60 per cent of the population, according to the survey, lived in areas where the war took place, nearly half of whom (46 per cent) were forced to move during the war. Just a third (35 per cent) say they lived outside the war zone.

The conflict mobilized society in support of the war effort. According to the ICRC survey, three-quarters of the population supported a side in the war.<sup>4</sup> Fully 29 per cent participated as soldiers, carrying a gun. Participation carried across all classes and ages. Those with a college education were as likely to support a side and serve as soldiers as those who had completed primary school. An overwhelming proportion of the younger men (71 per cent under the age of 40) were combatants, but a near majority of older men (44 per cent) also carried weapons.

The violence took a serious toll: 53 per cent lost contact with family members; 45 per cent experienced serious damage to their property; 44 per cent were forced to leave their homes and live elsewhere; 37 per cent report having their houses looted; a majority (54 per cent) say they felt "humiliated". A sizeable portion of the population experienced the war in its most direct forms: 14 per cent came under enemy control (3 per cent were imprisoned and 11 per cent lived in areas under enemy control); 12 per cent of the total population were wounded in the fighting; 5 per cent were tortured; 3 per cent report that someone they knew well was raped by combatants.<sup>5</sup> (See Figure 1.) Nearly a third of the soldiers (29 per cent) report being wounded in the conflict and almost one in ten (9 per cent) were imprisoned.



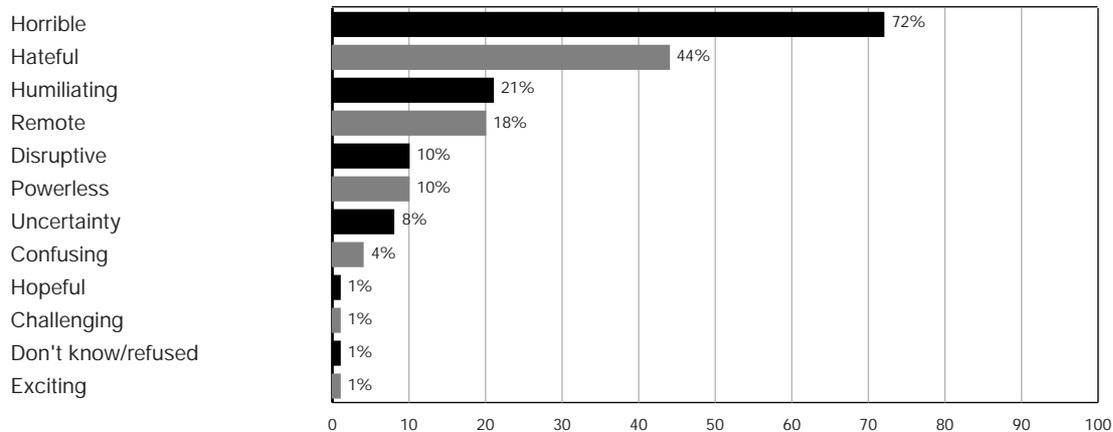
<sup>4</sup> This may be an underestimation, as 86 per cent told interviewers in the parallel study that they had supported a side. Since the Red Cross is perceived to be neutral, respondents may have understated their commitment to a side in the war.

<sup>5</sup> This is the one area of war experience where the ICRC results are lower than those of the parallel research (3 per cent compared with 6 per cent). It is possible that participants are being either more honest or more reluctant with the Red Cross.

<sup>6</sup> Respondents were asked a wide range of questions about their war experience. Each horizontal bar represents a result for a particular question. For example, 61 per cent responded that the war took place where they lived.

**FIGURE 2**  
**Personal description of the war**

(per cent of total population responding)<sup>7</sup>



Question: Which *two* of these words best describe the war for you personally?

For the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the dominant words used to describe the war experience are “horrible” (72 per cent) and “hateful” (44 per cent). As will be shown, the combination of hatred and revenge greatly contributed to the civilian toll. Just 1 per cent describe the war in positive terms. Even among soldiers, just 1 per cent portray it as “exciting” and 1 per cent as “challenging”. (See Figure 2.)

The Bosniac community experienced the highest level of injuries related directly to the war: 18 per cent of the total Bosniac population were wounded in the fighting, 10 per cent were imprisoned, 7 per cent tortured and 5 per cent know somebody who was raped. In each instance the percentage is two or three times that for the other communities.

The war enveloped all of Bosnia-Herzegovina’s communities. The Serbs were the most fully mobilized: 87 per cent supported a side, and a very large portion – 38 per cent – served as soldiers. All communities joined the war, however. Nearly as many Croats (70 per cent) and Bosniacs (72 per cent) supported a side, and large portions of the population — 30 per cent of Croats and 26 per cent of Bosniacs — took up arms. The conflict divided almost the whole of the population along national/ethnic lines, a factor that contributed greatly to the extent of the upheaval and, as will be seen later, to the scope of infringements of international humanitarian law.

The description of the war as “horrible” and “hateful” was evident across all the communities. The Bosniacs, more than the others, lost contact with relatives (58 per cent) and very large numbers were forced from their homes (42 per cent). A third of both Serbs and Bosniacs (31 per cent and 30 per cent, respectively) report a close family member killed. The Serbs report the highest incidence of being forced to leave their homes (54 per cent).<sup>8</sup> Almost half report losing contact with close relatives (47 per cent), suffering serious property damage (48 per cent), and having their houses looted (46 per cent) – the last figure higher than for any other community.

The Croats experienced the war marginally less intensively. A near majority (45 per cent) lost contact with a close relative. More than a third report serious property damage (38 per cent) and being forced to leave home (36 per cent). A third (31 per cent) had their houses looted and 18 per cent report the death of a close family member.

<sup>7</sup> The percentages add up to more than 100 per cent because individuals were asked to provide two responses to the question.

<sup>8</sup> Although this question was asked in the context of the “war in Bosnia”, it is likely that the percentages given also reflect respondents’ experiences resulting from the armed conflicts in other republics of the former Yugoslavia and the impact of the Dayton Agreement.

In general, however, the war respected few boundaries of community or geography. The minority living outside the conflict area are as likely to describe the war as “horrible” as are those in the line of fire. They were much less likely to be forced to leave home or have their property damaged or looted. Nonetheless, 36 per cent of people who lived outside the conflict area lost contact with a close relative and 24 per cent report a close family member killed.

Non-combatants in general and women in particular suffered badly in this war, even though they did not join the battle in the literal sense, by carrying a weapon. Non-combatants are much less likely to have experienced “battlefield” injuries – 6 per cent of non-combatants were wounded (compared with 29 per cent of combatants), 5 per cent were imprisoned (compared with 9 per cent of combatants) and 4 per cent were tortured (compared with 7 per cent of combatants); 4 per cent know somebody who was raped. The figures, though mostly lower than for combatants, suggest that non-combatants suffered a great many major war-related injuries. In other respects – serious damage to property (including looting), loss of family members and being forced to leave home – non-combatants experienced the war at least as intensely as combatants did.

For the most part, men became soldiers and women did not: 71 per cent of men under 40 took up arms, as opposed to 5 per cent of women. Both, however, lived the war. Men and women were equally likely to feel humiliated, to be forced to leave their homes or to lose a home or a family member.

In the in-depth interviews and focus-group discussions, most people thought both men and women suffered in their own way. The women trembled to think what their men faced at the front; the men, even with their experiences at the front, seem to recognize that their women carried special burdens – lack of information, caring alone for children, having to search for basic necessities, and the dislocations caused by the war. Neither the men nor the women expressed fear of or experience of sexual assault or rape, even though the quantitative data suggest these were a significant reality in this war.

Both men and women spoke of the uncertainty and absence of information, which generated a unique kind of wartime suffering for women. Men too lacked information, but they had comrades. Women were more isolated and, as more than one soldier put it, more “sensitive”. (IDI, soldier, East Mostar) Often alone and without news of their husbands and sons, they had to shoulder immense responsibilities. One mother captured the feeling:

Almost all of us here are wives of fighters. Some of them [our husbands] even died in the war, and we have suffered for them too. We have also suffered because our children have no fathers, because we cannot afford things we would like to provide for our children... We kept thinking about them, how they were there, if they were cold, if anything would happen to them, whether they would come for the next weekend at all... Still, I think that women suffer more... They suffer both for their husbands and for their children. (FG, mothers, Banja Luka)

Most of those consulted feel that women had the special burden of somehow getting their family through the war.

## The meaning of norms

What is so striking about the war is the vast disjunction between the norms on the limits of war and the reality of the conflict. Nearly three-quarters of those consulted in Bosnia-Herzegovina (73 per cent) volunteered at the outset of interviews that soldiers should not be allowed to do certain things when fighting their enemy. Actions they believe should be prohibited include: killing civilians (32 per cent); attacking civilians, including rape, robbing or beatings (26 per cent); and destroying or burning homes and buildings (24 per cent).

In the in-depth interviews, people spoke without much hesitation of what should not be allowed in war, almost as if nothing had occurred during the conflict that violated the limits.

They should leave innocent civilians out. (IDI, family member of missing person, Gorazde)

They should not kill civilians, torture prisoners. (IDI, student, West Mostar)

I think killing civilians off the front lines is a terrible war crime. (IDI, ex-soldier, Bijeljina)

They should not torture civilians or terrorize anybody... Civilians are not guilty of anything. (IDI, displaced person, Prijedor)

Because the war is when a soldier fights a soldier, not women and children. (IDI, university student, Sarajevo)

I have participated in this war. There should be two lines: at the first line there are soldiers who fight, and at the second line, there are civilians. I think civilians should not be molested or attacked. They are just civilians and should be left out of it. (IDI, ex-soldier, Banja Luka)

These prohibitions or limits in war are the basis of a norm that, if anything, has been reinforced by the war experience. Over three-quarters (76 per cent) of the population say the limits should be observed, not because failure to do so might lead to future problems, but simply because such violations are "wrong".

The people who see the limits as normative say attacks on civilians are wrong primarily because they are "against human rights" (57 per cent). Many fewer root the norm in a personal code (27 per cent), in law (24 per cent) or religion (19 per cent).<sup>9</sup> (See Figure 3.)

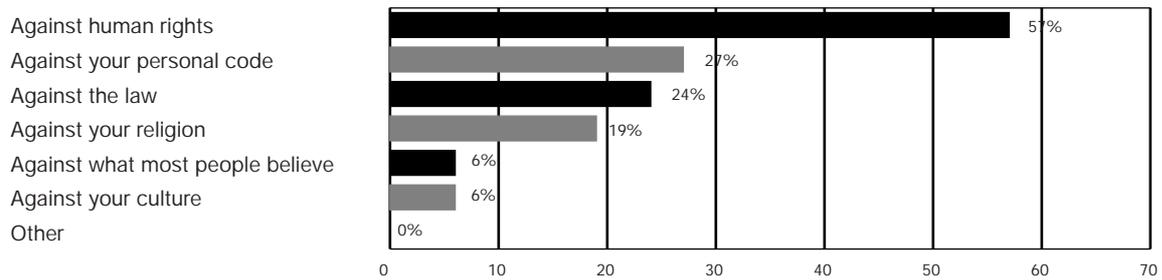
Throughout the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews, respondents keep coming back to the concept of "humanness", an idea that differentiates people from animals and a civilized society from an uncivilized one. Those who violate this concept – by taking certain actions or going beyond the limits – stand in danger of losing their humanity. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, people draw upon a presumed common understanding of what is right and wrong to remind themselves of the limits they share.

<sup>9</sup> The main concern of the minority who focus on the problems caused by assaults on civilians (22 per cent) is that they generate too much hate and division (56 per cent). A smaller number believe such attacks cause too much psychological damage (28 per cent). Even against the backdrop of so much physical war damage, just 3 per cent say attacks on civilians produce too much destruction.

FIGURE 3

**Basis for the norm**

(per cent of population responding "it's wrong")



Question: When you say it's wrong, is it primarily wrong because it is...?

In the statements below, people use the word "human" to establish what should and should not be done:

Well, there is the sense of humanness... A person goes to war with full awareness. So, he is aware of his actions and should behave accordingly, rather than get out of control. (FG, ex-soldiers, Banja Luka)

It breaks human rules – and the Geneva Conventions. But if a man is not human, there are no conventions he would obey. (IDI, displaced person, Tuzla)

I do not know of any law, but it is evidently a human rule... Basically, human dignity is a stronger rule than any written one. (IDI, ex-soldier, Bijeljina)

We might use those prisoners for exchange. It is not human to kill. (IDI, university student, Sarajevo)

Because there is no bigger value on earth than the life of a man. Never mind his age – young or old. I think there is nothing more valuable than human life. (IDI, university student, Trebinje)

If somebody killed my child, I would not guarantee my behaviour. I just hope I would be human. (IDI, woman invalid, Sarajevo)

I learned that the human being has the biggest value of all. Therefore, I think it has to be protected. (IDI, woman invalid, Sarajevo)

Because of war, I have to fight, but my fighting will remain within the boundaries of what does not violate human decency. (FG, ex-soldiers, Banja Luka)

Humanness, for many people, is more than just an idea, however, and the terms "human" and "not human" are more than just adjectives. They are what keep people from slipping into the behaviour of a lesser civilization, especially during war.

