PEOPLE
ON WAR

Country report Colombia

ICRC worldwide consultation on the rules of war

Report by Greenberg Research, Inc.

EVEN WARS HAVE LIMITS EVEN WARS HAVE LIMITS EVEN WARS HAVE LIMITS EVEN WARS HAVE

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

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.

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.

ICRC, Geneva, November 1999

Table of contents

Country context

Colombians have endured almost uninterrupted conflict for more than 50 years. International observers uniformly characterize the ongoing civil war in Colombia as among the world's longest and most violent. In the last two decades, a succession of governments has entered into peace negotiations with its opponents — and sometimes achieved agreements with one or more of the armed opposition groups — but periods of calm have been the exception.

Today's conflict is mainly rooted in the years 1946-1957, known as "La Violencia", when competition for power between the Conservative and Liberal factions ignited a civil war that is said to have claimed 200,000 lives. In the 1950s and 1960s a number of opposition groups emerged whose ideologies are based on communist principles. These groups have fluctuated in number and strength. Today, the best known include the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the smaller National Liberation Army (ELN). The ideologies, structure and tactics of these groups differ, but each has pledged to create a more equitable society and has routinely employed armed force to further its goals.

Within the last decade, paramilitary groups and so-called self-defence groups, which are present countrywide, have become major players in the armed conflict.

Narcotrafficking (Colombia is the world's largest cocaine producer) has contributed significantly to increasing the overall level of violence.

Colombia's civil war, in which assassinations and kidnappings — in addition to the military operations — have become routine, has had a devastating impact on civilians throughout the nation.

In 1999, the number of newly displaced persons will probably rise to 300,000. Many of them will join the hundreds of thousands who have already fled the conflict in recent years and who now primarily inhabit the shanty towns of the major cities, where the level of poverty and crime is extremely high.

In Colombia, some 95 per cent of crimes go unpunished. The number of violent deaths approaches 30,000 a year; the ratio is 89.5/100,000 residents, one of the highest in the world.

Country methodology

The findings in this report are based on a consultation carried out by the ICRC in Colombia, the first in the People on War project. The project was overseen by a multinational research team from Greenberg Research, in conjunction with a local partner, Centro Nacional de Consultoria (CNC), a public opinion research firm based in Bogotá. Under their supervision, ICRC delegates and members of the Colombian Red Cross (CRC) conducted the various components of the research.

- Ten **focus group** (FG) discussions were organized in Bogotá, Medellín and Villavicencio. In each place, ICRC/Red Cross representatives spoke to a range of people involved in or affected by the conflict: NGO workers (Bogotá), internally displaced women (Medellín), local journalists (Medellín), ELN guerrillas (Medellín area), women (Villavicencio), government soldiers (Villavicencio), political detainees (ELN and FARC, Bogotá), medical workers (Bogotá), CRC volunteers (Bogotá), and a paramilitary (self-defence) group (Villavicencio). All focus group participants were recruited by the ICRC. The focus groups were held from 26 October to 4 November 1998 in a variety of sites, including the ICRC office in Medellín, the government army barracks just outside Villavicencio, La Modelo prison building in Bogotá, and an open space in the jungle several hours drive west of Medellín. Professional moderation was provided by CNC, using guidelines prepared by Greenberg Research.

- ICRC staff conducted 40 **in-depth interviews** (IDI), each lasting approximately 45 minutes. Half the interviews mirrored the composition of the focus groups; the other half included police officers, members of the clergy, schoolteachers, NGO representatives, and others more directly affected by the armed conflict, including family members of those maimed, kidnapped or killed during the hostilities.

- The CRC carried out a **nationwide quantative survey** of 857 respondents selected using a stratified, multistage cluster sampling method. CNC trained interviewers and supervised the administration of the sample design under the direction of Greenberg Research. The quantitative survey took place between 8 November and 24 December 1998. The percentages reported are subject to a sampling error of +/- 4.9 percentage points (at a 95 in 100 confidence level). Results in smaller segments, such as the 201 interviews for the Central area, are subject to an error of +/- 9.9 percentage points.[1]

- In addition, Greenberg Research commissioned CNC to conduct a **parallel quantitative survey** of 1,000 respondents in order to assess the quality of the ICRC's survey and to look for areas of potential bias. While the parallel study points to areas of overstatement or understatement in the responses to the key questions on the rules of war, the results of the two studies are quite close. Any significant differences between the two surveys are noted in the report.

This report brings together the results of this extensive consultation. The research was remarkably well received by the respondents in the surveys and by the participants in the focus groups and in-depth interviews. In the quantitative research, interviewers characterized almost one in three respondents (29 per cent) as "extremely interested" and more than half (55 per cent) as "cooperative". While sometimes intimidated by the complexity of the issues, most of the focus group participants were enthusiastic about the experience and felt empowered after the session was over. On several occasions, they spontaneously thanked the moderator and each other for participating.

The report offers a unique view of the armed conflict in Colombia, its impact on non-combatants and the potential role of international humanitarian law — all from the perspective of those who, even now, have struggled with the armed conflict in Colombia.

[1] 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 +/- 2.9 percentage points.

Executive summary

The armed conflict in Colombia has brought episodic, sometimes indiscriminate violence, atrocities involving civilians, kidnappings and the blowing-up of oil pipelines. For most of the population, the armed conflict is a relatively remote phenomenon. A sizeable minority, however, have lost contact with or lost a family member (15 and 12 per cent, respectively). A small portion have had their lives disrupted: 7 per cent have been forced to leave their homes and 6 per cent have suffered serious damage to their property. For that group, the armed violence has been profoundly disruptive and profoundly obscure. Violent attacks can occur at any moment, catching civilians in the middle. Yet the purpose in all this is hard to discern. Indeed, the lines between the warring forces are not all that clear; the lines between civilians and combatants have been frequently blurred. The obscure but inescapable violence leaves people closest to the armed conflict feeling pessimistic about the future and increasingly powerless before events.

This pessimism and powerlessness has important ramifications for the idea of limits in war. Those buffeted by these obscure forces doubt society's capacity to limit what combatants do in war. Of those who have been forced to move or saw their property damaged, just 30 per cent are hopeful for peace; 44 per cent believe the Geneva Conventions have made no difference in preventing abuses, compared with 38 per cent of all Colombians.[2]

The country is protective of civilians and strongly supportive of limits on what combatants can do during armed conflict. As a result, Colombians are supportive of limits in principle and almost wholly oppose armed practices that endanger civilians. Countrywide, virtually every Colombian (92 per cent) believes that combatants should only fight combatants and avoid civilians or leave them alone.

- Very few people in Colombia — only about 6 or 7 per cent — are willing to sanction actions by soldiers and fighters that directly threaten non-combatants to gain a military advantage.

- Very few people — 6 per cent — support the planting of landmines to stop the movement of enemy combatants when they risk causing accidental injuries to civilians.

- Tolerance of methods of warfare that cause unnecessary suffering rises to 16 per cent, but only, it seems, because civilians are not part of the equation.

When it comes to combatants, the population has a more permissive view. A sizeable minority, for example, seem open to mistreatment of captured enemy combatants.

- Colombians are not very protective of fighters and soldiers when they surrender in battle: 22 per cent would not save a captured enemy combatant who had killed a fellow villager in a recent battle.

- Combatants have apparently been influenced by or have contributed to this culture: 21 per cent approve of torture to get important information; 28 per cent would not save a surrendering combatant who had killed someone in their unit.

- A quarter of combatants say there is no obligation to allow captured combatants to be visited by an independent representative; 25 per cent say there is no obligation to allow captured combatants to exchange letters with their relatives.

The combatants in this armed conflict may have invited some of this permissiveness. They are much more willing than the population as a whole to sanction attacks on civilians.

[2] People who have been forced to move or who have had property damaged as a result of the armed conflict are the individuals who, other than the combatants themselves, have experienced the armed conflict most intensively. In the report, the averaged result for the people who experienced the conflict more directly and combatants will be presented to illustrate the attitudes of those in the conflict zone.

- Fully 30 per cent of combatants would avoid civilians as much as possible, rather than leave them alone (compared with 20 per cent of the overall population).

- This attitude manifests itself in all areas: 12 per cent of combatants would attack a large town with explosives, double that for the overall population; 24 per cent say it is acceptable to deprive a town of food and water (compared with 17 per cent of the public).

Countrywide, a plurality of 40 per cent say civilians must be respected because of the practical consequences of doing otherwise: failure to respect civilians, they say, will simply cause “too many problems”. One-third of the population (32 per cent) base their judgements instead on a normative framework, saying that combatants should not be allowed to do certain things because they are “wrong”, that is, they violate norms that matter to society.

- Of the one-third who say certain things are “wrong”, most (58 per cent) base the norms for limiting what combatants can do in war in the concept of human rights or human dignity, i.e., that the human being is inviolable.

Almost all the population is opposed to any action in war that might harm civilians, even if it would give combatants a military advantage. Despite this, many abuses have taken place in Colombia’s armed conflict, as was revealed in the in-depth discussions about people’s experiences. Part of the explanation for this may lie in the more limited standard accepted by one in five Colombians: attack combatants and try to avoid civilians as much as possible. Those who accept that standard are more likely to sanction not saving captured enemy combatants, depriving civilians of food and medicine and planting landmines.

- If civilians are seen to be helping combatants, the public is more tolerant of attacks on them. When asked their views on civilians who voluntarily provide enemy combatants with food or shelter — a fairly conventional activity in this kind of armed conflict — some participants say that these civilians are taking sides and thus “willingly” entering the conflict.

- Government soldiers who participated in focus group discussions, though pressed to consider real conflict situations, usually give by-the-book, formal answers on these issues.

- The members of self-defence groups repeatedly and quite candidly admit to violating the rules of war, but only because “the guerrillas started first” and have broken down the distinction between combatants and civilians.