My personal opinion is that we are not cattle, and a normal person wouldn't treat even cattle like that. (IDI, women, Banja Luka)

I know prisoners should be treated as human beings and not as animals. (IDI, university student, Sarajevo)

Because it breaks the rules of civilized behaviour. [Does that break any rules?]<sup>10</sup> Of course, moral rules, ethical rules that have been made to develop the human race. And it is not human to torture a human being. (IDI, woman invalid, Sarajevo)

I am speaking as an active participant in the war. Anyone on the opposite side is a potential enemy. Naturally, one has to act in accordance with this. There is the animal side in every one of us. Man is some kind of social animal, and it is up to everyone to fight for himself against it, to prevent himself from inflicting evil on any one, even in war. (FG, journalists, Banja Luka)

[Killing a captured combatant who killed somebody close to you.] God forbid! I think that we are not on the level of such savages. (FG, journalists, Banja Luka)

That is absurd. We are not on such a savage level. (FG, journalists, Banja Luka)

I don't want to be identical. We would be the same then. And one of the battles we fought in this war was a battle to stay human. (FG, family members of the missing, Sarajevo)

That humanness is at the centre of a norm becomes clear when people were asked if anything "positive" had happened to them during the war. Their first reactions were usually to scorn the very idea of it. Some soldiers spoke of the solidarity and bonds forged with fellow soldiers; some civilians spoke of people helping each other; others spoke of the "nationalist cohesion that has overwhelmed us and led us for four years". (FG, journalists, Banja Luka) Interestingly, people more often reached for examples that ran counter to what would normally be expected in war – helping someone from the other side, suspending the notion of enemy and acting with humanity. By so doing, they seem to affirm for themselves that people had sometimes chosen to accept the limits in war – and that human dignity and decency are not inevitable casualties of war.

[We] must all admit that there were persons who showed their goodness in the war, regardless of their nationality, who helped and who could help. But there were also evil people. (FG, mothers, Banja Luka)

One has to retain one's dignity, regardless of what the enemy side does. (FG, widows, Banja Luka)

Refugees from Travnik, Croats who were fleeing from Muslims, passed through Banja Luka, and they were helped here, although they were from the enemy side. They were given all the help they needed. (FG, mothers, Banja Luka)

I remember some situations when people proved themselves to be true human beings. And I think those were individual cases, when a person had the possibility to give something to prisoners, e.g., cigarettes, or to people in work squads – and that was a victory over every human's animal side. (FG, journalists, Banja Luka)

<sup>10</sup> Words in square brackets indicate a moderator question or a clarification by the author.

[After speaking about saving prisoners.] I really saved them... I met them once more and the kids remembered me. That was something very human. Not big, but human. (FG, journalists, Mostar)

I reported a lot of compassion... Some unknown people gave me shelter and fed me. I have an example of a Serb helping me to get out of Glamoc. (FG, journalists, West Mostar)

It was a positive thing to treat them as humans. We just could not let them go. We fed them better. (FG, soldiers, West Mostar)

I am very proud of my father. There was only one Serb house in my village. They were old people, and my father protected them... (FG, widows, Mostar)

A positive thing was that one family was saved. (FG, mothers, West Mostar)

I have been in the camp for four years, and I would not have made it were it not for a Serb woman who kept helping me. She fed me. I would like to stop the war, even for the Serbs, because all of them are not evil. I visited that woman today, though many Muslims find it wrong. But I feel gratitude. (FG, mothers, Sarajevo)

Affirming that one can act as a human says that one can live by the norm and do what is right in times of war.

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## Attacking non-combatants

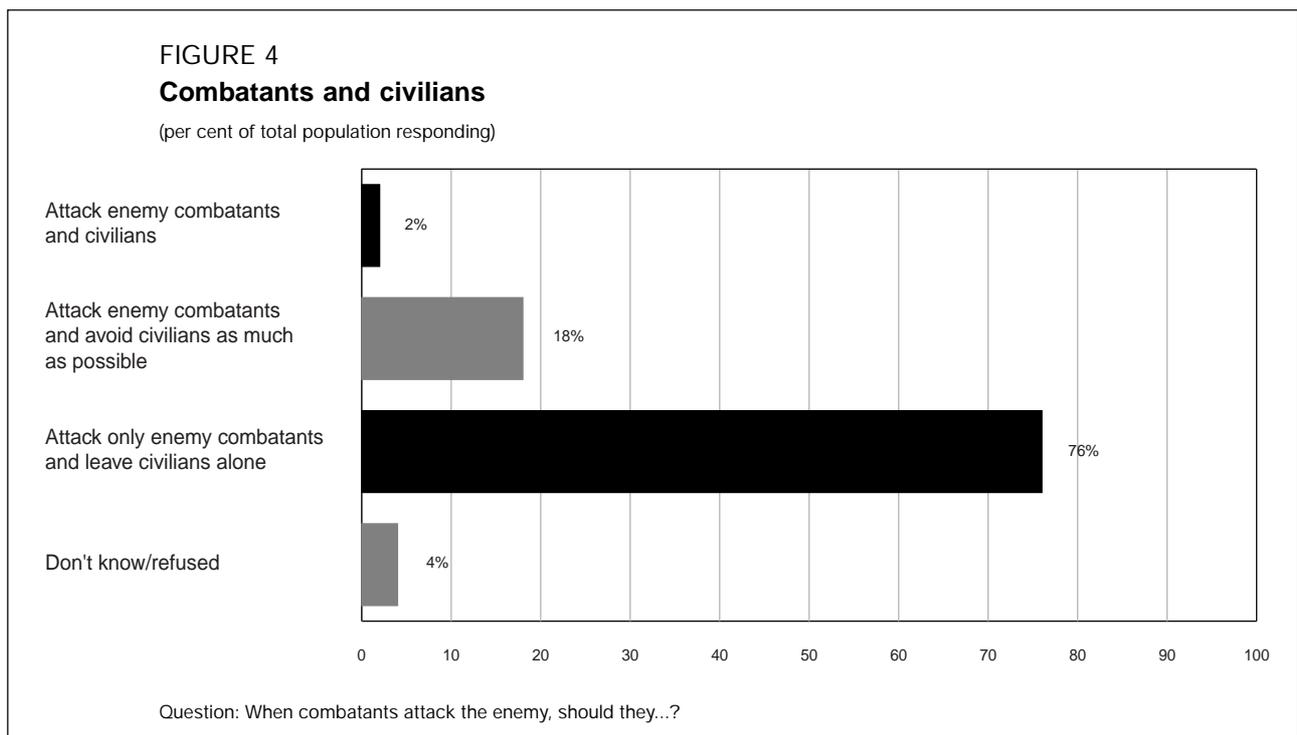
The belief that war should have limits and that assaults on civilians and prisoners are wrong is not so deeply rooted that it does away with inconsistencies or exceptions. In this period under the Dayton Agreement, the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina find acceptable a broad range of military activities that threaten non-combatants.

### Blurring the line between combatants and non-combatants

Just one in ten say they think that a captured enemy combatant “deserves to die”; just one in ten would approve of killing captured enemy combatants because the other side is doing it. To accept such practices would mean abandoning the principle of humanity that underlies the norms of war in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Nor is there very much support in principle for attacks on religious and historical monuments: again, just one in ten (12 per cent) find them acceptable. In the focus groups, almost nobody sought to justify such actions, unless enemy soldiers or snipers had occupied the building and used it to fire on the other side.

When it comes to the practicalities of war, however, the limits begin to break down. True, almost eight in ten (76 per cent) say civilians should be left alone when combatants are attacking. However, 18 per cent are prepared to accept a broader standard: attack combatants and avoid civilians “as much as possible”. (See Figure 4.)

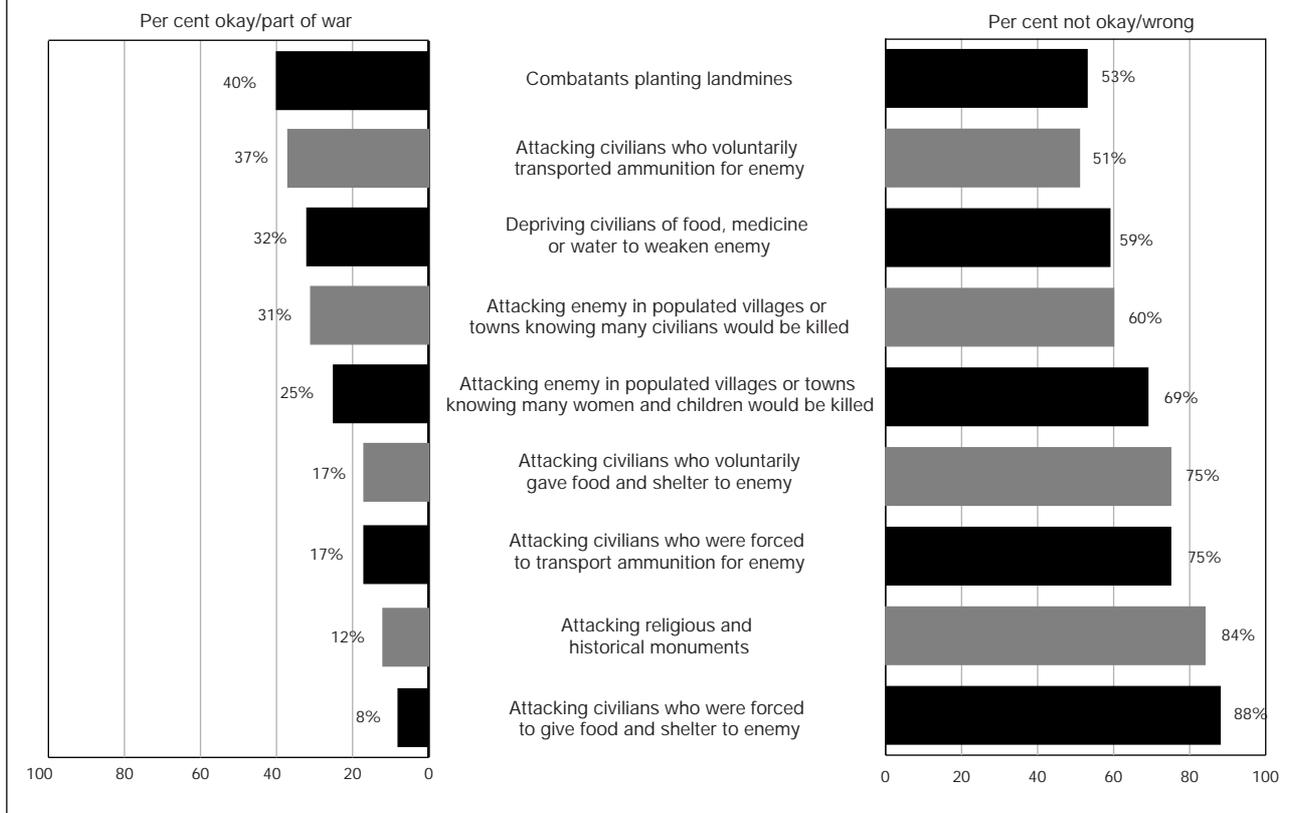


Indeed, when respondents were asked to consider the war itself, the line between civilians and combatants becomes blurred, and many more prove open to attacks on non-combatants. A considerable number – 17 per cent – say it is acceptable to attack civilians who voluntarily give food and shelter to enemy combatants, a situation which could only be seen as “normal” in this war.<sup>11</sup> When civilians voluntarily help with transporting ammunition to combatants who are defending a town, fully 37 per cent say it is acceptable to attack them; 17 per cent would attack even if the civilians were only helping under duress.

<sup>11</sup> The ICRC study very likely underestimates acceptance of these practices. On this and other questions that explore the acceptability of attacks on non-combatants, the parallel study found more people willing to express acceptance: for example, 28 per cent say attacking civilians who voluntarily provide food and shelter to combatants is acceptable.

**FIGURE 5**  
**Acceptance of war practices**

(per cent of total population responding)<sup>12</sup>



About a third of the public here accept as “part of war” (and not “wrong”) military initiatives that target civilian populations in order to weaken the enemy overall: 32 per cent accept depriving the civilian population of food, medicine, water or electricity; 31 per cent accept attacking enemy combatants in populated villages or towns. Even when it is pointed out that the populated areas have “many women and children”, 25 per cent – one in four – say it is “part of war”. In effect, there is a large minority in Bosnia-Herzegovina who find acceptable the war on civilian areas that produced such pervasive destruction and pain.

This conclusion is reflected in the broad acceptance in Bosnia-Herzegovina of the use of landmines: 40 per cent say it is acceptable to plant them to stop the movement of enemy combatants, even though civilians may step on them accidentally.

### Prisoners at risk

The permissive attitude towards waging war in civilian areas, not surprisingly, carries over to the treatment of captured enemy combatants. When an emotional situation involving prisoners is described, many respondents acknowledge a willingness to see them harmed. Fully 39 per cent say they would not help a wounded enemy combatant, and 37 per cent that they would not save the life of a surrendering enemy combatant who had killed a person close to them.<sup>13</sup> (See Figure 6.)

It is hardly surprising that captured enemy combatants would not be treated properly in this environment. Though it is widely accepted that independent representatives must be allowed to visit prisoners (79 per cent), the same is not true for many other obligations. A majority of 63 per cent say

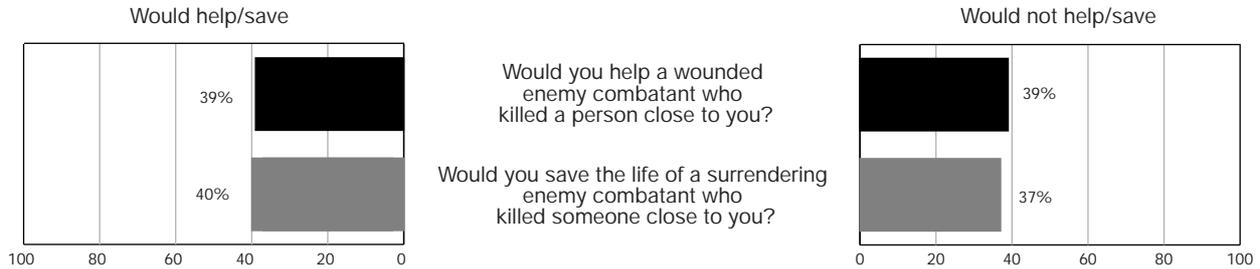
<sup>12</sup> This chart displays the results for a series of questions, each of which asked whether it was okay or not okay to do various things in war. To the left of the chart is the percentage of people who would blur the line between combatants and non-combatants. For example, 40 per cent say it is okay or part of war for combatants to plant landmines. To the right is the percentage of respondents who would not blur the line. For example, 53 per cent say it is not okay to plant landmines.

<sup>13</sup> In the parallel study, almost half – 44 per cent – say they would not help a wounded enemy combatant.

FIGURE 6

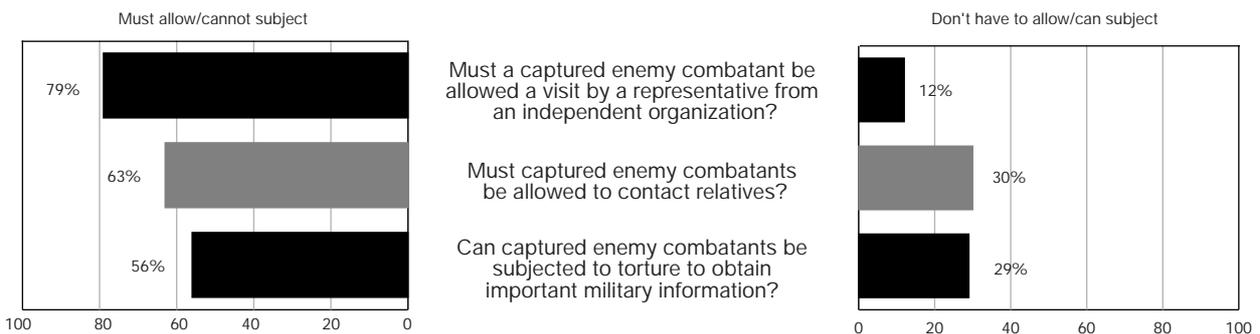
**Wounded or surrendering combatants**

(per cent of total population responding)



captured enemy combatants must be allowed to contact their relatives; 56 per cent say they must not be tortured to obtain important military information. In some cases, however, up to one-third of the public refuse to accept an obligation, particularly with regard to torture to obtain important military information (29 per cent). (See Figure 7.)

FIGURE 7

**Captured enemy combatants**(per cent of total population responding)<sup>14</sup>

Question: I will now describe some situations that may happen during a war. For each situation, I would like you to imagine you are part of that situation. Tell me how you think you would behave if the decisions were completely up to you.

**Combatants and civilians: the war on the ground**

Most of the people interviewed believe war must allow a fundamental distinction between a soldier and his family. As the figures above demonstrate, however, many yielded to the reality of the war on the ground: civilians who actively supported their soldiers; combatants fighting in populated areas; the use of military strategies that put civilians at risk; and indeed the war on civilians – often referred to as “ethnic cleansing”. When 28 per cent of people accept that enemy combatants can be attacked in populated towns and 40 per cent accept the use of landmines, a great deal of carnage on the ground can result.

While people speak of the dangers of landmines and the need for signs telling civilians “to avoid the whole area”, a very large portion refer to landmines as a normal, defensive weapon in war; they allow one “to sleep at night”.

People understand that prisoners are non-combatants and that killing them or torturing them is wrong. Very few would justify killing prisoners; nobody would do so solely because the other side was doing it. Sometimes people simply said: “I would never allow that. A prisoner is somebody under your

<sup>14</sup> Respondents were presented with a series of potential obligations regarding the treatment of prisoners. To the left is the percentage of the total population who accept a particular obligation. For example, 79 per cent say authorities must allow an independent representative to visit a captured enemy combatant. The responses to the right indicate the percentage of respondents not accepting a particular obligation.

control and you should take care of him. You should feed him and leave him alone... He is not able to fight any more. With time, he will come to his senses and see what is right." (IDI, soldier, East Mostar)

The basis for not harming prisoners is frequently normative; harming them is looked on simply as inhuman: "I know prisoners should be treated as human beings and not as animals." (IDI, university student, Sarajevo) Participants in focus groups and interviews frequently offer the ability to exchange prisoners for one of their own as a reason when asked why prisoners were or were not harmed: "But we did not kill them for the simple reason of being able to save our brothers who were captured by their side." (FG, ex-soldiers, West Mostar)

People readily recognize, however, that the norms and calculus are pushed aside during heated moments of war. Many – though not most – of the participants acknowledge that they would have trouble saving a prisoner who had killed somebody close to them. Some were honest about how they would handle such a situation.

Being as calm as I am [now], no, I would never do it. But at the moment of decision? That would depend on many things. (IDI, ex-soldier, Bijeljina)

Hmmm... These moments are specific. Probably, I will not. I do not believe so. It is hard to look someone in the eye. (IDI, ex-detainee, Banja Luka)

I do have this wish to have some needles to put through him. I do not know where and how I got this idea. (FG, family members of the missing, Sarajevo)

I would do to him what they did to my brother. (FG, family members of the missing, Sarajevo)

I think I could kill 100 of them for my husband, but I do not think I would be able to torture someone. I would not let him live, but would not slaughter him either. Because I do not have that poisoned blood. We, the Muslims, do not have that. We have "Merhamet". (FG, family members of the missing, Sarajevo)

I would make him suffer a lot, but would not be able to kill him. (FG, family members of the missing, Sarajevo)

Many of the soldiers in the in-depth research spoke reluctantly about the killing of prisoners, but nonetheless described assaults on them.

When I handed over that prisoner, who was a smith in the factory, to Colonel [Anonymous], there were seven of our fighters already dead there. When you lose someone close to you, you seek ways to avenge. Simply, you lose control over the situation. (FG, ex-soldiers, Banja Luka)

In my sector of the front line, a man who entered our lines and killed four of our fighters was captured. He was captured and wounded. Then, three of our fighters rushed there to take their revenge on him, but I didn't let them. The main reason why I stopped them was that our fighters had also been captured and so I told them that they couldn't do anything to him because the mothers who were waiting for their sons to return now had some hope of their being exchanged. (FG, ex-soldiers, Banja Luka)

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I witnessed how many people were killed. We were just numbers. (IDI, displaced person, Tuzla)

One of the soldiers described his ambivalence when dealing with surrendering combatants: "No, I would not kill him. But I would not save him either. I would like somebody else to kill him." (FG, ex-soldiers, West Mostar)

The soldiers and many of the mothers and journalists take for granted that this war was about civilians. Few defend or describe the killing or torture of civilians, but many describe a war whose primary methods included intimidating and expelling civilian populations, practices which often lead to atrocities. Some of the participants described events in which they participated.

[There] were many instances of expulsion in this war with the aim of providing territory for fellow nationals driven out by the other side. If there is any movement, there is automatically reciprocal movement on the other side; it's like the domino effect. In my opinion, the main culprit is the one who has started it in the first place. It is difficult to stop anything that is under way, let alone a war, because it immediately brings about various reasons for hatred and, subsequently, atrocities. People start hating, expelling people, behaving like psychopaths, like sick people. (FG, ex-soldiers, Banja Luka)

However, if we bear in mind the goal of any war, that is, to eliminate enemy forces, then attacks on civilians can also be a military objective because the rear is connected with the front line. Soldiers come from civilians. The entire enemy system is thus disturbed. If you attack a village, it directly means deployment of a part of their force there, that the psychological effect on the enemy will be greater. Although it is well known that this is against regulations. (FG, ex-soldiers, Banja Luka)

The shelling of villages occurred on both sides. That is sheer intimidation. The shells do not distinguish between a Muslim, a Croat or a Serb to be able to choose whom to hit or kill. My brigade was not involved in any crimes – slayings, rape or torture. (FG, ex-soldiers, Banja Luka)

During the war, I was stationed around Gorazde, which we had blocked completely from all sides. I mean, I have nothing to fear, I was wounded there. Had anyone wanted to pull out the civilians, we would have let them, and no one would have been hurt. We simply had to take the area. In such situations, you cannot trust anyone from the enemy side – not a woman or anyone else, because they will kill you. The aim of such operations is to surround a town, block it, create panic, make people start evacuating, surrendering, to conquer the town. That is the way and why it is done. When you take one town, one point, then you go on, you advance. (FG, ex-soldiers, Banja Luka)

It is difficult in war. Rules cease to be valid. The major culprit is the one who started the war. It is in a way difficult to answer questions about blocking a town. That is military strategy, you know. I am not competent to tell whether it is right or wrong from the military standpoint. It was part of military operations and strategy. You may have Sarajevo or Gorazde in mind. Our commanders thought that was the way to take as many territories that needed be taken as possible. I cannot judge the military rightness of that, because I was a common soldier, a private.

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However, such things were done. Other armies also did that whenever they could. They would surely have blocked Bijeljina or, for instance, Banja Luka, if only they had been able to. That is all aimed at winning a war. So, the rules you mention cannot be applied in war. What happens in war happens, the crimes, too – it is all a product of war. (FG, ex-soldiers, Banja Luka)

Take Sarajevo, for three days at least, they were being told: “Get out, you won’t be hurt by anyone, leave, we will let you leave.” However, had their army let the civilians go, the army would have been caught in a trap and killed. They did not allow the civilians to leave. When you get a command to attack, you cannot distinguish between civilians and fighters. I am positive, and that was also recorded by television crews, that we invited them to leave the town without fear and without problems. We would probably also keep our civilians with us if we were surrounded by the enemy forces, hoping to avoid attacks in this way. Once the attack has started, there can be no distinguishing. (FG, ex-soldiers, Banja Luka)

As these observations illustrate, the soldiers who waged this war on civilians – and more specifically the ordinary soldiers – do not view their actions as violations of international humanitarian law. Combatants and non-combatants were brought together in this war, but that was the nature of it, that was part of the plan.

Others describe the war on civilians – one they were drawn into as civilians or as soldiers — as mainly a reaction to someone else’s design for the war.

The Serbian side used it a lot. They turned the water down at Ilizda and left Sarajevo without it. It makes me feel sick to think about that. Besides grenades, the worst thing was not to have water. (FG, journalists, Sarajevo)

If civilians are attacked, we talk about genocide. And genocide was the goal – to clean up the whole area. And there was another reason. It meant to weaken the real army because, if a soldier knows his family is attacked, it makes him weaker. There is, of course, a psychological element too. (FG, family members of the missing, Sarajevo)

We in Mostar had all that, from both “aggressors”. The first goal was to attack civilians. Everyone was taken away. My mother was taken away, and she could not move at the time... The idea was robbery. They took all our money. Of course, they knew we had no money to buy food any more. That was the general idea – to destroy. (FG, family members of the missing, Sarajevo)

I think their idea was to destroy everything and it would not even be remembered that somebody else used to live here. (FG, widows, Sarajevo)

I think the idea was to destroy what we call the very soul of people... You can destroy the old bridge in Mostar, but it can be rebuilt. And to destroy a soul is not possible. And the idea was to destroy even a memory of the other nation. (FG, family members of the missing, Sarajevo)

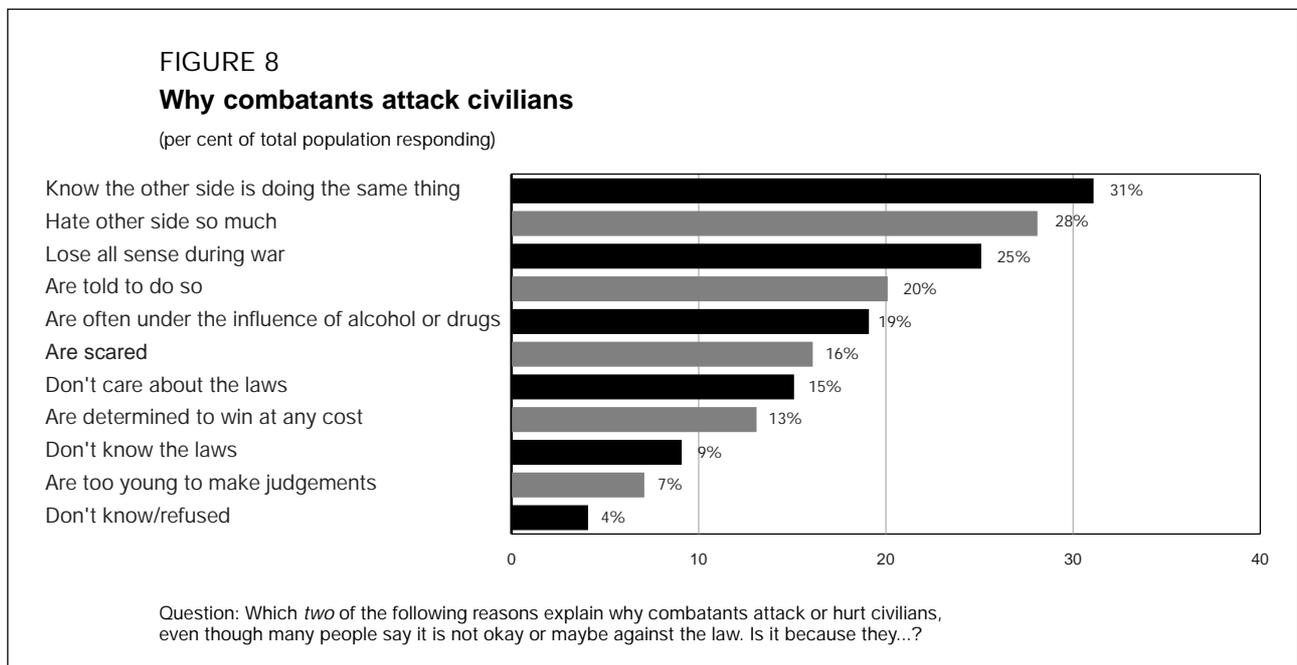
But in our war, moving the population was part of the plan. It was planned. (FG, ex-soldiers, Sarajevo)

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## Explaining the war on civilians

The events in Bosnia-Herzegovina in themselves require explanation – a need that this consultation has only reinforced. The great majority of people express adherence to norms that say wars must have limits; the great majority believe that certain acts are wrong. At the same time, many people in Bosnia-Herzegovina are ready to accept that the line between combatants and civilians was blurred during wartime: they are prepared to attack populated villages and towns; wage war on civilian areas to hurt the enemy; plant landmines even at risk to civilians; and, where necessary, torture prisoners. This attitude has produced a war in which civilians are easily assimilated as combatants and, indeed, in which civilians are the objects of attack.