- Reactions to the question of how to handle a surrendering combatant who might have killed a fellow soldier or villager were so emotional that many felt they could not predict what they would do. They felt in many cases that the passions of battle would dictate their actions.

The Geneva Conventions are not widely known in Colombia, despite the armed conflict. In the country as a whole, 37 per cent have heard of them, but many more accept the principle that there are rules and laws that should limit what happens in war.

- Awareness of the Geneva Conventions and of the various legal limits on combatants’ behaviour makes a difference in the kind of practices people are willing to countenance in war.

- Among those unaware of the Geneva Conventions, fully 35 per cent say combatants should avoid civilians as much as possible, rather than specifically leave them alone. Among those aware, fewer (just 14 per cent) are open to the idea of possible attacks on civilians.

Indeed, many accept that people should be punished for their actions during the war.

- A large majority of the Colombian people (71 per cent) feel that there are rules or laws that are “so important that, if broken during war, the person who broke them should be punished”.

- A significant majority of Colombians (72 per cent) clearly want people who break the rules to be put on trial rather than just “exposed to the public” or “forgotten when the war is over”. Interestingly, 80 per cent of combatants would put on trial people who have broken rules or laws.

While Colombians tend to base war-crimes prosecution in law, including international law (40 per cent), they think the ultimate responsibility for dispensing justice lies with the country’s institutions, rather than abroad.

- Above all, they think the Colombian government should be responsible for the judgment and punishment of war criminals (45 per cent); another 15 per cent think Colombia’s courts should handle the issue. In all, 60 per cent believe such matters should be handled by the State.

- Just 3 per cent think the military should be responsible for punishing wrongdoers.

- Just one in four Colombians (23 per cent) would turn outside Colombia to an international court to address the issue.

Colombians want their own national institutions, not the international community, to address these wrongs.

Colombians look to the ICRC/Red Cross, more than to any other group or institution, when they face trouble during war. People say they would turn to the ICRC/Red Cross for protection if, during war, prisoners were tortured, civilian areas were attacked, or towns or villages were cut off from food, water, medical supplies and electricity.

- If their town or village were cut off, 48 per cent would turn to the ICRC/Red Cross, while 28 per cent would turn to the government and only 13 per cent to the military; 9 per cent would turn to the United Nations (UN).

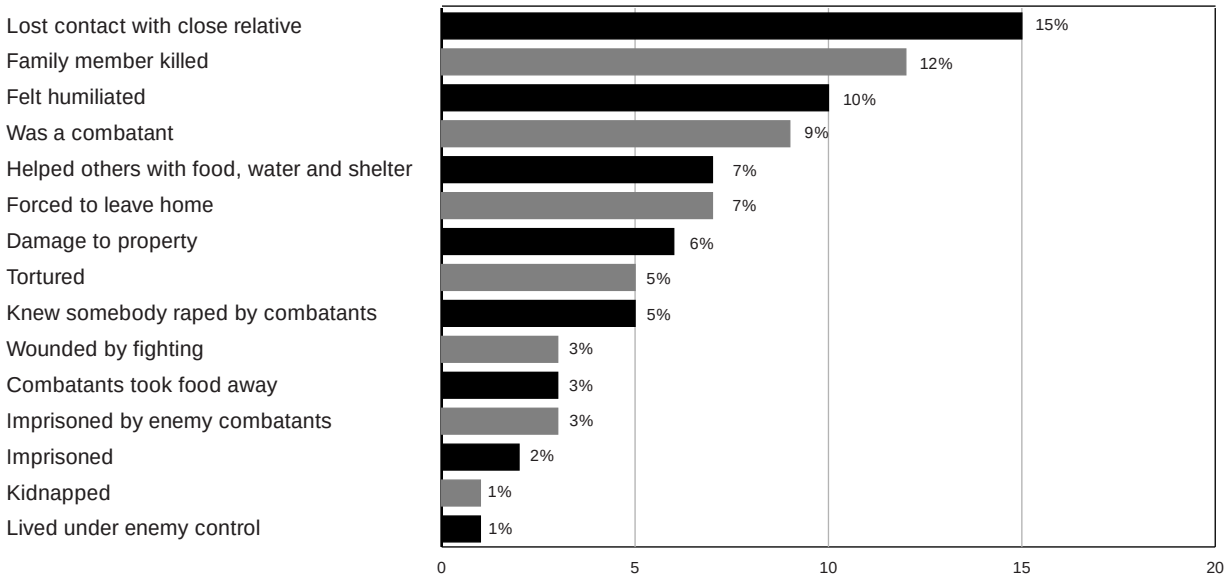
- An extraordinary 72 per cent of Colombians say the ICRC/Red Cross has played the biggest role in preventing mistreatment and abuses during the armed conflict.

The armed conflict in Colombia

Since gaining its independence on 10 July 1810, and throughout the rest of the 19th and 20th centuries, Colombia has maintained a tradition of civilian government and regular, free elections. Yet, despite the country's commitment to democratic institutions, its history has been marked by periods of widespread, violent conflict causing the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people. Today, Colombia finds itself mired in a decades-old internal armed conflict. Among those surveyed, many see no immediate end to the conflict in sight. However, peace talks between government representatives and insurgency leaders provide a glimmer of hope to the 37 million Colombians, who, as the focus groups show, remain unconditionally proud of their country and who trust the Colombian spirit to survive in the end.

For the vast majority of the Colombian people, the armed conflict is somewhat remote and obscure. They pay attention to the blowing-up of oil pipelines and the kidnappings that seem to characterize modern Colombia, but the great majority have not been displaced or seen their property damaged. For them, the bombings and kidnappings take place somewhere else. At the same time, the majority of those outside the conflict areas and those least involved are the most optimistic about the prospect of peace: 53 per cent of those from the eastern plains, as well as 53 per cent of older women (50 years of age or older), say they are hopeful for peace. They are also the most committed to the rules or laws that limit what combatants can do during armed conflict.

FIGURE 1
The war experience
(per cent of total population responding)[3]



For a significant minority of the Colombian people, the armed conflict is not at all remote. A sizeable segment of the population have seen their families disrupted: 15 per cent have lost contact with a close relative; 12 per cent have seen a relative killed in the conflict. For others the armed conflict is very immediate. For them, the atrocities involving civilians, indiscriminate violence, kidnappings and the blowing-up of oil pipelines are part of daily life. About 6 per cent have experienced serious damage to their property and 7 per cent were forced to move because of the armed conflict. The Colombians who were forced to move or had property damaged have experienced the armed conflict most intensively, almost half (44 per cent) experienced at least six other aspects of the conflict (compared with 4 per cent of all Colombians).

[3] Respondents were asked a wide range of questions about their war experience. Each horizontal bar represents a result for a particular question. For example, 15 per cent responded that they had lost contact with a close relative.

About one in ten say they have been combatants and carried arms — 9 per cent, according to the ICRC survey — though for almost all of them, it was for only a short period (less than a year).[4] Nearly half (46 per cent) became combatants voluntarily, a little over a third (36 per cent) were drafted and a significant minority (13 per cent) were forced to join. Combatants, not surprisingly, have experienced the war much more intensely and have been more affected by the violence than other segments of the population: 34 per cent lost contact with a relative and 28 per cent felt humiliated during the conflict; 9 per cent report being imprisoned and 5 per cent were kidnapped.[5]

For most of the population, the armed conflict is a distant phenomenon, but those caught up in it have felt it profoundly. In the focus groups and in-depth interviews, people expressed anger and astonishment at the pervasiveness and unpredictability of the violence.

> I am sorry that a country as rich and with so much potential in different areas is immersed in this situation. (FG, medical workers, Bogotá)

> You walk down the street and you get killed. Who killed you? The local criminals? The guerrillas? The paramilitaries? Or the army? (IDI, guerrilla fighter, Bucaramanga)

> It ruined our lives completely. Because of it we lost sleep, our desire to work. (IDI, detainee's mother, Bucaramanga)

> One can't sleep easily, one doesn't want to eat, one thinks it's night and they're going to take your home away, life is very hard. (FG, internally displaced women, Medellín)

> Colombia has been in war since its independence and no group has ever been able to annihilate the other and the only ones that are hurt are the civil population, peasants and finally the poor. (FG, medical workers, Bogotá)

> I think what's affecting us the most is corruption, the lack of values, because it's absolute, it's a horrible thing. It is the desire for power that is finishing us. (FG, CRC volunteers, Bogotá)

> Every time you are less shocked by something — well, it was only 20 that were killed, last week it was 80 — you get a little more used to the climate of violence. (FG, medical workers, Bogotá)

> It is very tough, and no solution can be seen. [The] more days that pass, the more horrible it is. (FG, internally displaced women, Medellín)

> I believe that they try to show the country with a kind face... But those of us who are really living the reality of things, we see that many children die of hunger, that youngsters have to cease being youngsters. (FG, guerrillas, Medellín)

While there were three warring parties — government forces, guerrillas and paramilitary groups (also known as self-defence groups) — for most of those living in the conflict area the situation is not that clearly defined. In their view, the fighting has been going on for so long that it has become difficult to understand who exactly the warring parties are and what they are fighting for.

---

[4] The parallel study indicated a smaller number of combatants (5 per cent), though it is probable that Red Cross interviewers are more likely to get a truthful response from participants.

[5] All percentages for combatants in this report are based on the combined ICRC and parallel surveys, to ensure a sufficiently large number of respondents. In general, combatants may be under-represented in these surveys because these numbers are self-reported and respondents may have been afraid to admit they had been combatants to the interviewers. This should not affect the conclusions presented in this report, as these are all based on the patterns within the group of combatants.