When people themselves try to explain the contradiction, they focus, in the first instance, on hatred of the other side (28 per cent), which leads to people losing all sense (25 per cent), exacerbated by the belief that the other side is doing the same thing (31 per cent).<sup>15</sup> (See Figure 8.)



In effect, people say the limits have broken down because of the intense nationalist sentiment, now expressed in war. However, looking at the in-depth discussions, the explanation goes much further.

### Defending yourself: suspending the limits in war

The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina incorporated and mobilized nearly the whole of the population. As observed earlier, 75 per cent – 86 per cent according to the parallel study – supported a side. However, “side” in this war came to have a very clear meaning that tended to set aside or greatly relax the limits in war. Each side reports a desperate struggle to defend its own community from attack. To do that required suspending the limits.

The soldiers are the starting point, according to the in-depth research. In all three communities, they are defined as “our soldiers”, the real soldiers who defended the community from the “aggressors”. People’s first instinct is to think of their own soldiers, who accepted the call to arms to defend the community from the most dire consequences.

<sup>15</sup> It is important to note that in the parallel survey, a greater number gravitated to the response “hate the other side so much” (38 per cent). It may well be that respondents are less willing to focus on hate when speaking to a Red Cross interviewer.

Ours were soldiers and theirs were "aggressors". They attacked us. (IDI, family member of missing person, Gorazde)

A soldier is somebody who defended the country. (IDI, family member of missing person, Gorazde)

If the Yugoslav Army really were [a] people's army, people should not have attacked it. And real soldiers were those who stood up against such an army. (IDI, soldier, East Mostar)

Soldiers? They are the people who went to war with some ideals and not to rob people. They went to defend their families, country and homes. (IDI, student, West Mostar)

Soldiers were men who tried to protect their families from falling apart. Real soldiers, I mean. There were soldiers of the other kind. (IDI, armed forces, Bihac)

They were the people who were ready to give themselves. (IDI, ex-soldier, Orasje)

They were the people who felt their nation, their religion and their very being were endangered. (IDI, ex-soldier, Bijeljina)

On the one side, they were patriots who entered the war with open hearts and, on the other side, there were, should I say, profiteers. (IDI, doctor, Jajce)

Soldiers were all persons who were involved in the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. But I do not consider those who attacked us to be soldiers. Soldiers were those who wanted to defend the state of Bosnia-Herzegovina. (IDI, family member of missing person, East Mostar)

I think of a soldier as a person who defended what we had before the war, who defended Sarajevo as it used to be. (IDI, woman invalid, Sarajevo)

A soldier fought for his family and his identity. (IDI, medical staff, Prijedor)

All the people who tried to preserve their cultural or national pride. They were soldiers. (FG, journalists, West Mostar)

Bosnian Army soldiers were patriots. They were men who decided to defend their town, their house, their family. (FG, journalists, Sarajevo)

The collapse of the limits on what soldiers do in war cannot be fully understood without beginning with the notion of the soldier as defender. The perception that soldiers are defending the community from attack changes everything with regard to the rules of war. Across all the communities of Bosnia-Herzegovina, people say soldiers, as defenders, are required to do whatever is necessary to save their communities. For the real soldiers, not the "aggressors", the rules would often have to be suspended.

If they are attacked, they have to do whatever there is to be done. (IDI, family member of missing person, Gorazde)

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Defenders cannot break any rules. Maybe they made some mistakes, but not much. If you defend yourself you cannot break any rules. (IDI, soldier, East Mostar)

We just had to defend our country, our Republic... These institutions that gather here in Bosnia should make the difference between aggressor and defender. That is the problem... I do not agree that an equal crime is committed by somebody who attacks and somebody who defends himself. (IDI, soldier, East Mostar)

But if you are in a position to defend your own life, to defend your family, you would be forced to do what you would never have done otherwise, in a normal situation. (FG, mothers, Banja Luka)

There is no crime if you have done something while defending your home and family. There is no crime then. (FG, journalists, West Mostar)

If somebody is in front of my home attacking, there is no rule against defending. Nothing is forbidden. (FG, ex-soldiers, West Mostar)

I even think that people who defend themselves could not commit any crime. The crime is on the enemy's side. The rest is a legal technicality. (FG, ex-soldiers, West Mostar)

One of the soldiers began with a presumption for the defence: "To defend one's homeland, one's family, one's village, you might even say, one's State – that is absolutely necessary." In the actual: "In hand-to-hand combat, one knows that it is either defeat or be defeated." However, this soldier also knows that once the limits are gone, it is hard to re-establish them. "[When], for instance, two men are holding someone helpless and the third one is cutting his throat, I am strongly against it. It was never to my liking. I spent four years in war and never liked people who did that, but everyone is his own master." (FG, ex-soldiers, Banja Luka)

In this context, landmines are simply a line of defence for "our side" that is, unfortunately, necessary for survival. Many of the respondents spoke of the need for clear maps to minimize the problems later, but the requirements of defence overrode all others:

It is okay to plant the mines to stop the enemy. You just need to draw a plan, so when the aggressor is expelled, you could dig the mines out. (IDI, soldier, East Mostar)

That is the way to prevent the enemy entering your territory. (IDI, student, West Mostar)

I am a doctor, so I think it is not okay. I do understand the military position. They find it okay. (IDI, doctor, Jajce)

I would plant the mines if that would save our people. (IDI, family member of missing person, East Mostar)

The distinction between defender and aggressor defines this as a war with sides. People did not just identify with the various parties to the conflict; they did not just take up a nationalist identity. They adopted an historical interpretation of events that established their own community as the defenders

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against aggression and their own soldiers as defenders of community and family. For them, the limits on soldiers' behaviour are greatly relaxed or suspended.

From the survey, it becomes apparent how serious are the implications of "sidedness" for international humanitarian law. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, those who support a side in this conflict – 75 per cent – are much more likely than those who did not to accept attacks on non-combatants. They are more than three times more likely to accept attacking civilians who voluntarily provide food and shelter (15 per cent compared with 4 per cent) and almost twice as likely to accept attacking civilians who transport ammunition (42 per cent compared with 23 per cent). They are substantially more likely to see as "part of war" attacks on populated areas (36 per cent compared with 14 per cent) or depriving civilians of food, medicine or water in order to weaken the enemy (35 per cent compared with 22 per cent). The biggest difference of all is on the issue of landmines: 46 per cent of those who supported a side in the war see planting landmines as acceptable, even if it endangers civilians; just 19 per cent of those who did not support a side approve the use of landmines in these circumstances. (See Figure 9.)

**FIGURE 9**  
**Impact of sidedness**

(per cent of total population responding)<sup>16</sup>

Acceptance of attacks on civilians	Supported side	Did not support side
Okay to attack civilians who give food and shelter to enemy	15%	4%
Okay to attack civilians who transport ammunition for enemy	42%	23%
Would not help a wounded enemy combatant	42%	39%
Would not save a surrendering enemy combatant	39%	31%
Okay to deprive civilians of food, medicine or water to weaken enemy	35%	22%
Okay to attack enemy in populated villages or towns	36%	14%
Okay to attack religious or historical monuments to weaken enemy	12%	10%
Okay to plant landmines near civilians in order to weaken enemy	46%	19%

### **Towards a war on civilians**

It is important to remember that the overwhelming majority of people in Bosnia-Herzegovina, in all communities, begin with the affirmation that civilians are innocent and that they should be in an entirely different position from combatants. As one member of the armed forces put it, "People should live and soldiers should fight." He then observed, "And it is hard to believe after such a dirty war as we had here." (IDI, armed forces, Bihac)

Because there was no clear delineation of civilian and combatant areas and because the war's goals frequently involved control over territory where civilians lived, the line between combatants and non-combatants became blurred, at least for some. It is worth recalling that a large majority of people (76 per cent) say that, in principle, combatants should "only attack combatants and leave civilians alone". Almost one in five say "attack combatants and avoid civilians as much as possible". Unfortunately, in the context of this war, "as much as possible" opens the door to a broad acceptance of attacks on non-combatants.

In every area, the people who say one should try to avoid civilians "as much as possible" are more open, sometimes markedly so, to attacks on civilians. Over half would not help a wounded enemy combatant, compared with a little more than one-third of those who say civilians should be left alone. The pattern is found in other similar situations: depriving civilians of food, medicine and water to weaken the enemy (49 versus 29 per cent); and planting landmines (51 versus 38 per cent). (See Figure 10.)

<sup>16</sup> This table compares the responses to a series of questions put to those who supported a side in the war and those who did not. For example, 15 per cent of those who supported a side were receptive to attacks on civilians who provided food and shelter to the enemy; only 4 per cent of those who did not support a side were open to such attacks.

FIGURE 10  
**Consequence of attitudes**  
 (per cent of total population responding)<sup>17</sup>

Acceptance of attacks on civilians	Avoid civilians as much as possible	Leave civilians alone
Okay to attack civilians who give food and shelter to the enemy	18%	11%
Okay to attack civilians who transport ammunition for the enemy	30%	26%
Would not help a wounded enemy combatant	52%	36%
Would not save a surrendering enemy combatant	48%	35%
Okay to deprive civilians of food, medicine or water in order to weaken the enemy	49%	29%
Okay to attack the enemy in populated villages or towns	41%	26%
Okay to attack religious or historical monuments to weaken the enemy	22%	10%
Okay to plant landmines near civilians in order to weaken the enemy	51%	38%

Of course, even those who say “leave civilians alone” seem ready to accept risks to civilians in the context of this war. After all, 38 per cent still find planting landmines acceptable, despite the risk to civilians.

Sometimes civilians become targets because they are in the line of fire, if the war is taking place in populated areas.

If there is a bunker in the village, it [the village] becomes a target. (IDI, student, West Mostar)

Because there were no classic fights... Religious objects were used as firing spots. This provoked the other side to pull them down. (IDI, displaced person, Tuzla)

There were cases in which guns were put on hospitals and, of course, another side’s soldiers would shoot at the hospital. (IDI, ex-soldier, Bijeljina)

But, you have to neutralize the threat coming from the building, you have to whatever it is – a religious structure or anything else. If it is impossible to accomplish with gunfire, then you use launchers, if not launchers then tanks or any other more powerful machines. Anyhow, you must eliminate it to ensure your own survival. That is so. (FG, ex-soldiers, Banja Luka)

If there is fire from a civilian object, we soldiers have a duty to destroy that firing centre. And the fact that the object is civilian is less important at that moment... So if soldiers act out of a civilian object, it is no longer a civilian object. It becomes a military target, and is supposed to be destroyed. (IDI, armed forces, Bihac)

In the Bosnian war, civilians were not just caught up in battle when they found themselves in the line of fire. The people in this war conceptualize a war that brings civilians and soldiers together in defence of their community and this does not permit a clear distinction between the two. This is the reality of the war. It also creates a conceptual legitimacy for the idea that civilians and combatants are joined in the same fight – whether they are defending their community under attack or trying to force the surrender or expulsion of a community. In either case, civilians and soldiers are joined.

<sup>17</sup> This table compares the responses to a number of questions put to those who have a conditional view of the distinction between combatants and civilians and those who have an absolute view. For example, 18 per cent of those with a conditional view (“avoid civilians as much as possible”) would accept attacks on civilians who provide food and shelter to the enemy; only 11 per cent of those with an absolute view (“leave civilians alone”) would entertain such attacks.

These civilians are more of an enemy than the real enemy. They are soldiers too. They are enemy logistics, and it is only natural to attack them. (IDI, soldier, Mostar)

Yes, because they are soldiers too. They just do not have uniforms. (IDI, student, West Mostar)

I was the biggest soldier in my opinion. While real soldiers fought at the front lines, we the wives fought our own war. (IDI, returnee, Bihac)

It is enemy logistics. They give them food and shelter. If soldiers stay in a civilian's apartment, you have to attack the apartment. (IDI, university student, Sarajevo)

There are soldiers, Bosnian Army soldiers, who fought at the battle lines, and I was a soldier too. My mother and everyone who stayed in Sarajevo were soldiers. My opinion is that all civilians who stayed in Bosnia were soldiers – the children, the journalists who tried to explain to the world what was going on. They are all soldiers. There are some nuances, but they were all soldiers. (FG, journalists, Sarajevo)

Everybody was a soldier at some point. Soldiers cannot survive alone, without logistics. Even common citizens became soldiers at a certain point in some way. They were at least part of civil protection. They cooked, gave blood, gave whatever they could and had. They sheltered soldiers. (IDI, WWII veteran/partisan, East Mostar)

We called them collaborators... But they should not be killed. They should be beaten up or something similar, but no, they should not be killed. (IDI, family member of missing person, Bijeljina)

I think nearly all were soldiers, except small kids and old people. In several ways. Housewives made bread, journalists would report. All, all of them were soldiers. (FG, journalists, West Mostar)

In my village, everybody who was able to walk was forced to be a soldier because thousands of Muslim soldiers of the Bosnian Army attacked them. (FG, journalists, West Mostar)

People who are ready to fight should go to battle to save their country. Even people who do not go to battle should help them... If they cannot fight, they should cook for the soldiers. (IDI, soldier, East Mostar)

Some soldiers affirmed the unity of civilian and combatant, but still refused to give in to the notion that family members were therefore exposed as combatants.

We were not ready for this war. There was no food or anything. I could not separate from my family, and it is only logical that my family gives me food... If somebody imprisoned a member of my family, they should not kill my wife or child because of feeding me. And I, being a soldier, would never do that. I would not touch a member of an enemy soldier's family, because a soldier can not be separated from his family.

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Still, he concluded, "We were all one. The only difference was that I carried a rifle and my wife carried water. We all know the Sarajevo situation. I was fighting to preserve physical life and she was fighting to preserve her family." (FG, ex-soldiers, Sarajevo)

The merging of civilians and combatants takes place in their common struggle, but for many this also makes them both the object and the subject of the war. Because this was a struggle for a nation, civilians, their towns and land became part of the war. The purpose of the war is not just to defeat the troops, but also to demoralize the whole community. This is no longer the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

Let us remember the battle of Kosovo or the battle of Misar. They were not waged in populated areas. They were waged in agreed battlefields and the winners took the territories of the defeated. It is not so anymore. Now, the war is waged on a psychological basis. Simply, the psychological moment is the most important. (FG, mothers, Banja Luka)

After all, in this thinking, the civilians may not be so innocent.