It's hard to separate, it's all intertwined (FG, NGO workers, Bogotá)

We don't even understand the war — why are the paramilitary and the guerrilla fighting? (FG, internally displaced women, Medellín)

Why don't they establish among themselves why they are fighting? Let them fight only the ones who must fight, and leave the people who have nothing to do with it alone. (FG, internally displaced women, Medellín)

It's like a ghost. One goes out and they say men are watching... I don't know what they have against us. I can't tell anything and they could say I am a guerrilla member. It's the worst. (FG, internally displaced women, Medellín)

People feel distanced from the conflict and powerless to stop it. They just want to lead peaceful lives and cannot understand why the conflict is allowed to go on at their expense, without some kind of authority asserting itself. A child in Villavicencio noted that "each one dreams about a free country, full of kindness, with love, respect [for] all the values that enrich a human being. But I don't know, everything seems to be so unreal, like a dream." She expressed the hope that she would find the will to create real dreams. A priest from Usme lamented that no authority has stepped in to create order or rights: "The State no longer represents a guarantee."

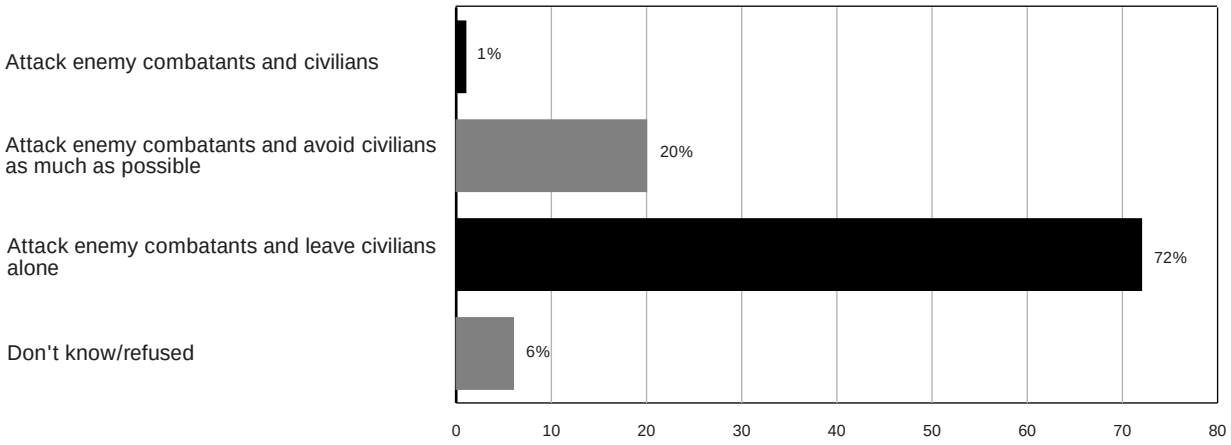
A significant minority of the population have lived with this ill-defined and unpredictable armed conflict that has produced an inescapable and capricious violence. While overall, more Colombians are hopeful there will be peace rather than continued armed conflict (45 to 36 per cent), those caught in the middle are more pessimistic about peace and less confident that armed conflict can have limits. Just 38 per cent of those in the Pacific region of Colombia and 30 per cent of combatants believe the future holds a greater prospect of peace. Those who have been affected by the war — they were forced to move or had damage to property — are also less optimistic (30 per cent), suggesting that the war may erode people's hopes and sense of control over events. As shall be demonstrated, this has important implications for the role of international humanitarian law.

Combatants and civilians

Respecting the civilian population

Countrywide, a vast majority of Colombians (92 per cent) believe that combatants should fight only combatants and either avoid civilians or leave them alone. For a significant bloc within that consensus (20 per cent) this principle is not absolute: they would attack combatants and seek to “avoid civilians as much as possible”. Nonetheless, there is an overwhelming sentiment in the country against attacks on civilian populations. (See Figure 2.) When people were asked whether there is anything that combatants should not be allowed to do in war, the responses — should not involve civilians (27 per cent) and should not disregard human rights (22 per cent) — reflect a desire to protect civilians from the conflict. (See Figure 3.)

FIGURE 2
Combatants and civilians
(per cent of total population responding)



Question: When combatants from your side attack the enemy, should they...?

In the conflict zones, combatants and non-combatants alike affirm that civilians should simply be off-limits.

> No violent action against the civilian population should be allowed... I think the first thing to be done would be that all the acts committed during an armed conflict should be by combatants in battle. (FG, NGO workers, Bogotá)

> First, there would be a rule designed to protect as far as possible the people who are not involved in the fighting, that is, the non-fighters. (IDI, lawyer, Popayán)

> [Civilians] are not prepared to face any war, they’re defenceless. (FG, government soldiers, Villavicencio)

> They shouldn’t bother us. They should isolate us, the civilian population, from the armed conflict. They should get away from us. (FG, internally displaced women, Medellín)

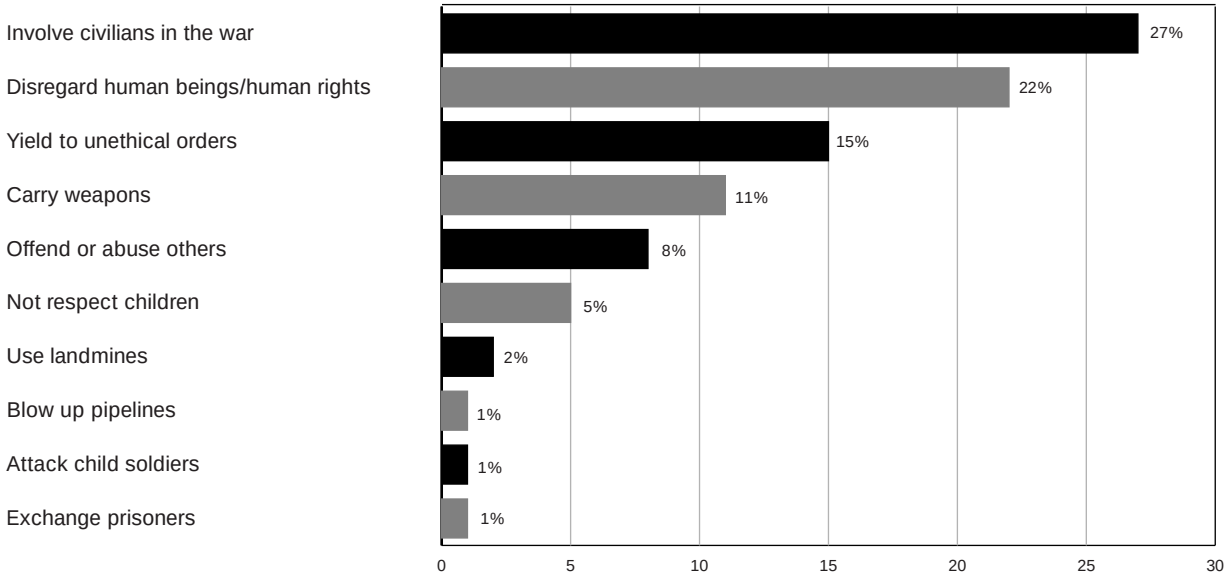
> [Killing civilians] constitutes a flagrant infringement of the minimal rules... and is a cowardly way to wage a war. (FG, guerrilla detainees, Bogotá)

The detention of civilians to be used as targets and for military advantage should not be allowed. (IDI, guerrilla, Bogotá)

Yes, the ones that are in the conflict must fight. We, who don't stick our noses in at all, let us be in peace. (FG, internally displaced women, Medellín)

As a guerrilla fighter in Medellín said, "If there are no rules, the civilian population will be at the mercy of either side. So there must be something to protect them and prevent both sides from letting everything go against those who can't defend themselves." A journalist, also from Medellín, declared: "Those who come to a small town and shoot children, women and men indiscriminately... even without the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, these people know that this is not the behaviour of an honourable fighter." Another journalist summed up everyone's sentiments: "It's as simple as this: you must respect the civilian population."

FIGURE 3
What combatants should not do
(per cent of total population responding)



Question: Is there anything that combatants should not be allowed to do in trying to win a war or gain a military advantage?

Acknowledgement of a clear distinction between combatants and non-combatants easily extends into a call for special protection of specific groups, notably women, children and the elderly, and for humanitarian institutions. The commitment to the special status of these groups seems absolute and universal.

[The elderly are] incapable of confronting anybody. It's like they return to child-hood. They're like children. (FG, internally displaced women, Medellín)

[Combatants should] change their ways and not try to get even with children, there are ladies who are pregnant and they drag them out of their houses... I would tell them to go fight each other and not the people in the village. (IDI, child attending a focus group, Bogotá)

> The problem is that the civilian population becomes involved in war — children, women, elderly people. (IDI, National Police officer, Usme)

> And hospitals should be protected. (FG, CRC volunteers, Bogotá)

> The health sector should always be protected... There is no logic in attacking any institution that afterwards may be helpful to either of the two groups. (IDI, nurse, Popayán)

One of the NGO workers elaborated the special and enduring pain experienced by children that gives them a special status:

> [They're] depriving a child of the possibility of developing, of having a family, of being happy, of having a life, having a home. These are children's rights: to be able to develop, to be educated. They're violating all that, because... it's an effective death. A child who witnesses an atrocity is a child who will always remember that and will be unable to develop normally. It's a child whose possibilities have been taken away. (FG, NGO workers, Bogotá)

The roots of respect

Countrywide, a plurality of 40 per cent say civilians must be respected because of the practical consequences of doing otherwise: failure to respect civilians, they say, will simply cause "too many problems". Most of the population observe the conflict from a distance and do not focus too much on questions of law or violations of societal norms. They are more concerned by the damage in general. In the conflict zones, however, it becomes apparent that people are deeply concerned by these issues.

> The base of society, the family, would be destroyed. (FG, government soldiers, Villavicencio)

> Peasants, because they grow the food for us people in the cities. They work the most. The peasants are very honest; they are dedicated to cultivating their crops; they don't know what's going on. (FG, women, Villavicencio)

A third of the population (32 per cent) use a normative framework, saying that combatants should not be allowed to do certain things because they are "wrong", that is, they violate norms that are important to society. Most of those who respond normatively, who say "it's wrong" (58 per cent), find the roots of these norms in the concepts of human rights or the inviolability of human beings. (See Figure 4.)

> [It is] a conception that tells us that the human being has some dignity or that the human being is by himself more important than any situation whether it is called war, disaster, hecatomb and that such dignity forces us to maintain that core of human being untouchable. (FG, medical workers, Bogotá)

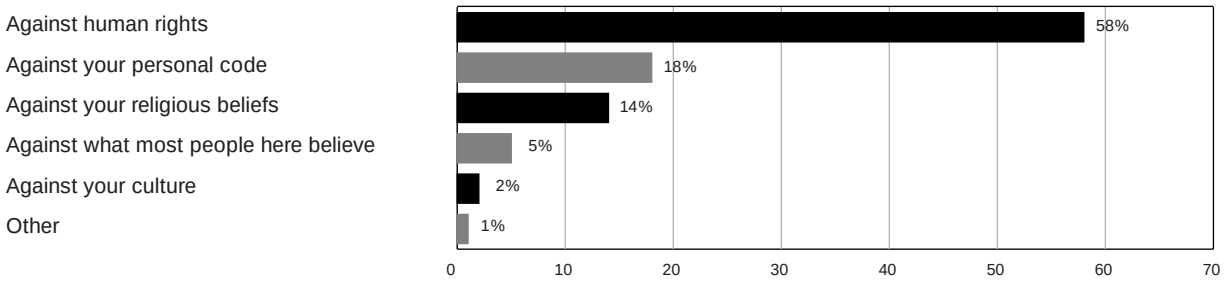
> The right to live, the right of being somewhere, the right to work, the right to be, it's more than that because when you have the right to live it includes various things, having children, love, peace, being able to live. (FG, CRC volunteers, Bogotá)

> Respect for life: because they are innocent. They don't have anything to do with the conflict. Because of human rights. (FG, women, Villavicencio)

FIGURE 4

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...?

That’s an attempt against the dignity of a person. (FG, government soldiers, Villavicencio)

Because every person is a different world and due to it we have the same rights, we have the right to live, to freedom, to dignity that must be respected. (FG, government soldiers, Villavicencio)

It bothers me talking about this war, but behind all this, human rights should always be respected. It could be guerrilla, the paramilitary, the government itself. So there should exist that respect. It should be something innate. (FG, NGO workers, Bogotá)

The very fact that you are a human being means that your conscience tells you what you should and should not do at any give moment. (IDI, army general, Villavicencio)

[We] have demonstrated it and we have taught it in many places: that we should respect the human rights, [even if] the other side of the conflict is not respecting it. Then, the integrity of the human population has been violated. (FG, government soldiers, Villavicencio)

[It] would be useful if the people who attack would maybe stop doing it, if they would please leave us a little peace, and remember there are human rights. They must also have hearts. I personally don’t have a grudge against them, but I would like them to understand that we are humans and we have hearts, and I know that they have one too. (FG, internally displaced women, Medellín)

In the intensive focus group discussions with prisoners, the notion of human dignity proved very important to their motivation for joining as fighters, for acknowledging the individual worth of enemy combatants, and accepting limits on fighting.

Of course, it is the same, the drama finally, as people, as human beings, is the same.

We are human beings and the fact that we have joined a struggle sacrificing a position, sacrificing a quiet life, means that we have a humanistic conception....

> For respect for human dignity, for respect for the nature of the human being is that people should not be tortured, regardless of what you want to obtain, of the information that such person may have, you should not torture.
>
> Also for respect to life and to the human being one should not kill a person who is outside of the combat.
>
> (FG, guerrillas detainees, Bogotá)

About a quarter (22 per cent) use a legal framework, saying that attacking civilians is against national or international rules. For many of these individuals, the roots of respect are quite formal; non-combatants are protected because the rules dictate it: “The national Constitution says so.” “Rules must exist.” (FG, government soldiers, Villavicencio) “You need rules, just like in soccer.” (FG, journalists, Medellín) “The war has its rules and regulations that should be respected.” (FG, guerrilla detainees, Bogotá) “all of them must comply with the rules, all of us involved in combat.” (FG, guerrilla fighters, Medellín)

Avoiding civilians; mistreating prisoners

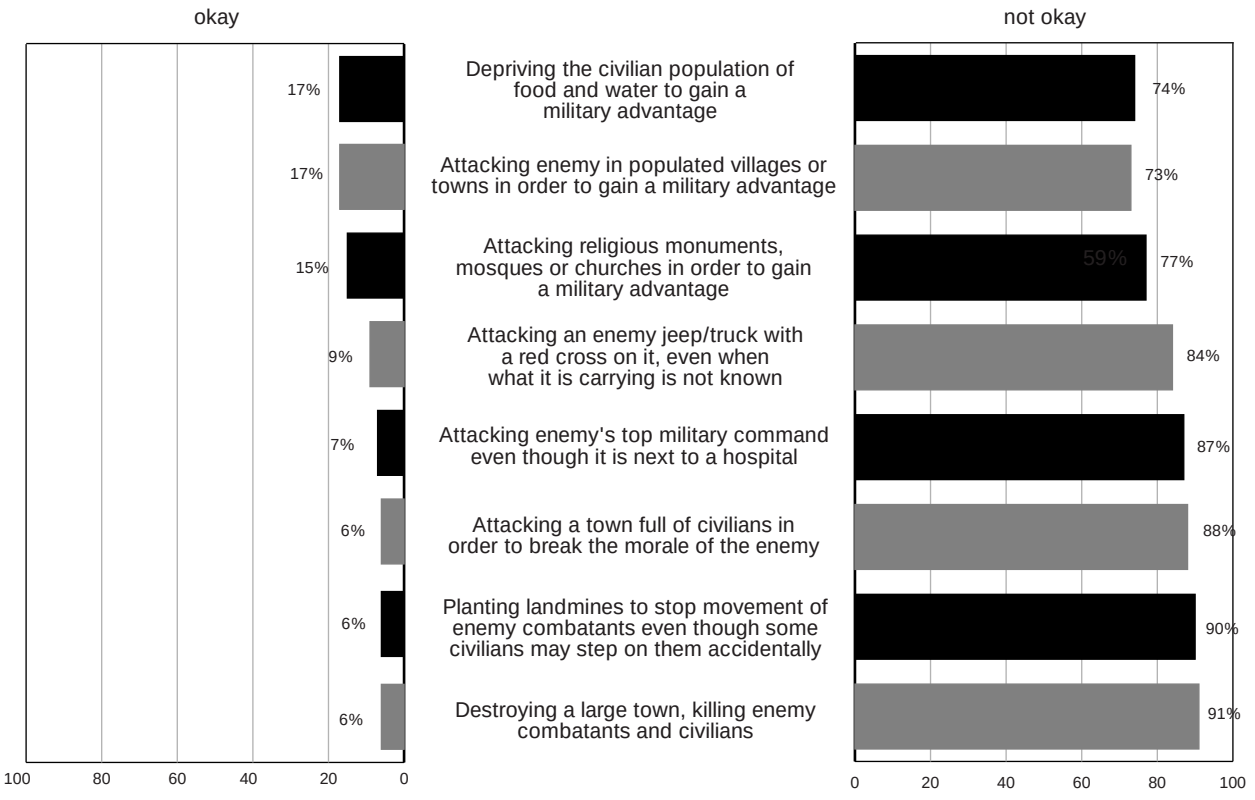
Defending and relaxing the limits in armed conflict

The commonly held belief that soldiers and fighters should not operate without limits, no matter how strongly expressed and no matter how well grounded, is qualified in Colombia, as it is elsewhere in the world. One in five Colombians, as evidenced earlier, believe combatants should attack combatants and avoid civilians as much as possible, rather than, more firmly, leave civilians alone. Nonetheless, people strongly resist violent actions by combatants that target civilians. That resolve breaks down when the issue of the treatment of prisoners and enemy combatants is raised. In general, however, the Colombian public seems unwilling to sanction any war on civilians.

FIGURE 5

Acceptance of war practices

(per cent of total population responding)[6]



Opposing war on civilians

Very few people in Colombia — only about 6 or 7 per cent — are willing to sanction actions by soldiers and fighters that directly threaten non-combatants to gain a military advantage. As can be seen in Figure 5, few people support the planting of landmines to stop the movement of enemy combatants, if it puts civilians at risk of accidental injury. Few would support a major attack on a large town where there were both combatants and civilians. Few would support an attack on a town to break the morale of the enemy. Few would attack the enemy's top military command, if it were right next to a hospital. Tolerance of methods of warfare that cause unnecessary suffering rises to 16 per cent, but only, it seems, because civilians are not part of the equation. There is little receptivity in Colombia to extending the violence of armed conflict to civilians.

There are a small proportion of people who see attacks on Red Cross vehicles as part of war and not wrong (9 per cent); similarly with attacks on religious monuments (15 per cent). Seventeen per cent

[6] This chart displays the results for a series of questions, each of which asked whether it was okay or not okay to do certain things in war. To the left of the chart are the percentages of people who believe certain things are acceptable in war. For example, 17 per cent say it is okay or part of war to deprive civilians of food and water. To the right are the percentages of respondents who believe it is not okay to do certain things in war. For example, 77 per cent say it is not okay to attack religious monuments, mosques or churches.

see “depriving the civilian population on the other side of food or water in order to gain a military advantage” as part of war (whereas 74 per cent reject such a practice), but this may be because it seems less destructive than armed attacks that hurt civilians directly.