I am not so sure about them being innocent civilians. Upon the emergence of nationalist parties, evil things started happening in Bosnia-Herzegovina. How guilty were the civilians of voting for, say, SDA, HDZ, SDS or other nationalist parties?... So, we are all somewhat responsible. And you are now trying to set the civilians apart. Naturally, children should be excluded from such considerations. Nobody asked them anything. But the majority of citizens, almost 90 per cent I would say, certainly voted for that in a way. (FG, ex-soldiers, Banja Luka)

A Mostar journalist took that thinking to its logical conclusion: "By killing civilians, you kill the whole enemy corpus, the national corpus." (FG, journalists, West Mostar)

### **The extremists**

People in Bosnia-Herzegovina understand that war – particularly one that is hastily organized, without formal armies, and without limits – creates a space for a range of players who use it to great excess. Sometimes they are immature people, now handed a weapon; sometimes they are soldiers under the influence of drugs or alcohol; sometimes they are mentally unbalanced people; and sometimes they are extreme nationalists.

The ex-soldiers in the Banja Luka focus group discussion, who describe the war on civilians in greatest detail, highlight the extremists and "non-normal" people who drove the war to excess.

That was done by perverts. Normal people would never do that, although one might wonder to what extent sanity existed at all in this war. (FG, ex-soldiers, Banja Luka)

There are many people of suspicious moral qualities in the military, who will do anything in a critical situation. (FG, ex-soldiers, Banja Luka)

Say, when we apply for a license to carry firearms in peacetime, we have so many formalities to satisfy. However, in this war, anyone who opened his hand, and many who did not, was given weapons – regardless of his state of mind. For disturbed people, it is irrelevant who they are shooting at – be it a Serb or anyone else. When they are drafted, their mental state is not considered. The only thing

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that matters is their number. Hence we had attacks against civilians and many other immoral acts. They committed many immoral acts. For, those carrying weapons feel powerful. (FG, ex-soldiers, Banja Luka)

The problem of my unit, the xxxth unit [edited for anonymity], was that we had very few active officers, that is, people who graduated from military schools. There were people who commanded battalions and who, without my wishing to undervalue anyone, having only finished secondary school, had no control over the army. They could not maintain army discipline and morale, so that all kinds of incidents happened. (FG, ex-soldiers, Banja Luka)

While the discussion was most developed among ex-soldiers in Banja Luka, others spoke about such people in other circumstances.

Oh, my Lord. They should not fight at all. They should not have guns at all. And even now, there are extremists. (IDI, displaced person, Prijedor)

Those other people, they were the underachievers and failures before the war in their civilian lives, and when they were given weapons, they vented it on other people. (FG, mothers, Banja Luka)

There are some maniacs. All they do is kill. (FG, ex-soldiers, Sarajevo)

Some of the ex-soldiers in Banja Luka talked, not just of perverts and extremists, but of powerful people who sent the common people to wage this war. The common soldiers were "the poor and miserable, farmers and workers"; some of the "villagers... took food with them to service". These were the "patriots". In the meantime, military commanders used the ordinary soldiers to serve their designs.

Our commanders thought that that was the way to take as many territories that needed to be taken as possible. I cannot judge the rightness of it, because I was a common soldier, a private. (FG, ex-soldiers, Banja Luka)

"So, when we consider the matter of conscience", one of the Serb ex-soldiers declared, it is the power-wielders, military commanders and politicians, not fighters, who should be asked."

### **Circularity: the war experience**

The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina mobilized a very large percentage of the population as combatants, brought a large portion into the war zone, and left many scarred physically and psychologically. This experience, rather than teaching people the dangers of blurring the line between combatants and non-combatants, has actually left them more ready to do so.

As seen in the table below, those who have experienced the war with some intensity are more open to attacks on civilians. Combatants, as well as those who have lived under enemy control, are particularly open to the use of landmines, even when they endanger civilians. They are also very cautious about saving surrendering combatants. Those who have lost a family member are cautious about the use of landmines, but not about the treatment of surrendering fighters. They are also more willing to deprive civilians of food, medicine and water to weaken the enemy. Those who have been imprisoned are markedly more willing than any of the others to involve non-combatants in war or to risk endangering them. (See Figure 11.)

The embittering war experience has, even now, increased people's receptivity to attacks on civilians. At least with respect to international humanitarian law, war has a circularity that progressively undermines its limits.

FIGURE 11

**Impact of war experience**(per cent of population with specific war experiences)<sup>18</sup>

<b>Acceptance of attacks on civilians</b>	Would not help/save a wounded/surrendering enemy combatant	Okay to deprive civilians of food, medicine, water or electricity in order to weaken enemy	Okay to attack enemy in populated villages or towns knowing many civilians/women and children would be killed	Okay to plant landmines even though civilians may step on them
<b>Combatants</b>	41%	35%	37%	54%
<b>Forced to leave home</b>	45%	36%	32%	40%
<b>Family member killed</b>	47%	38%	31%	38%
<b>Serious damage to property</b>	41%	34%	32%	42%
<b>Wounded</b>	44%	37%	32%	48%
<b>House looted</b>	41%	35%	32%	37%
<b>Imprisoned</b>	42%	44%	33%	60%
<b>Lived under enemy control</b>	46%	35%	30%	52%
<b>All respondents</b>	34%	31%	28%	40%

<sup>18</sup> This table looks at people with different war experiences and compares their views on the treatment of civilians and combatants no longer taking part in the fighting. For example, of those who were combatants in the war 41 per cent would not help/save a wounded/surrendering enemy combatant; 35 per cent would deprive civilians of food, medicine, water and electricity to weaken the enemy; 37 per cent say it is okay to attack the enemy in populated villages; and 54 per cent accept the planting of landmines.

## Internationalization of the war

The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina has been internationalized. People see international forces as playing a major, even predominant role in the conflict and in the country's future. International institutions – from the ICRC and UNHCR to the UN, NATO, UNPROFOR, IFOR, SFOR – are considered to be as much a part of recent history as the various governments and armies. International treaties on war, particularly the Geneva Conventions, come first to mind when people consider what constraints there might have been on combatants in this war and what acts should now be punished.

### Geneva Conventions

The Geneva Conventions are known to almost everyone in Bosnia-Herzegovina: 80 per cent have heard of them, of whom 89 per cent can offer a roughly accurate account of their meaning.<sup>19</sup> Among those under 40 years of age, 90 per cent have heard of the Geneva Conventions. Knowledge is virtually absolute and unrelated to war experience.

Indeed, in the focus groups, when asked whether combatants could not do certain things in war, respondents immediately appended their replies with references to international rules. "International conventions, written decades ago, tell us how a soldier should behave — never mind if the war was offensive or defensive." (IDI, soldiers, East Mostar) "They should not do what is not according to international law." (IDI, ex-soldier, Orasje)

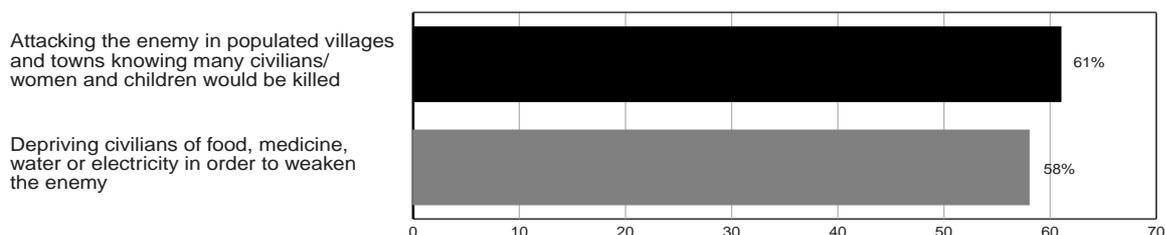
When asked what the Geneva Conventions "are about", people in Bosnia-Herzegovina offer an account that draws on their own norms and understanding of international conventions. Protecting human rights is most often mentioned (20 per cent), no doubt reflecting the role of the norm "humanness" discussed earlier. After that, people elaborate in their own way the rules of war: regulation of war in general (13 per cent); prohibit destroying certain targets (12 per cent); help vulnerable people, including women, children, elderly, wounded and refugees (5 per cent); bar some weapons (3 per cent); and prohibit war crimes (2 per cent). There is some emphasis on peace-making, humanitarian aid and even-handedness: trying to stop the war (7 per cent); help to all people in war (6 per cent); and helping any people in trouble (3 per cent).

Knowledge of the Geneva Conventions declines when it addresses the central challenge of the war – the war on civilians. Universality gives way to a murkier legal position: 61 per cent say there are laws that would prohibit soldiers from attacking the enemy in populated villages and towns; 58 per cent say that there are laws that bar combatants from depriving a town of food, medicine and water in order to weaken the enemy. (See Figure 12.) Just 46 per cent say such a siege is both wrong and unlawful. Finally, 25 per cent – one in four – say there are no laws that bar attacks of this kind on civilians.

FIGURE 12

### Knowledge of laws

(per cent of total population responding "yes")

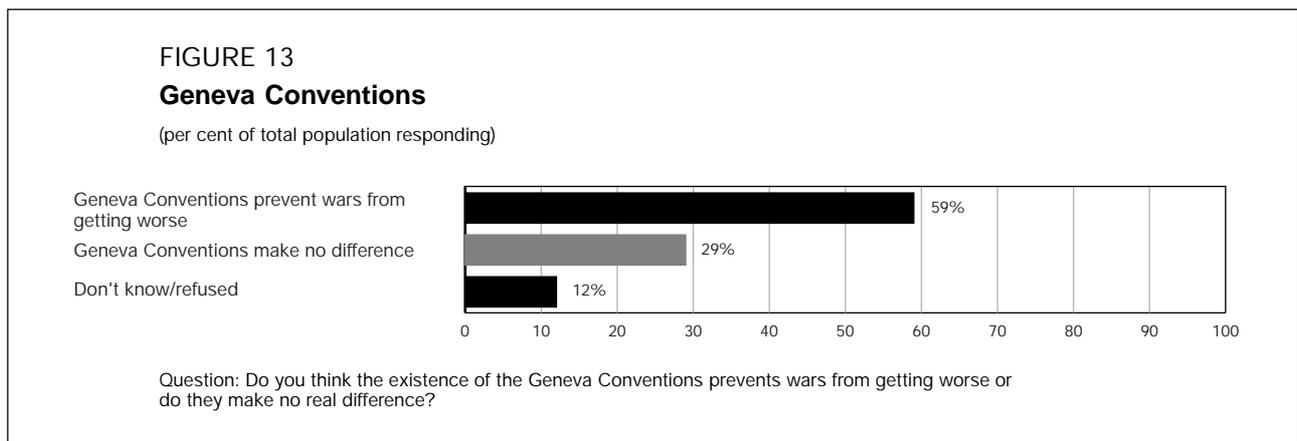


Question: Are there laws that say you can't do that, even if it would help weaken the enemy?

<sup>19</sup> In the parallel survey, 72 per cent of respondents say they have heard of the Geneva Conventions.

The belief that there are laws prohibiting war on civilians varies dramatically across the communities: only 18 per cent of Croats and Bosniacs say there is no applicable law, but fully 37 per cent of the Serbs say such actions are not against any rule or law. One-third of the combatants in the war and one-third of those who were imprisoned (29 per cent each) also say there are no applicable rules or laws.

Overall, almost twice as many people in Bosnia-Herzegovina think the Geneva Conventions prevent wars from getting worse (59 per cent), rather than make no difference (29 per cent).<sup>20</sup> (See Figure 13.) This positive view of the impact of the Geneva Conventions carries across all communities, regardless of their differing views on the role of the international community and of the scope of the Geneva Conventions. All the communities of Bosnia-Herzegovina accept that war must have limits and certain norms and rules should apply even if, as found earlier, the rules are frequently superceded by other considerations.



All the communities accept that some rules are so important that, if broken, the person who broke them should be punished (82 per cent).<sup>21</sup> Support for war-crimes prosecution is strongest among Bosniacs (91 per cent), but over 70 per cent of Croats and Serbs also believe there are important laws of war that, if broken, violators should be punished. Across all communities, 90 per cent would put war criminals on trial. These communities differ on many matters, but they all accept the concept of war crimes.

The concept of war crimes is rooted in the prevailing norms and international law. More people mention human rights law than any other category, a finding that is probably based on the norm that was so important to people's understanding of the limits in war. The largest bloc of responses refers to laws beyond Bosnia-Herzegovina: the Geneva Conventions (22 per cent), the International Tribunal in The Hague (10 per cent), laws of war (6 per cent) and war crimes (4 per cent). Together, 42 per cent of the responses centre on international law. Many fewer respondents mention the country's laws and institutions (10 per cent citing property law, the judiciary or the State). (See Figure 14.)

Indeed, in a follow-up question, respondents overwhelmingly say the rules of war are based on international law (69 per cent), rather than the laws of Bosnia-Herzegovina (11 per cent).

Over 60 per cent – rising to two-thirds of Bosniacs and Croats – believe an international criminal court should be responsible for punishing wrongdoers. Just 2 per cent think the military should judge and punish war criminals. In fact, a minority would turn to any of the national institutions. The Serbs have much less confidence in an international criminal court, though half believe it should assume responsibility for punishing war criminals.