The combatants in this armed conflict may have invited some of this permissiveness. They are much more willing than the population as a whole to sanction attacks on civilians. Fully 30 per cent would avoid civilians as much as possible, rather than leave them alone (compared with 20 per cent of the overall population). This attitude is manifest in all areas: 12 per cent of combatants would attack a large town with explosives, twice as many as for the population overall; 24 per cent say it is acceptable to deprive a town of food and water (compared with 17 per cent of the public).

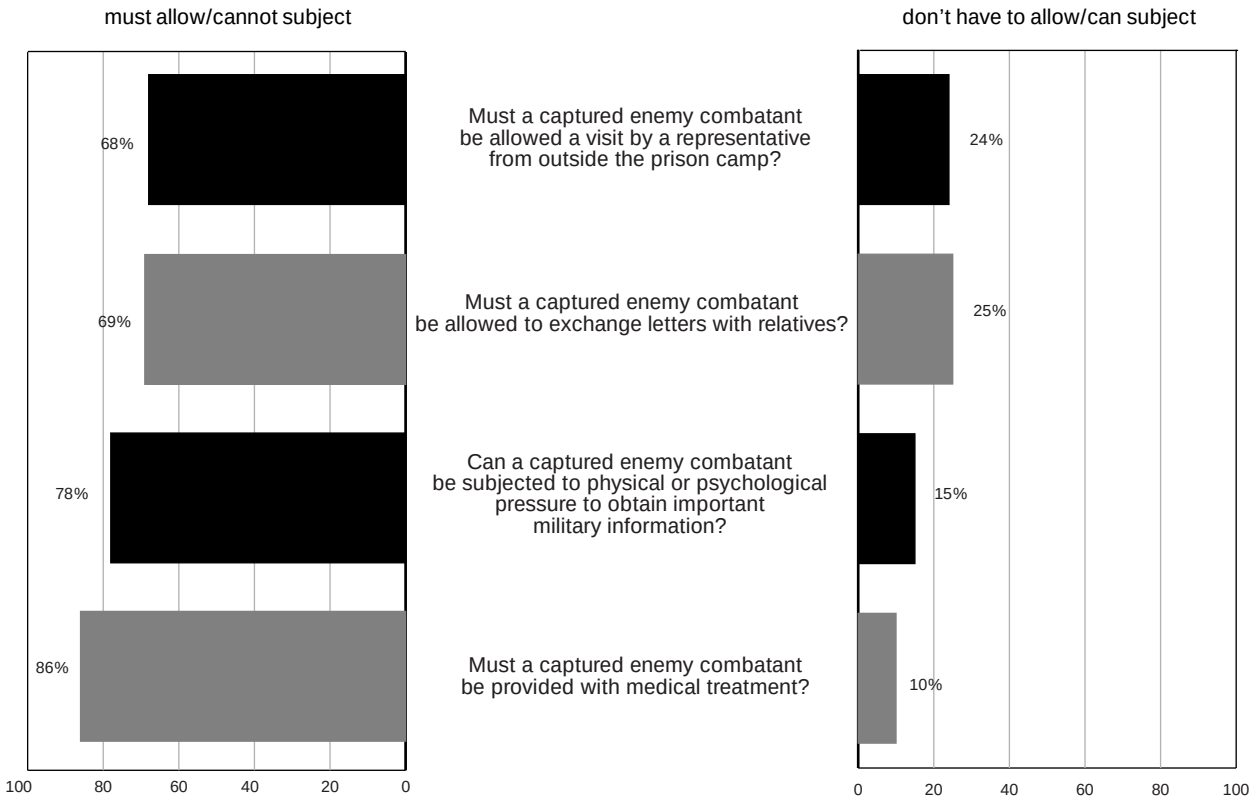
Mistreating captured combatants

While Colombians are generally loath to countenance attacks on civilians, they are more tolerant of abuses that involve soldiers and fighters, as are the combatants themselves. That instinct was apparent in people’s responses to the idea of unnecessary suffering, but it is particularly evident when it comes to the treatment of prisoners and surrendering combatants.

FIGURE 6

Captured enemy combatants

(per cent of total population responding)[7]



Question: I will now describe some situations that may happen during a war. 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.

The great majority of Colombians accept that soldiers and fighters have obligations towards captured enemy combatants. But 15 per cent think torture may be acceptable to get important military information; a quarter think the authorities do not have to allow prisoners to exchange letters with relatives or receive visits from independent representatives. (See Figure 6.) About 12 per cent would approve of killing prisoners, if the other side were doing the same.

[7] Respondents were presented with a series of possible rights for captured combatants. To the left are the percentages of the total population who believe these rights must be allowed. For example, 68 per cent say authorities must allow an independent representative to visit a captured enemy combatant. The responses on the right indicate the percentages of respondents that do not believe these rights must be allowed.

The Colombians are not very protective of fighters and soldiers when they surrender in battle: 22 per cent would not save a captured enemy combatant who had killed a fellow villager in a recent battle.

Combatants have apparently been influenced by or have contributed to this culture: 21 per cent approve of torture to get important information; 28 per cent would not save a surrendering combatant who had killed someone in their unit.

Child combatants

Colombians reject the notion of child combatants. The vast majority (82 per cent) say that young people are not mature enough to become combatants in a war until they are at least 18 years of age. Nearly as many (70 per cent) say that during this armed conflict many children who were “too young and too irresponsible” became combatants. In the conflict area, people reject the idea of child combatants, mainly as an expression of their opposition to the fighting in general. Many people feel that with older, mature combatants, there is likely to be less fighting and less abuse.

Explaining the breakdown of limits

The public is wholly opposed to armed conflict that endangers civilians. Only a very small percentage are willing to sanction specific actions that might harm civilians, such as using landmines or explosives in populated areas, even if doing so would help give combatants a military advantage. Nonetheless, a lot of abuses have taken place in Colombia's armed conflict, as has been seen in the in-depth discussions about people's experiences. Part of the explanation for this may lie in the more limited standard accepted by one in five Colombians: attack combatants and try to avoid civilians as much as possible. The people who accept that relaxed standard are more likely to sanction not saving captured enemy combatants, depriving civilians of food and medicine and planting landmines. Their attitude is likely to have even more serious consequences when the nature of the armed conflict makes combatants dependent on civilians for certain needs. As can be seen below, this would drive both civilians and combatants to tear down the barriers that are supposed to separate them.

Civilian perspectives: becoming a combatant

Armed conflict in areas populated by civilians gives civilians an ambiguous status. The women from Villavicencio, for example, began their discussion by affirming, just as people across Colombia did in the survey, that it is not appropriate for combatants to attack civilians: "A civilian is an innocent person." "He has nothing to do with the conflict, the war - the clashes." "He is not prepared for combat. He is unarmed."

Civilians forced to provide food and shelter to enemy combatants have the same status: "No, because he had to do it forcefully. He had to protect his family. He had no choice but to do it. He was under pressure. If he didn't he would be killed. That happens quite often."

If, however, civilians assist combatants voluntarily, the public is more tolerant of attacks on them. When asked about civilians who willingly provide enemy combatants with food or shelter — a fairly conventional activity in this kind of armed conflict — some participants say that these civilians are taking sides and thus "willingly" entering the conflict: "Yes, he is entering the conflict. He is supporting one of the parties. If he does it willingly, he is committing a sin." (FG, women, Villavicencio)

When the type of assistance progresses from food and shelter to passing on military information, some conclude that, "yes, attacking would be appropriate". Others go to great lengths to resolve the dilemma while maintaining a distinction between non-combatants and combatants.

> [He] has to be punished, but his life should not be taken away. Send him to jail. What is most important is to respect his life. Perhaps he made a mistake as a human being. Perhaps he needed money. First, you need to make an inquiry to find out why he did so. (FG, women, Villavicencio)

The women from Villavicencio were searching for an alternative to declaring civilians as combatants, realizing what the consequences would be in the midst of an armed conflict.

> No, because it would generate more violence.
>
> If you don't respect other people's lives, there is no sense in even living. We should all try to reach a dialogue.
>
> I don't think we should generate more violence but then it escalates.
>
> (FG, women, Villavicencio)

However, when presented with the hypothetical consequences of someone providing military information to the enemy — the deaths of ten of their own combatants — all the lines are erased; the civilians have joined the fight.

> If he is an informer for the enemy band, he's got to go.
>
> He may look like a civilian but he may be one of them. If you don't punish him he's going to do it another time - you have to stop him.
>
> I think he should be attacked, because he hurt our group.
>
> Yes (he should be attacked), because he is informing the enemy group. Without that information our soldiers would have been okay.
>
> There's just too much blood, but it's a difficult situation. It really is an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.
>
> (FG, women, Villavicencio)

Even in this hypothetical situation, the passions of war overwhelm the barriers that separate civilians from those on the battlefield.

Combatant perspectives: from honour to disguised guerrillas

The soldiers and fighters at the centre of this armed conflict are only slightly more willing than civilians to relax the limits in principle. In the in-depth discussions, the combatants affirmed that they care deeply about the distinction between civilians and combatants. They say it is a matter of honour — a military code — to be seen to act in accordance with these principles. In fact, some say that you cannot expect to be seen as a good side if you don't respect the rules.

Government soldiers from Villavicencio flatly denied breaking the rules of war. Indeed, on many occasions they condemned the guerrilla fighters for both breaking the rules and wanting the rules' protection. Their response to these issues is very formal. In the focus groups, though pressed to consider real conflict situations, they usually gave by-the-book answers. When the moderator asked whether it was appropriate to attack civilians who are providing food and shelter to combatants, they simply say "no". One after the other, they all say "no".

> Because combatants are not supposed to try people or judge their actions. That belongs to the legal department. If I am a combatant, I am just performing military functions.
>
> I think we have to remember that we are in a democratic country here. If someone has proven that someone has voluntarily given food to the guerrillas — then we let the justice department handle it. That person is not a combatant.
>
> (FG, government soldiers, Villavicencio)

Then the moderator further blurred the line: "Would it be appropriate for combatants to attack a civilian who gave the enemy important military information that allowed the enemy to attack and kill 10 of their fellow soldiers?" They remained firm in their formal response:

> No - he is a civilian.

It is not appropriate. There are laws in Colombia. There are laws — it is illegal. We do not judge and try — that is the justice department.

All of these are the same situation. The only thing you can do is inform the legal authorities and let them investigate it.

It is the right to life. We would be violating the law.

(FG, government soldiers, Villavicencio)

Both the guerrilla fighters and members of self-defence groups are more open to acknowledging attacks that harm civilians. Like the government soldiers, they, too, are adamant that they themselves adhere to the rules of war, but their interpretation of the rules is quite different from that of the government soldiers and more like that of the women from Villavicencio. Like the women, the guerrillas draw the line at passing on military information. A civilian who donates money to combatants or gives important military information to the enemy should, in their view, be seen as a combatant.

Here we are involving the civilian population because they are very close, they give us food and they are killed because they are involved. In that respect we are involving them. (FG, guerrillas, Medellín)

We first give notice to the civilian population not to build their houses close to the command and to get out of the area. Then we operate for a short time, and if they do not pay attention, because what the F2, the Sijin [police intelligence] do is place their collaborators there. (FG, guerrillas, Medellín)

The members of self-defence groups repeatedly and quite candidly admit to violating the rules of war, but only because “the guerrillas started first” and have broken down the distinction between combatants and civilians. They claim to prefer to abide by the rules of war, but say that they have been obliged to take arms and defend themselves against the guerrillas.

In addition, the guerrillas are constantly violating the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We do not kidnap. The guerrilla does. We do not bomb oil ducts. The guerrilla does.

I believe that an armed conflict is a war in which human rights are violated on a daily basis by the guerrillas, by the State, and by our organization. The guerrillas are the first ones to violate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and they repeatedly violate the Declaration, thus forcing us to violate it as well. We have to defend ourselves.

Many times we are accused of massacres. They accuse us of many things that we are not responsible for, they accuse us of committing massacres. Of course, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is being violated. Sometimes we arrive to a civil population and a civilian is being executed. He is not a civilian, but rather a guerrilla combatant dressed as civilian who lives within the civilian population.

(FG, paramilitary group, Villavicencio)

Passions and prisoners

About one in four Colombians would not save a captured enemy combatant who had killed someone close to them; a like number seem ready to isolate enemy combatants who have been taken prisoner. Clearly, the strong resistance to assaults on civilians yields to a greater permissiveness where the treatment of combatants is concerned. Faced with such an obscure and violent conflict, many Colombians may feel little need to protect the warring parties and their combatants.

It is worth noting that most Colombians say that they would save a captured combatant, and this, too, is reflected in the focus groups. Displaced women, who had suffered greatly in the war, hoped that they would maintain their sense of humanity. A few of them felt that it was acceptable to attack such a person if there were practical reasons, but others did not.

> I don't agree with killing him. I always think that we have to respect other human being's lives. (FG, internally displaced women, Medellín)

> I think it is appropriate to attack him, because if he gives that information, he generates the deaths of who knows how many more human beings. (FG, internally displaced women, Medellín)

> I would also save him because a person has the right to live even if he is on the opposing side. He has every right to live. If the same thing happened to you, the other person would save you in order to be human, because if you leave him there you won't kill him. (FG, internally displaced women, Medellín)

> I would save him because he is a human being. (FG, internally displaced women, Medellín)

People were presented with the hypothetical situation of a captured enemy combatant who killed a person close to them. The reaction to this situation was so emotional, particularly for those in the conflict zones, that many felt they could not predict how they would behave. Many thought that the passions of battle would most likely dictate their actions.

> It's difficult to handle your emotions in such circumstances. I can't be sure. It's difficult to say what I would do. (FG, NGO workers, Bogotá)

> I'm totally angry at that moment. I don't think rationally at that moment. (FG, journalists, Medellín)

> You would lose control, behave like an animal. (FG, journalists, Medellín)

> I don't know if I would kill him or torture him. I would not save him. I believe that as Nietzsche says, I am too human and I believe that I would yield to rage, to pain. I believe that it would be more powerful than me. I believe that the other option [saving him] is more Hollywood style — those movies in which one sees that the person lowers the weapon and in a moment of tension is not capable of killing the other. (FG, medical workers, Bogotá)

Some in the group noted not so much their passions, as how they would behave practically in this armed conflict.

> I am fighting, I don't have time. (FG, women, Villavicencio)

16

> There are rules, but war isn’t like that when you’re there, living it. (FG, journalists, Medellín)

One woman in Villavicencio said: “It’s my life first. If I save him, then my own people might attack me. They might consider me an enemy too.”

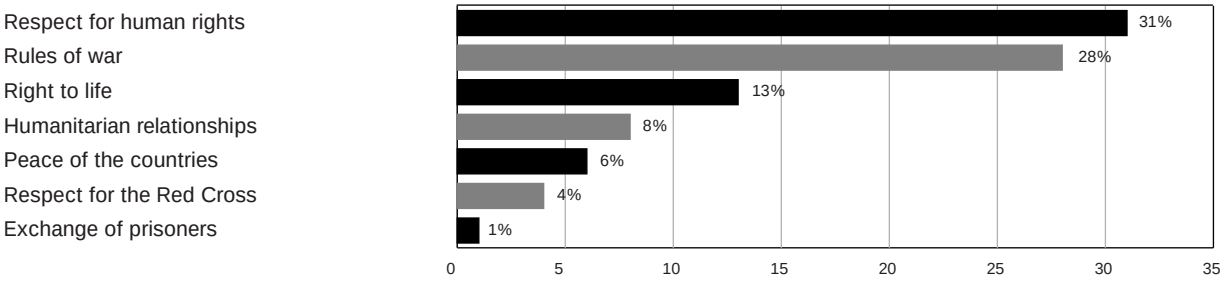
Geneva Conventions

Despite the prolonged armed conflict and the attention paid to various abuses, a minority of Colombians — 37 per cent — are aware of the Geneva Conventions.[8] Those who are aware of them describe their scope with some accuracy, with most people mentioning respect for human rights (31 per cent) and the rules of war (28 per cent); next most frequently mentioned are the right to life (13 per cent) and humanitarian relationships (8 per cent). Those who know the Geneva Conventions apparently see them as providing for respect for humanity.

FIGURE 7

What the Geneva Conventions are about

(per cent of population who have heard of the Geneva Conventions)



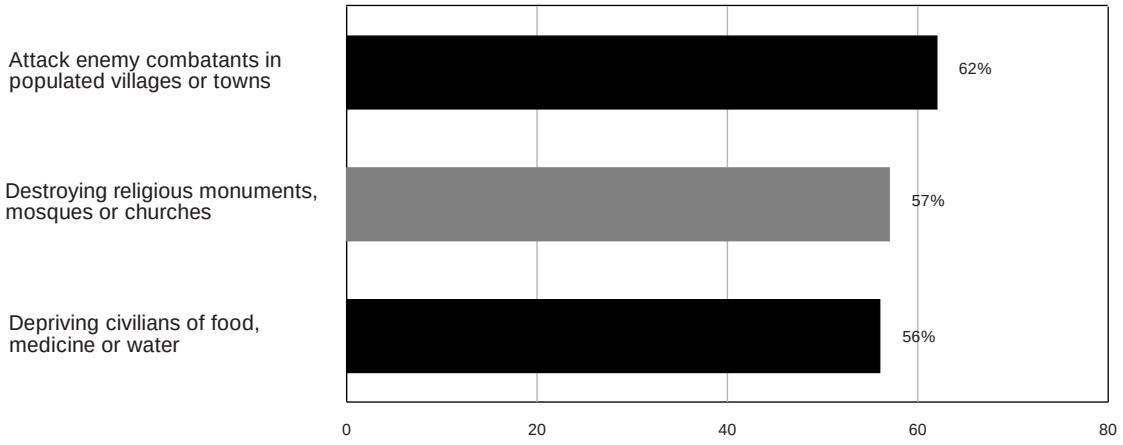
Question: Could you tell me what the Geneva Conventions are about?

The lack of broad awareness of the Geneva Conventions has important ramifications when it comes to the specific practices of combatants in this type of armed conflict. More than two-thirds of the population know that it is against the law to attack a vehicle marked with the Red Cross, but many fewer are aware that other practices are unlawful. For example, only a small majority know that it is unlawful to deny the civilian population food and water (56 per cent) or to destroy religious monuments (57 per cent) to gain a military advantage. (See Figure 8.)

FIGURE 8

Knowledge of laws

(per cent of total population responding “yes”)



Question: Are there any laws that say you can’t do that, even if it would help your side?

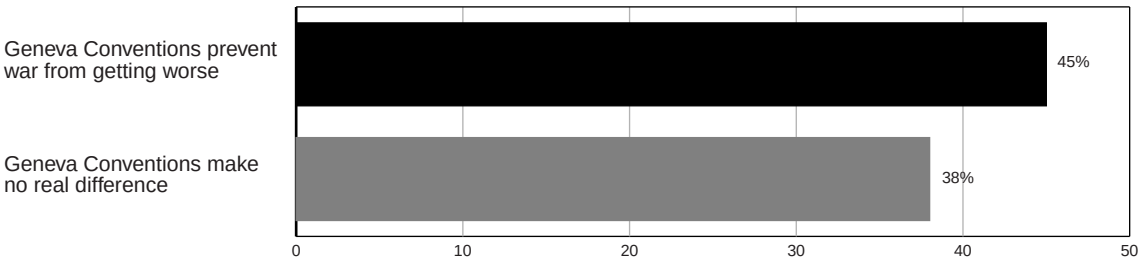
[8] The corresponding number in the parallel research is lower (26 per cent).