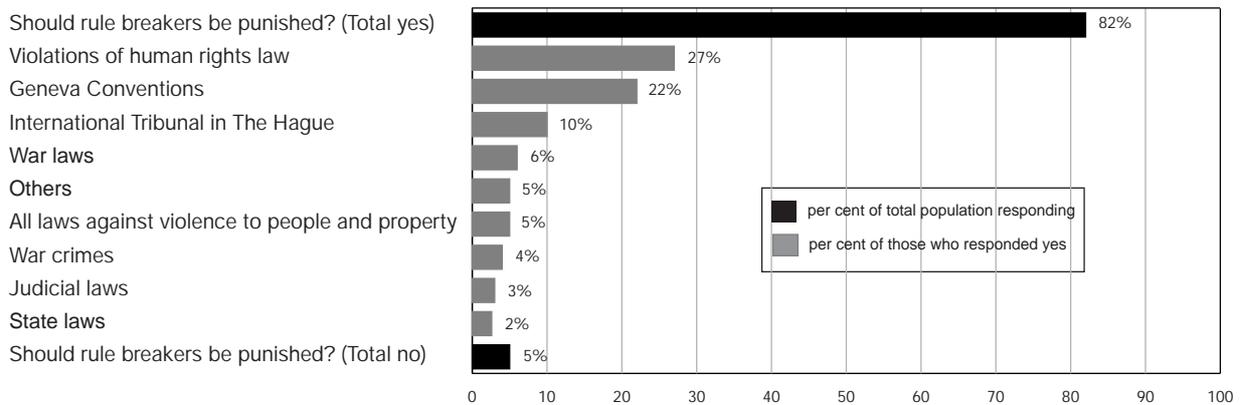
<sup>20</sup> In the parallel survey, support is somewhat less enthusiastic: 47 per cent say the Geneva Conventions prevent wars from getting worse, and 34 per cent say they make no difference.

<sup>21</sup> The belief that there are such laws is somewhat lower in the parallel survey, 73 per cent, but the figure is still very high.

FIGURE 14

**War crimes**

(per cent of total population responding)



Question: Are there rules or laws that are so important that, if broken during war, the person who broke them should be punished? So, what kind of rules are you thinking about?

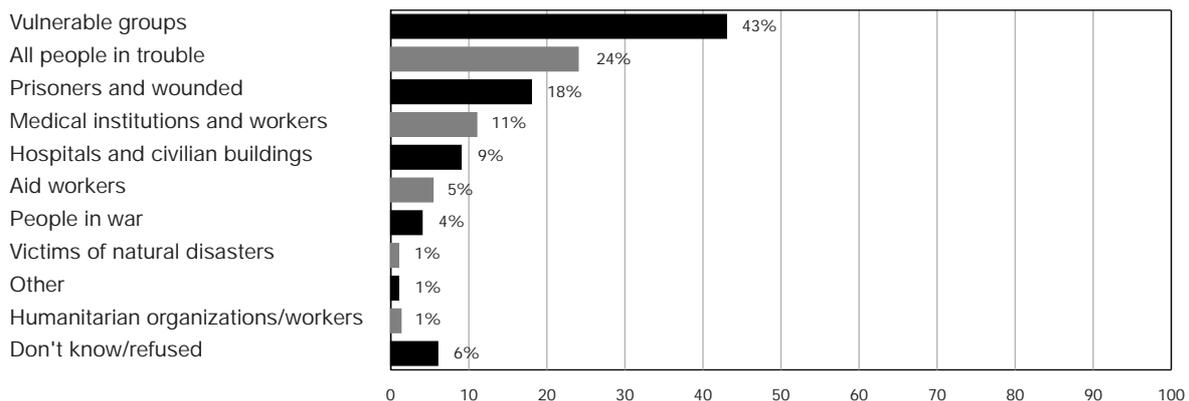
**The ICRC's role**

The ICRC and the Red Cross are known by almost everyone in this war zone: 91 per cent could correctly identify the red cross on a white background.<sup>22</sup> The ICRC/Red Cross is seen as an institution that, in the first instance, protects vulnerable groups, such as women, children, the elderly and sick (43 per cent), but many think it protects all people in trouble (24 per cent). Eighteen per cent associate it with protecting prisoners and the wounded; 11 per cent associate it with protecting hospitals and medical institutions and workers. (See Figure 15.)

FIGURE 15

**Red Cross and protection**

(per cent of total population responding)



Question: What kind of people or things does this symbol (red cross emblem) protect?

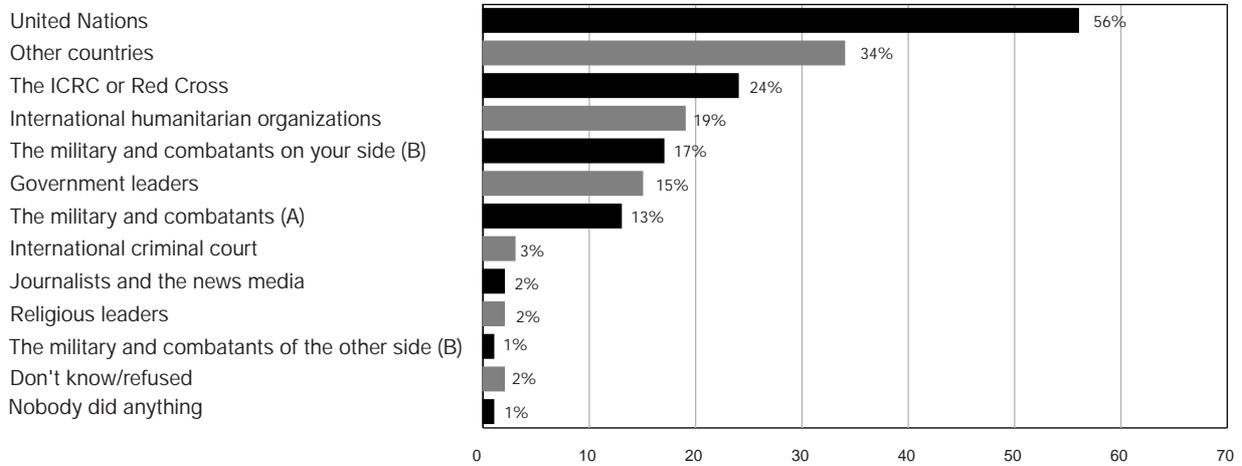
During the war, people think the UN played the biggest role in trying to stop attacks on civilian populations (56 per cent); after the UN, people think "other countries" played the biggest role (34 per cent). Only 24 per cent mention the ICRC or the Red Cross, which apparently was seen to help people in trouble, rather than to stop these actions. (See Figure 16.)

<sup>22</sup> The number was even higher for the parallel survey, suggesting that recognition was not produced by Red Cross interviewers.

FIGURE 16

**Biggest role**

(per cent of total population responding) (top two responses)



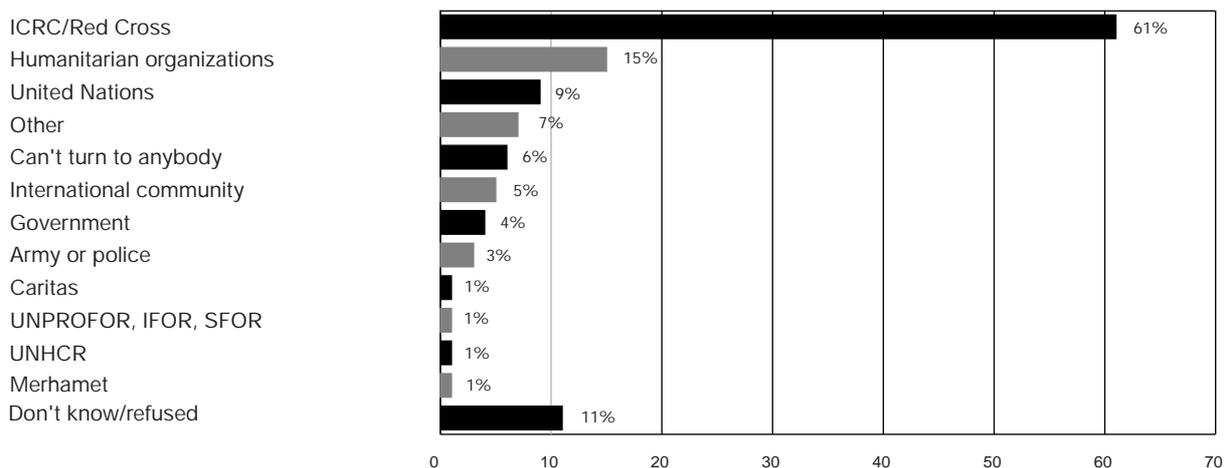
Question: I'm going to describe different kinds of people and organizations. Please tell me which *two* have played the biggest role during the war to stop civilian areas from being attacked or towns or villages being cut off from food, water, medical supplies and electricity.

When asked, "Whom would you turn to for help if civilian areas are attacked or towns or villages are cut off from food, water, medical supplies and electricity?" the people overwhelmingly respond that they would turn to the ICRC/Red Cross (61 per cent).<sup>23</sup> (See Figure 17.)

FIGURE 17

**Turn to for help**

(per cent of total population responding)



Question: Let me ask what can be done if during the war, civilian areas are attacked or towns or villages are cut off from food, water, medical supplies and electricity? To whom would you turn to get help or be protected?

**International forces**

The people of Bosnia-Herzegovina regard the role of other international players with more ambivalence. In the focus groups and in-depth interviews, people regularly credit the international community with bringing an end to the fighting, for stopping the killing, "for stopping the war". "Without them, we would still have war." (IDI displaced person, Prijedor) In the survey, significant numbers (42 per

<sup>23</sup> This result is 20 percentage points higher than for the parallel survey, but even in the parallel survey, there is no other organization that comes close to the Red Cross on this measure.

cent) say UNPROFOR made things better for civilians during the war; 39 per cent say it made things better for them personally. Only about 13 per cent say UNPROFOR made things worse.

Still, 38 per cent of the people say UNPROFOR made no difference for civilians during the war. While over half say that “safe areas” are a good idea” (52 per cent think they are a good idea versus 36 per cent who think they are a bad idea), people are more cautious about their impact on civilians’ welfare. Only 38 per cent say they made things better, 20 per cent say they made things worse and fully 33 per cent feel they made no difference.<sup>24</sup>

The public’s ambivalence towards the international community has many roots, manifest in the various national communities’ differing responses. According to the survey, half of the Bosniacs (50 per cent) think that “safe areas” are a good idea. They are also more likely to say that UNPROFOR and the “safe areas” helped civilians in the war. Yet, they are also more likely to say they made things worse. There is a lot of resentment towards the international community for failing to stay and protect the so-called protected area of Srebrenica.

I would like to stress that in my opinion the international community, more than the Serbs, is guilty of that crime [Srebrenica]. These people were in a protected area. (FG, family members of the missing, Sarajevo)

In the end, the international community gave me pain. They really disappointed us. (FG, family members of the missing, Sarajevo)

They are good if they help people get food, etc., and bad if they proclaim something to be a security zone and in the end the town gets attacked and destroyed. (IDI, returnees, Bihac)

But we know what happened. A lot of civilians got killed in these zones. The international community should have protected them better. (IDI, family member of missing person, Bijeljina)

In the in-depth discussions, there was a general feeling that, given the experience of Srebrenica, the international community had failed to deliver on its promise to protect the civilians. However, when asked to focus on their own personal situation in the war, a majority of Bosniacs say UNPROFOR made things better (50 per cent); only 10 per cent say it made things worse.

A majority of Croats think “safe areas” are a good idea in principle (56 per cent in favour versus 24 per cent opposed). Two-thirds of the Croats think they made things better (33 per cent) or made no difference (33 per cent); only 16 per cent think they made things worse. In general, they are also more inclined to see UNPROFOR in a positive light (41 per cent say that it made things better and 16 per cent that it made them worse). Their view, however, is fairly abstract and distant. Regarding their own personal situation, they mostly think UNPROFOR made no difference (42 per cent).

In the in-depth discussions, people in East Mostar credit UNPROFOR with getting people food and medicine during a dire period, but such compliments rarely stand alone. There is a great deal of criticism of the international community for being very late on the scene.

UNPROFOR stopped the war here. But maybe they started it too. UNPROFOR has done a lot of good things. They stopped war activities, but now they are very slow. (IDI, soldier, East Mostar)

<sup>24</sup> In the parallel survey, respondents are even more ambivalent: 31 per cent say they made things better, 24 per cent they made things worse and 28 per cent they made no difference.

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The international community will do what it finds suitable. If they want peace here, it will be peace. They should intervene at the first sign of fire. But they are always late. They were late in Croatia and in Bosnia; they are late now in Kosovo and Albania. (IDI, soldier, East Mostar)

In the survey, as well as in the more in-depth focus group research in Banja Luka, Serb respondents expressed deep cynicism about the role of the international community. Overall, the Serbs are divided on whether "safe areas" are a good or bad idea. Just a third (32 per cent) think they made things better; 16 per cent think they made things worse and 40 per cent think they made no difference. With regard to UNPROFOR, 55 per cent say it made no difference for civilians in general and 61 per cent say it made no difference for them personally.

For many of the Serbs and Croats in the in-depth research, the "safe areas" symbolized the partiality of the international community in this conflict. People were allowed to carry arms in these zones, which threatened the Serbs and delayed the war's conclusion. In the end, their failure to really create a safe area as promised endangered the civilians. "They made it more complicated... UNPROFOR said they could not do that because it was a free zone. Next day, all the civilians were killed." (FG, ex-soldiers, West Mostar) "The international community were responsible for every single life in those areas." (IDI, family member of missing person, East Mostar)

Many of the Serb participants in the Banja Luka focus groups and in-depth interviews view the safe areas as an indictment of them by the international community. Because the safe areas were perceived to be only for Bosniacs, they came to symbolize the international community's whole attitude towards the warring parties.

The zones were only Muslim, because they protected only the Muslims. So, it automatically follows that the Serbs are always the attackers and criminals, whereas the Muslims are always the victims. (FG, ex-soldiers, Banja Luka)

However, we know that Gorazde, Srebrenica, Zepa were also protected zones and there were armed forces there... They chiefly protected the Muslim enclaves. (FG, ex-soldiers, Banja Luka)

The international community's failure to act when Serb civilians were under assault in Krajina creates a powerful symbolic contrast.

[They] simply left the people to the tender mercies of the Croatian army. (FG, ex-soldiers, Banja Luka)

If you mean the protected zone of the Serb Republic of Krajina, then we are all familiar with its fate. That was the largest protected area. (FG, journalists, Banja Luka)

These hostile or ambivalent feelings towards UNPROFOR and the safe areas in Banja Luka and Mostar lead people to the conclusion that the international community was partial.