According to the ICRC survey, a plurality of those who are aware of the Geneva Conventions (45 per cent) believe they have kept the armed conflict from getting worse; 38 per cent say they have made no difference.[9] (See Figure 9.)

FIGURE 9

Geneva Conventions

(per cent of total population responding)



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

Awareness matters

Awareness of the Geneva Conventions and of the various legal limits on combatants' behaviour makes a difference to the kinds of practices people are willing to countenance. For example, just 10 per cent of those who can accurately describe the Geneva Conventions say they would not save a captured enemy combatant, but of those unaware of the Conventions, many more — 26 per cent — would not save one.

Awareness of the Geneva Conventions also matters when it comes to putting civilians at risk. Among those unaware, fully 35 per cent say combatants should avoid civilians as much as possible, rather than specifically leave them alone; of those aware, a smaller number (just 14 per cent) say it is acceptable to attack civilians.

These data strongly suggest that greater awareness of the Geneva Conventions and of the rules of war could reduce the public's willingness to put civilians and captured combatants at risk.

[9] It is not possible to say with certainty whether people genuinely believe the Geneva Conventions have kept things from getting worse in this armed conflict. In the ICRC research, a plurality of 45 per cent say they did (with 38 per cent saying they made no difference). In the parallel research, however, just 34 per cent say they helped, while 58 per cent think they made no difference. Obviously, the response to this question should be approached with a degree of caution, owing to the possibility of overstatement to Red Cross interviewers.

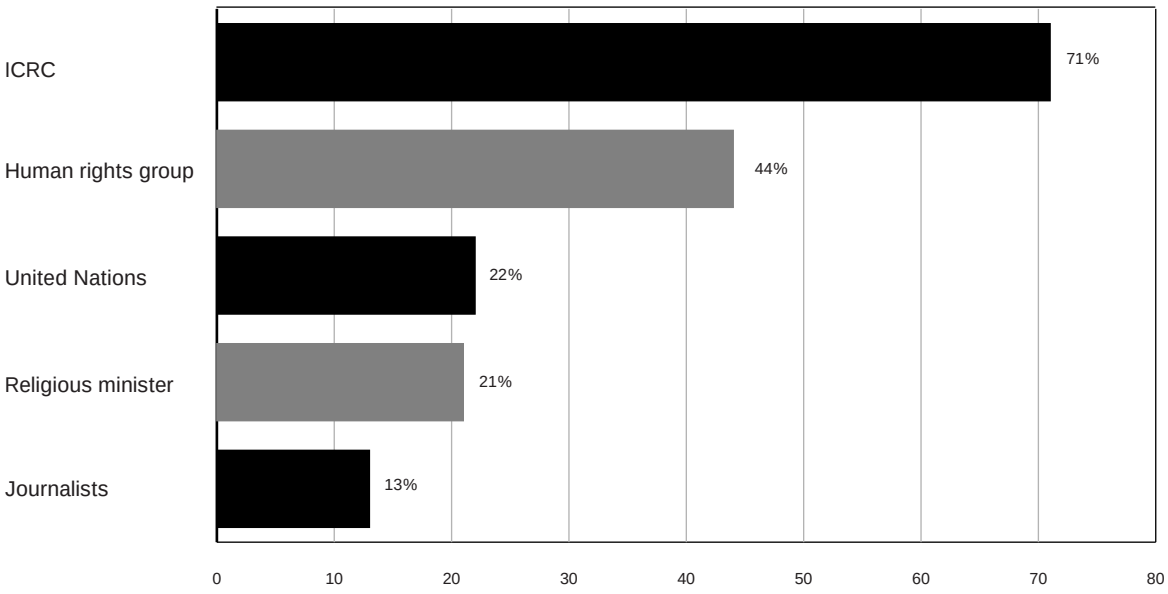
The role of the ICRC/Red Cross

The ICRC/Red Cross is the strongest representation of the Geneva Conventions and of international humanitarian law in general in Colombia. The organization is widely recognized — not just through the red cross emblem but through its work to assist people affected by the armed conflict.

More than four out of five respondents associate the red cross emblem with the ICRC or the Red Cross; just 7 per cent associate the emblem with medical assistance or hospitals in general. The level of recognition, amazingly, was even higher in the parallel survey conducted independently of the ICRC.

Recognition of the emblem has immense practical consequences. When Colombians think independent representatives should be able to visit imprisoned combatants, it is to the ICRC that people turn: 71 per cent would choose the ICRC, while 44 per cent mention a human rights representative. Just 22 per cent would choose a UN representative and 21 per cent a religious minister. (See Figure 10.)

FIGURE 10
Visit by representative
(per cent of those saying visit should be allowed)



Question: Which of the following representatives should be allowed to visit captured enemy combatants?

The ICRC/Red Cross is the organization people look to when they face trouble during war. It is to the ICRC/Red Cross, more than to any other group or institution, that Colombians would turn for protection if, during war, prisoners were tortured, civilian areas attacked, or towns/villages were cut off from food, water, medical supplies and electricity (48 per cent). Of the others, 28 per cent would turn to the government, only 13 per cent to the military and 9 per cent to the UN. The ICRC/Red Cross is seen as the dominant player in providing protection. More people would turn to it by far than to any other international organization or any other institution in the country, including the government or the Church. (See Figure 11.)

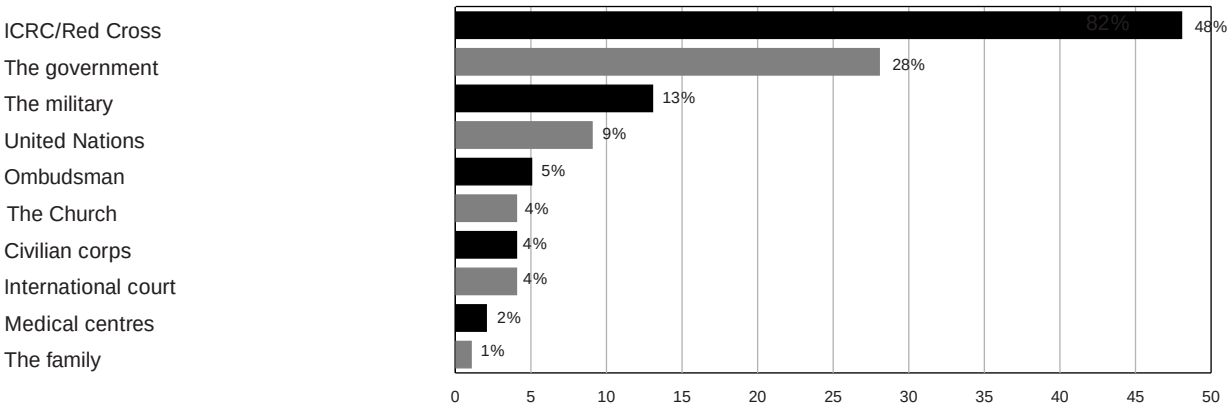
Finally, an extraordinary 72 per cent of Colombians say the ICRC/Red Cross played the biggest role in preventing mistreatment and abuses during the armed conflict. The next most frequently mentioned are international humanitarian organizations, cited by just 32 per cent. (See Figure 12.) Looking

ahead, 56 per cent of Colombians also think the ICRC/Red Cross is likely to play the biggest role in the future, twice that for the next most frequently mentioned organization.

FIGURE 11

Turn to for help

(per cent of total population responding)

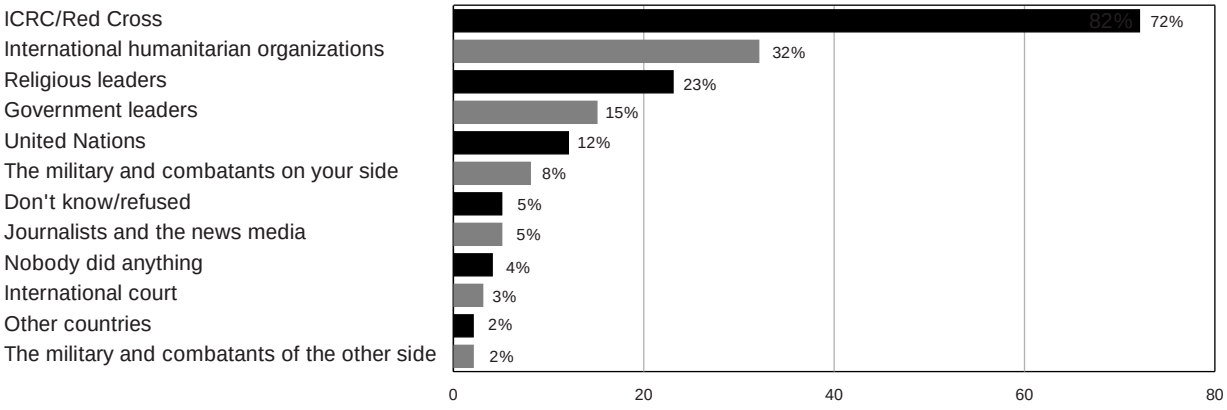


Question: Let me ask what can be done if during the war prisoners are tortured, civilian areas are attacked, or towns/villages are cut off from food, water, medical supplies and electricity. To whom would you turn to get help or to be protected?