Regarding UNPROFOR, SFOR and others, they all made the mistake of taking one side in this war. Their members take sides. UNPROFOR was on one side and it made it worse for us here. (IDI, family member of missing person, East Mostar)

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UNPROFOR, SFOR, IFOR, even UNHCR and the UN are occupying forces, as I see it. (FG, journalists, West Mostar)

In the Mostar, Banja Luka and Sarajevo research, people observe that the international community – particularly NATO and the United States – chose to end this war, but left every group short of achieving its goals. The war did not end of its own accord, but when the international forces chose to intervene. This belief helped create among the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina a sense that they were powerless to control their own destinies.

I think Richard Holbrooke. He was ordered to stop the war in Bosnia. (IDI, student, West Mostar)

Turkey ruled for 600 years and went away, then Austro-Hungary, then Germany. The time will come for NATO to be ashamed of what they are doing to us now. (FG, ex-soldiers, Banja Luka)

Just as they ended it, they could have prevented it. (FG, journalists, Banja Luka)

If anyone could have stopped it, it was the British, that is, the American factor, or as it is now called, the world factor. It certainly did not depend on us. (FG, journalists, Banja Luka)

What is some American to me, or the world in general? They make all the moves and dispose of our lives, and we are powerless and small. (FG, mothers, Banja Luka)

One of the journalists in Sarajevo recalled: "We used to make jokes about Christiane Amanpour coming to Sarajevo. If she comes, you can expect something spectacular – NATO strikes or something of the kind." (FG, journalists, Sarajevo). For the journalists, she symbolized the ultimate internationalization of the Bosnian conflict.



## Annex 1: General methodology

The ICRC's worldwide consultation on the rules of war, which is the cornerstone of the People on War project, was carried out in 12 countries that have been ravaged by war over the past decades. In each case, the ICRC conducted a public opinion survey with a representative sample of the country's population and organized in-depth interviews and focus groups with those involved in or directly affected by the conflict.

For comparative purposes, the views of people were also sought in France, Russian Federation, Switzerland, United Kingdom and United States on the basis of the opinion survey only.

The consultation was based on three principal research methods:

- A survey of 1,000 (in some cases 1,500) respondents representative of the country's general population;
- Focus groups (between 8 and 12 depending on the country) allowing a professionally moderated and intensive discussion in small groups;
- In-depth, face-to-face interviews (about 20 in each country) with individuals with specific war experiences.

In almost every case, the ICRC and local Red Cross or Red Crescent staff conducted the interviews, organized the focus groups, including recruitment of participants, and helped with translation/interpreting. Greenberg Research, with a local partner company, developed the sample design for the survey, processed data in electronic form, provided moderators and prepared transcripts.

### Opinion survey

*Questionnaire.* The opinion survey questioned people on their war experiences and views on international humanitarian law. The survey was mainly standardized for all countries, though the wording was modified to reflect each context and to achieve consistent meaning. About 10 per cent of the questions were contextual and in many cases unique to the country. In an additional five countries, the questionnaire was designed to elicit people's perceptions on war and humanitarian law.

The questionnaires were developed by Greenberg Research, in consultation with the ICRC, on the basis of interviews with humanitarian law experts in the United States and Europe. The survey and questions were pre-tested in Mozambique and Colombia.

*Sample design.* In each country, interviews were held with 1,000 to 1,500 respondents, selected by a stratified, multistage cluster sampling method. The sample was stratified to ensure representation (500 interviews) from each of the principal conflict-affected geographic areas or ethnic/religious groups. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, for example, this meant some 1,500 interviews (500 from Republika Srpska and 500 each from the Bosniac and Croat areas of the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina); in Israel, the occupied territories and the autonomous territories, this meant 1,000 interviews (500 in Israel and 500 in the occupied territories and the autonomous territories). These areas were divided into urban and rural geographic units (strata), to ensure representation of urban and rural populations.

The local partner randomly selected small geographic units within these strata. These units – 100 to 200 in each country – constituted the sampling points for the survey. In each geographic unit, 10 households (though fewer in some countries) were selected using a random route method appropriate to

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the country. In some cases, interviewers were provided with a map and a route; in others, interviewers were simply given a route and selection instructions.

Within households, respondents were selected using a Kish grid (a respondent selection key that employs a combination of random numbers, alphabet codes and the number of available members in a household to identify the appropriate respondent) or the birthday criterion (a respondent selection process that employs dates of birth to determine the appropriate respondent). Interviewers were to make three attempts to achieve a completed interview, including locating the respondent elsewhere. In nearly every country, non-response was below 10 per cent.

The demographic distribution of the surveyed respondents was compared with the best available census data on education, age, household type and occupation. Where the sample survey was sharply askew (e.g., too many college-educated or too many young respondents), statistical weights were applied to eliminate the bias.

Interviews carried out by phone reached 755 adults in France, 1,000 in Switzerland, 750 in the United Kingdom and 1,000 in the United States, and 1,000 face-to-face interviews were carried out in the Russian Federation.

*Survey administration.* In nearly all the countries, the survey was administered by the ICRC, with the assistance of Greenberg Research and a local research partner. Interviews were conducted by Red Cross or Red Crescent staff. Greenberg Research provided training, which typically took two days.

*Parallel research.* In three of the countries – Colombia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Philippines – Greenberg Research commissioned a parallel quantitative survey, administered by a local research company using professional interviewers, in order to identify patterns of bias. The results of the parallel studies were then compared with the results of the ICRC-administered surveys. The exercise found only a few areas of systematic bias. Those interviewed by the ICRC and Red Cross or Red Crescent staff, for example, were consistently more supportive of the ICRC's role and more aware of the Geneva Conventions and the rules of war. However, the parallel research found few systematic differences in opinions on international humanitarian law. The ICRC results closely resemble the parallel survey results on most other questions. (A technical report assessing the parallel research and Red Cross bias is available separately.)

### **In-depth research**

*Focus groups.* The focus groups provided a relatively unstructured environment for people to discuss their war experiences freely, express their views on the appropriate limits to war and consider possible actions against those who exceed them. To be effective, the groups had to be as homogeneous as possible, that is, the participants all had to have similar characteristics. Thus, in general, the participants in a group came from the same area, were all male or all female and shared an important experience (e.g., families of missing persons, ex-soldiers, ex-fighters, prisoners, teachers or journalists). The discussions were frequently intense and emotional and provide a rich commentary on how the public approaches these issues.

In each country, 8 to 12 focus groups were organized – four in each of the principal conflict areas. The participants were recruited by Red Cross or Red Crescent staff, based on guidelines provided by Greenberg Research. The local research company provided a professional moderator, who facilitated the discussions using guidelines prepared by Greenberg Research.

The discussions were held in focus-group facilities, school classrooms, hotel rooms and even in the open air, if, for example, they involved guerrilla fighters. ICRC, Red Cross/Red Crescent and

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Greenberg Research staff observed and listened to the discussions from an adjoining location, with simultaneous translation in English. The focus group discussions were recorded and later transcribed in English.

*In-depth interviews.* To help interpret the full meaning of the survey responses, about 20 in-depth interviews were conducted with individuals who had had specific war experiences. The in-depth interview guidelines repeated questions from the public opinion survey, although they allowed for open-ended, rather than categorized responses. Interviewers were encouraged to probe and follow up on responses.

The in-depth interviews involved a broad range of people – officers, medical personnel, students (secondary school and university), journalists, former combatants, refugees, displaced persons, family members of missing persons, war invalids and others.

The interviews were recorded on tape, transcribed and translated into English by the local partner.

## Annex 2: Questionnaire\*

### Introduction

We are doing a series of interviews on **[NAME OF COUNTRY]** and would like your help with that. Would it be possible to ask a few questions to the person who is 18 years or older and whose birthday is **[FIRST AFTER TODAY]**? **[IF NECESSARY: The interview will take about 30 minutes.]** The questions are about your experiences and opinions on the [war/armed conflict] in **[NAME OF COUNTRY OR REGION]**. Your identity will remain absolutely confidential.

Let me begin by asking you some questions about yourself to make sure we are talking to all kinds of people. If you don't want to answer, feel free to tell me so and we will move on to the next question.

1. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_

[Don't know/refused]

2. How many years of school have you had? \_\_\_\_\_ years

[Don't know/refused]

3. What is your current family situation?

Married (have a husband or wife)

Single

Live together with someone (in a permanent relationship)

Divorced (or separated)

Spouse of missing person

Widow(er)

[Don't know/refused]

4. Do you have children? **[FOLLOW UP IF "YES"]** How many?

No children

Yes \_\_\_ children

5. What is your job now or are you not working?

Farmer

Manual worker

Skilled worker

Self-employed

Housewife/home care

Soldier (combatant)

Government employee

Private sector employee

Teacher/professor/intellectual

Pensioner/retired

Unemployed (but looking for work)

Unemployed (not looking for work)

Student

Other **[SPECIFY]**

[Don't know/refused]

\* This questionnaire is the standard one used in the 12 countries affected by conflict in the last decades. Some contextual questions were added for specific countries. These do not figure here, but are reflected in the findings presented in each Country Report.

6. Let me ask about the war in [COUNTRY NAME]. Did the war take place in the area where you were living or did the war take place mainly somewhere else?

- Area where you were living → GO TO Q7  
 Somewhere else? → GO TO Q8  
 Both [Volunteered response] → GO TO Q8  
 [Don't know/refused]? → GO TO Q8

7. **[IF "AREA WHERE YOU WERE LIVING" IN PREVIOUS QUESTION]** Did you live in that area before the [war/armed conflict], move voluntarily, or were you forced to move? **[PROBE IF RESPONDENT SAYS "THERE HAS ALWAYS BEEN ARMED CONFLICT"]**

- Live in same area  
 Moved voluntarily  
 Forced to move  
 [Don't know/refused]

8. **[ASK OF ALL RESPONDENTS]** During the [war/armed conflict], did you ever find yourself in a situation of being a combatant and carrying a weapon?

- Yes — combatant, carried weapon  
 No — not a combatant  
 [Don't know/refused]

9. **[ASK OF ALL RESPONDENTS]** Is there anything that combatants should not be allowed to do in fighting their enemy? **[PROBE AND WRITE ANSWERS AS FULLY AS POSSIBLE]**

**[IF NO RESPONSE, GO TO Q11]**

10. **[IF RESPONDENT GIVES ANY RESPONSE TO PREVIOUS QUESTION]** Could you tell me the main reason why they should not do that? Is that because...? **[READ AND ROTATE]**

- It's wrong → GO TO Q10a  
 It just causes too many problems → GO TO Q10b  
 [Don't know/refused] → GO TO Q11

**[FOLLOW UP IF MORE THAN ONE REASON SELECTED]** Which would be the main reason?

10a. **[IF "IT'S WRONG"]** When you say, it's wrong, is it primarily wrong because it is...? **[READ AND ROTATE] [TWO RESPONSES ALLOWED]**

- Against your religion  
 Against your personal code  
 Against the law  
 Against what most people here believe  
 Against your culture  
 Against human rights  
 Other **[SPECIFY]**  
 [Don't know/refused]

10b. [IF "IT JUST CAUSES TOO MANY PROBLEMS"] When you say, it just causes too many problems, are you thinking it...? [READ AND ROTATE] [TWO RESPONSES ALLOWED]

- Produces too much hate and division
- Causes too much psychological damage
- Produces too much destruction
- Causes too much physical suffering
- Other [SPECIFY]
- [Don't know/refused]

11. Which two of these words best describe the war for you personally? [READ AND ROTATE]

- Horrible
- Disruptive
- Humiliating
- Exciting
- Hateful
- Challenging
- Hopeful
- Confusing
- Uncertainty
- Powerless
- Remote
- [Don't know/refused]

*Note: Version used in countries where there are no clear sides for most of the population; for countries where there are sides, half the surveys will be asked Version A (without sided wording) and half Version B (with sided wording).*

12. Now I would like to ask you some *general* questions about how, in your view, combatants should behave in times of war.

**Version A:** When combatants attack to weaken the enemy, should they...? [READ AND ROTATE]

**Version B:** When combatants from your side attack to weaken the enemy, should they...? [READ AND ROTATE]

- Attack enemy combatants and civilians
  - Attack enemy combatants and avoid civilians as much as possible
- OR**
- Attack only enemy combatants and leave the civilians alone
  - [Don't know/refused]

[FOLLOW-UP IF CONFUSION ABOUT YOUR/OTHER SIDE] Just imagine that there is a side in the conflict that you support more than any other side.

*Note: in the next set of questions we will be randomly splitting the sample in two. Version 1 will be asked of one half and version 2 will be asked of the other half. If there are clear sides to the war, Version 1 coincides with Version A and Version 2 coincides with Version B. (This means there will always be two and exactly two versions of the questionnaire.)*

Let me ask you about some things that combatants may do to weaken the enemy they are fighting against. Please tell me for each of these things whether it is okay or not okay to do it, to weaken the enemy.

13. **Version 1:** Attacking civilians who voluntarily gave food and shelter to enemy combatants. Would it be okay or not okay to attack them in order to weaken the enemy?

**Version 2:** Attacking civilians who were forced to give food and shelter to enemy combatants. Would it be okay or not okay to attack them in order to weaken the enemy?

- Okay  
 Not okay  
 [Don't know/refused]

14. **Version 1:** Attacking civilians who voluntarily transported ammunition for enemy combatants defending their town. Would it be okay or not okay to attack them to weaken the enemy?

**Version 2:** Attacking civilians who were forced to transport ammunition for enemy combatants defending their town. Would it be okay or not okay to attack them to weaken the enemy?

- Okay  
 Not okay  
 [Don't know/refused]

15. I will now describe some situations that may happen during a [war/armed conflict]. For each situation, I would like you to imagine that you are part of that situation. Tell me how you think you would behave if the decisions were completely up to you. Here comes the first imaginary situation.

**Version 1:** Would you save the life of a surrendering enemy combatant who killed a person close to you?

- Would save  
 Would not save  
 [Don't know/refused]

**Version 2:** Would you help a wounded enemy combatant who killed a person close to you?

- Would help  
 Would not help  
 [Don't know/refused]

Now I'm going to ask your opinion on some of the things combatants might do in times of [war/armed conflict].

- 16a. **Version A:** What about depriving the civilian population of food, medicine or water in order to weaken the enemy?

**Version B:** What about depriving the civilian population on the other side of food, medicine or water in order to weaken the enemy?

Is that wrong or just part of war?

- 
- Wrong
  - Part of war
  - Both [Volunteered response]
  - [Don't know/refused]

16b. **Version A:** Are there any laws or rules that say you can't do that, even if it would help weaken the enemy, or are there no laws or rules to stop that?

**Version B:** Are there any laws or rules that say you can't do that, even if it would help your side weaken the enemy, or are there no laws or rules to stop that?

- Laws — can't do that
- No laws
- [Don't know/refused]

17a. **Version 1:** What about attacking enemy combatants in populated villages or towns in order to weaken the enemy, knowing that many civilians would be killed?

**Version 2:** What about attacking enemy combatants in populated villages or towns in order to weaken the enemy, knowing that many women and children would be killed?

Is that wrong or just part of war?

- Wrong
- Part of war
- Both [Volunteered response]
- [Don't know/refused]

17b. **Version A:** Are there any laws or rules that say you can't do that, even if it would help weaken the enemy, or are there no laws or rules to stop that?

**Version B:** Are there any laws or rules that say you can't do that, even if it would help your side weaken the enemy, or are there no laws or rules to stop that?

- Laws — can't do that
- No laws
- [Don't know/refused]

18. **[ASK ONLY IN WAR ZONES WHERE APPROPRIATE]** What about attacking religious and historical monuments, in order to weaken the enemy. Is that wrong or just part of war?

- Wrong
  - Part of war
  - Both [Volunteered response]
  - [Don't know/refused]
-

19. **[ASK ONLY IN WAR ZONES WHERE APPROPRIATE]** What about taking civilian hostages in order to get something in exchange? Is that wrong or just part of war?

- Wrong  
 Part of war  
 Both [Volunteered response]  
 [Don't know/refused]

20. **[ASK ONLY IN WAR ZONES WHERE APPROPRIATE]** Now a question about the "protected areas". Do you think that these "protected areas" are a good or a bad idea?

- Good idea  
 Bad idea  
 [Don't know/refused]

21. **[ASK ONLY IN WAR ZONES WHERE APPROPRIATE]** Did the "protected areas" make it better or worse for civilians during the war, or did they make no difference?

- Better  
 Worse  
 No difference  
 [Don't know/refused]

22. **[ASK ONLY IN WAR ZONES WHERE APPROPRIATE] Version 1:** Did the "Peace support operation" make it better or worse for civilians during the war, or didn't it make any difference?

**Version 2:** Did the "Peace support operation" make it better or worse for you personally during the war, or didn't it make any difference?

- Better  
 Worse  
 No difference  
 [Don't know/refused]

**Version A:** Let me ask you about some other things that might happen during war to weaken the enemy. Please tell me for each of these things whether it is okay or not okay to do it in order to weaken the enemy.

**Version B:** Let me ask you about some other things that your side might do to weaken the enemy during war. Please tell me for each of these things whether it is okay or not okay to do it in order to weaken the enemy.

23. First, are there types of weapons that should just never be used during war? **[FOLLOW UP IF YES]** What types of weapons would you think of? **[CHECK RESPONSE BELOW] [DO NOT READ CHOICES] [MULTIPLE ANSWERS ALLOWED]**

- Landmines  
 Laser weapons  
 Napalm  
 Nuclear weapons  
 Chemical weapons  
 Cluster bombs

- Other [SPECIFY]
- No types of weapons allowed
- [Don't know/refused]

24. **Version A:** Combatants planting landmines to stop the movement of enemy combatants, even though civilians may step on them accidentally. Is it okay or not okay to do that if it would weaken the enemy?

**Version B:** Combatants on your side planting landmines to stop the movement of enemy combatants, even though civilians may step on them accidentally. Is it okay or not okay to do that if it would weaken the enemy?

- Okay, if necessary
- Not okay
- [Don't know/refused]

25. In war, combatants sometimes attack or hurt civilians, even though many people say it is not okay and maybe against the law. So please tell me why you think combatants attack civilians anyway. **[PROBE AND WRITE ANSWERS AS FULLY AS POSSIBLE]**

26. Which *two* of the following reasons best explain why combatants attack or hurt civilians, even though many people say it is not okay or maybe against the law. Is it because they...? **[READ AND ROTATE RESPONSES] [FOLLOW-UP IF MORE THAN TWO REASONS SELECTED]** Which would be the two main reasons?

- Don't care about the laws
- Hate the other side so much
- Are determined to win at any cost
- Lose all sense during war
- Are too young to make judgements
- Don't know the laws
- Are often under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- Are scared
- Are told to do so
- Know the other side is doing the same thing
- [Don't know/refused]

27a. Now let me ask you how *captured combatants* should be treated.

**Version A:** Must a captured enemy combatant be allowed to contact relatives, or doesn't that have to be allowed?

**Version B:** Must your side allow a captured enemy combatant to contact relatives, or don't you have to allow that?

- Must allow
- Don't have to allow
- [Don't know/refused]

27b. **Version A:** Is it true that a captured enemy combatant cannot be subjected to torture to obtain important military information, or can captured combatants be subjected to torture?

**Version B:** Is it true that your side cannot subject a captured enemy combatant to torture to obtain important military information, or can you subject captured combatants to torture?

- Cannot subject
- Can subject
- [Don't know/refused]

27c. **Version A:** Must a captured enemy combatant be allowed a visit by a representative from an independent organization outside the prison or camp, or doesn't that have to be allowed?

**Version B:** Must your side allow a captured enemy combatant to be visited by a representative from an independent organization from outside the prison or camp, or don't you have to allow that?

- Must allow → GO TO Q27d
- Don't have to allow → GO TO Q28
- [Don't know/refused] → GO TO Q28

27d. **[IF "MUST ALLOW"]** Which of the following people should be allowed to visit captured enemy combatants...? **[READ AND ROTATE RESPONSES] [ALLOW MULTIPLE RESPONSES]**

- International Committee of the Red Cross representatives
- UN representatives
- Human rights group representatives
- Journalists
- Religious clerics/ministers
- Other **[SPECIFY]**
- [Don't know/refused]

Once again, I want you to *imagine* yourself in the following situations and tell me what you think you would do if the decisions were completely up to you.

28. **Version A:** If one side in the war is killing prisoners, would you approve the killing of prisoners by the other side or would you not approve it?

**Version B:** If the other side in the war is killing prisoners, would you approve the killing of prisoners by your side or would you not approve it?

- Would approve
- Would not approve
- [Don't know/refused]

**[FOLLOW UP IF RESPONDENT PROTESTS]** Just imagine you happen to find yourself in this situation.

29. In general, do you ever think that captured enemy combatants deserve to die?

- Think deserve to die
- No
- [Don't know/refused]

30. Now I'm going to ask you about your actual experiences during the war. Please tell me whether any of the following things happened to you personally or did not happen as a consequence of the [war/armed conflict] in [COUNTRY NAME]. **[READ AND ROTATE ORDER]**

	Happened	Did not happen	Don't know/ refused
Forced to leave your home and live elsewhere	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Imprisoned	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kidnapped or taken hostage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tortured	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Felt humiliated	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lost contact with a close relative	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A member of your immediate family killed during the armed conflict (son, daughter, father, mother, brother, sister, grandmother, grandfather, grandchild)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Serious damage to your property	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wounded by the fighting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Combatants took food away	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Had your house looted	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Somebody you knew well was sexually assaulted by combatants	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>[READ LAST]</b> Somebody you knew well was raped by combatants	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

31. **[ASK ALL RESPONDENTS]** Were you imprisoned by enemy combatants or were you living in an area that came under enemy control?

Imprisoned by enemy combatants	<b>→ GO TO Q32</b>
Living in area under enemy control	<b>→ GO TO Q32</b>
Both [Volunteered response]	<b>→ GO TO Q32</b>
[Don't know/refused]	<b>→ GO TO Q34</b>
No response	<b>→ GO TO Q34</b>

32. **[ASK IF "IMPRISONED", "LIVED UNDER ENEMY CONTROL", OR BOTH]** Please tell me whether any of the following happened while you were under enemy control. **[READ AND ROTATE]** Did that happen or not?

	Happened	Did not happen	Don't know/ refused
You were personally mistreated	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
You were physically injured	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
You were treated correctly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>[READ LAST]</b> You had a contact with a representative from an independent organization to check on your well-being	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

33. **[ASK ONLY IF CONTACT HAPPENED, OTHERWISE GO TO Q33]** Which of the following people did you have contact with to check on your well-being? **[READ AND ROTATE RESPONSES]** **[ALLOW MULTIPLE RESPONSES]**

- ICRC representatives
- UN representatives
- Human rights group representatives
- Journalists
- Religious clerics/ministers
- Other **[SPECIFY]**
- [Don't know/refused]

34. Now let me ask you for your opinion about something else, about young people being combatants. At what age is a young person mature enough to be a combatant? **[READ LIST UNTIL RESPONDENT CHOOSES AN ANSWER]**

- 14 or under
- 15
- 16
- 17
- 18
- 19
- 20
- 21
- Above 21
- [Don't know/refused]

35. During the war, did you support [have you supported] one of the sides or did you not support any side?

- Supported a side
- Did not support a side
- [Don't know/refused]

36. Let me ask you something very different. Have you ever heard of the Geneva Conventions?

- Yes — heard
- No — not heard      **→ GO TO Q38**
- [Don't know/refused]      **→ GO TO Q38**

37. **[IF HEARD OF GENEVA CONVENTIONS]** Could you tell me what the Geneva Conventions are about? **[WRITE DOWN ANSWER AS FULLY AS POSSIBLE]** **[MARK APPROPRIATE RESPONSE]**

- Accurate **[ANY REFERENCE TO LIMITS IN WAR]**
  - Not accurate **[NO REFERENCE TO LIMITS IN WAR]**
-

38. Let me read you a statement about the Geneva Conventions:

*The Geneva Conventions is a series of international treaties that impose limits in war by describing some rules of war. Most countries in the world have signed these treaties.*

Do you think the existence of the Geneva Conventions prevents wars from getting worse or does it make no real difference?

- Prevents wars from getting worse
- No real difference
- [Don't know/refused]

39. Are you familiar with this? **[SHOW RED CROSS OR RED CRESCENT]** What does it stand for? **[DO NOT READ RESPONSES]**

- Red Cross
- Red Crescent
- Red Cross and Red Crescent
- Medical/Hospital
- United Nations
- Army
- Other **[SPECIFY]**
- [Don't know/refused]

40. What kind of people or things does this symbol protect? **[WRITE ANSWERS AS FULLY AS POSSIBLE]**

41. Are there rules or laws that are so important that, if broken during war, the person who broke them should be punished?

- Yes
- No → **GO TO Q46**
- [Don't know/Refused] → **GO TO Q46**

42. **[IF YES]** So what kind of rules or laws are you thinking about? **[PROBE AND WRITE ANSWERS AS FULLY AS POSSIBLE]**

43. **[IF RESPONDS TO PRIOR QUESTION, OTHERWISE GO TO Q46]** What are these rules based on? **[READ AND ROTATE] [ONE RESPONSE ONLY]**

- [Country name]'s laws
  - International law
  - Religious principles
  - The values people hold
  - Other **[SPECIFY]**
  - [Don't know/refused]
-

44. If these rules are broken in war, who should be responsible for punishing the wrongdoers? **[READ AND ROTATE] [ONE RESPONSE ONLY]**

- The government of [country name]
- The [country name]'s courts
- International criminal court
- The military itself
- The civilian population
- Your own political leaders
- Other **[SPECIFY]**
- [Does not apply, rules are not broken]
- [Don't know/refused]

45. When the war is over, should people who have broken these rules...? **[READ AND ROTATE] [ONE RESPONSE ONLY]**

- Be put on trial
- Be exposed to the public but not be put on trial
- Be forgotten when the war is over
- Be forgiven after the war
- Granted amnesty
- [Don't know/refused]

46. **[ASK ALL RESPONDENTS]** Let me ask what can be done *if* during the war civilian areas are attacked, towns or villages are cut off from food, water, medical supplies and electricity. To whom would you turn to get help or to be protected? **[PROBE AND WRITE ANSWERS AS FULLY AS POSSIBLE]**

- [Can't turn to anybody]
- [Don't know/refused]

47. I'm now going to describe different kinds of people and organizations. Please tell me which *two* of these have played the biggest role *during* the war to stop this. Here are the people and organizations: **[READ AND ROTATE] [RECORD THE TWO MOST IMPORTANT RESPONSES] [FOLLOW UP WITH: Which two have played the biggest role?]**

- The military and combatants on your side **[Version B]**
- The military and combatants of the other side **[Version B]**
- The military and combatants **[Version A]**
- Religious leaders
- International humanitarian organizations
- Journalists and the news media
- The United Nations
- The ICRC or Red Cross (or Red Crescent)
- Government leaders
- International criminal court
- Other countries
- [Nobody did anything]
- [Don't know/refused]

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48. In the future, would you like to see more or less intervention from the international community to deal with these kinds of issues?

- More intervention
- Less intervention
- [No intervention]
- [Don't know/refused]

49. Do you think the peace will last or do you think there will be more war in the future?

- Peace will last
- More war in future
- [Both]
- [Don't know/refused]

50. One last question, what did you learn from the war that you think others should know? **[PROBE AND WRITE ANSWERS AS FULLY AS POSSIBLE]**

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## **The ICRC's 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 war and internal violence and to provide them with assistance. It directs and coordinates the international relief activities conducted by the Movement in situations of conflict. It 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 International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

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