FIGURE 12

Biggest role

(per cent of total population responding)[10] (top two responses)



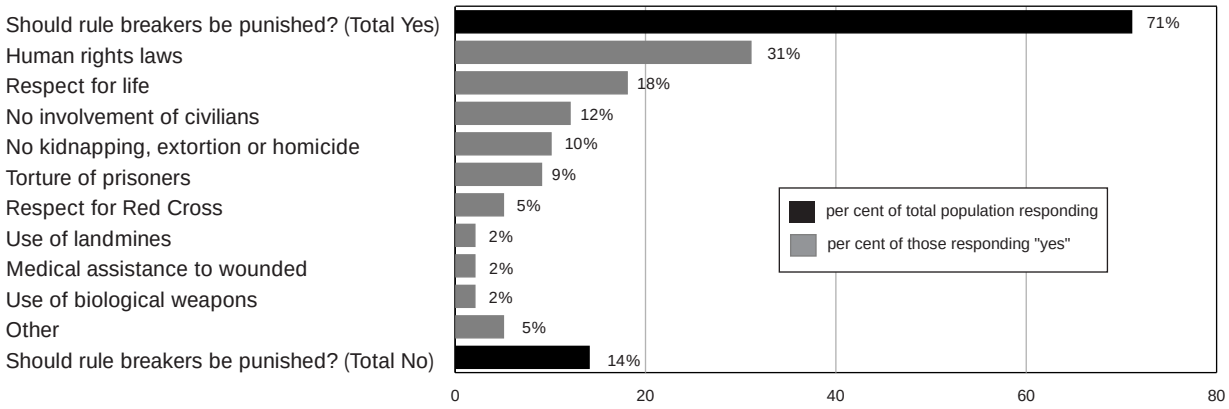
Question: Who played the biggest role during the armed conflict to end the kind of mistreatment previously described?

[10] Respondents were read a list and asked to select which *two* organizations they thought played the biggest role in ending mistreatment during the armed conflict. As a result, the aggregate responses add up to more than 100 per cent.

War crimes

A large majority of Colombians (71 per cent) feel that there are rules or laws that are “so important that, if broken during war, the person who broke them should be punished”.

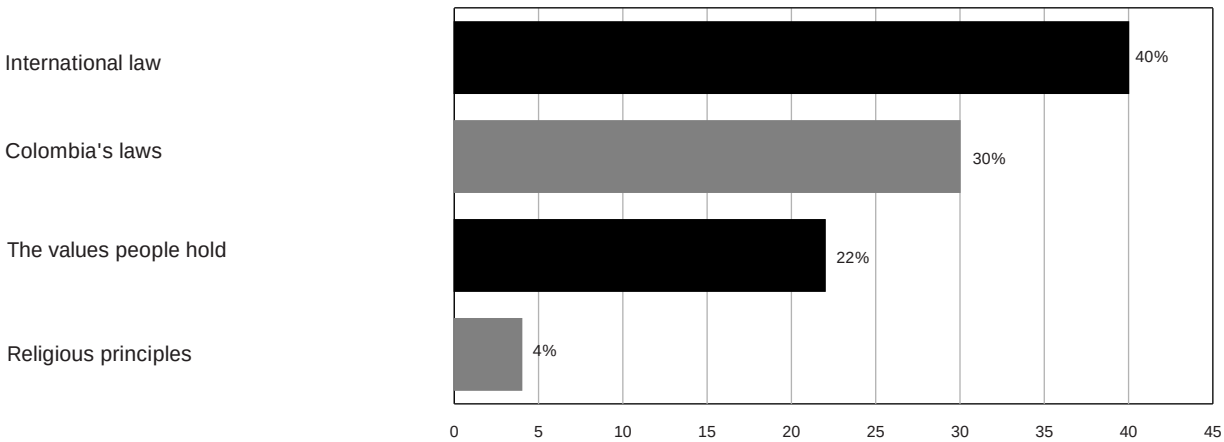
FIGURE 13
War crimes[11]



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

Consistent with broader beliefs in Colombia, these rules or laws are seen mainly to involve violations of human rights (31 per cent), respect for life (18 per cent), and the general norm of “not involving the civilian population” (12 per cent). More tangible rules, such as those designed to prevent kidnapping, torture and the use of landmines or biological weapons, are less salient and therefore mentioned less often. (See Figure 13.) In Colombia, the threat to human dignity and human rights is seen to provide a foundation for prosecution and punishment.

FIGURE 14
Basis for rules
(per cent of those saying such rules exist)



Question: What are these rules [rules so important that if broken during war, the person who broke them should be punished] based on?

[11]Respondents were asked if there were “rules or laws so important that, if broken during war, the person who broke them should be punished.” Those who responded affirmatively (71 per cent) were then asked to describe open-endedly what rules or laws they had in mind.

Colombians largely (70 per cent) see formal law as the basis for prosecuting war crimes: 40 per cent refer to international law and 30 per cent to Colombian law. Fewer have recourse to moral or religious precepts.

A significant majority of Colombians (72 per cent) want people who break the rules to be put on trial rather than just "exposed to the public" or "forgotten when the war is over". This response is consistent with the predominant view that there is a legal basis for punishment. Indeed, among those who hold this view, 80 per cent would put war criminals on trial. Conversely, those who refer to norms or religious beliefs are more likely to seek alternatives to trials after the war.

Interestingly, 80 per cent of combatants would put on trial people who have broken the rules of war.

In the more in-depth focus group discussions and interviews, people were insistent on the need for trials and judgment.

> Not [putting people on trial] gives a sense of impunity for future generations. (FG, journalists, Medellín)

> Of course, they have to be judged. (FG, guerrillas, Medellín)

> If I do a thing like that, then I will be judged, but so will they judge everybody. (FG, guerrillas, Medellín)

> They violated rules: the right to life. They have taken away the right to liberty. They did too much harm to Colombia. (FG, women, Villavicencio)

> For one thing, if the individuals who commit atrocities are not tried and penalized, they remain free to continue committing atrocities, as they have done in Colombia. (IDI, priest, Usme)

> The people [should be the judges]. It would be a great day when the people could say: come here, we are going to judge you. (IDI, university student, Bogotá)

> Violation of the international rights that regulate the wars has to be judged, and it is the international community that should judge them. (IDI, ex-guerrilla, Medellín)

Colombia's responsibility

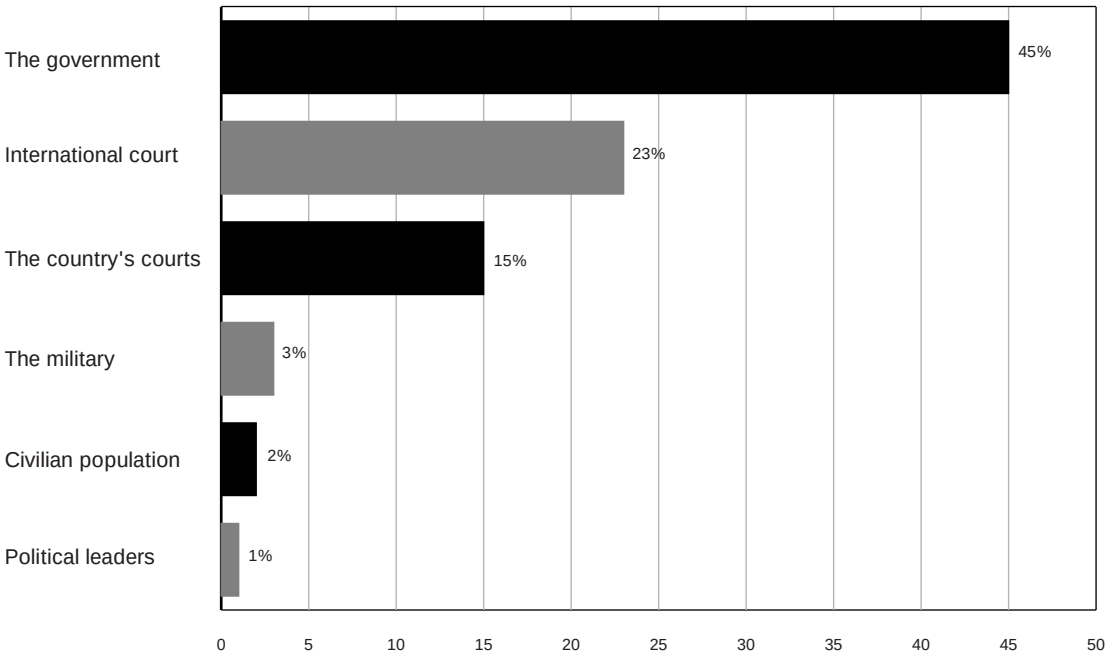
While Colombians see the basis for war-crimes prosecutions in law, including international law (40 per cent), they think the ultimate responsibility for dispensing justice lies with the country's institutions, rather than abroad. Above all, they think the Colombian government should be responsible for judgment and punishment (45 per cent); another 15 per cent think Colombia's courts should handle the issue. Fully 60 per cent see the State as the institution best suited to the task. (See Figure 15.) Just 3 per cent think the military should be responsible for punishing the wrongdoers.

Just one in four Colombians (23 per cent) would turn to an international court to address the issue of war crimes. Serious abuses, like those that have occurred in Colombia's armed conflict, are seen to cause profound problems and to violate norms of humanity that are important to Colombians. They want their own national institutions, not the international community, to address these wrongs.

FIGURE 15

Who should punish wrongdoers?

(per cent of total population responding)



Question: If these rules are broken in war, who should be responsible for punishing the wrongdoers?

This armed conflict, observed at a distance by many, but experienced profoundly by others, influences how Colombians feel about international humanitarian law. Those at a distance feel more hopeful of a peaceful outcome and are more likely to accept the efficacy of the limits on war. Those more directly affected are less hopeful and less assured of the efficacy of the rules. Their experiences have made them very protective of civilians, but less so of combatants. Combatants and civilians alike would nonetheless bring wrongdoers to trial. Although they acknowledge that the foundations of such legal action might involve international law, the great majority want Colombian institutions to take responsibility for enforcing the limits in war.

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

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

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	☐	☐	☐
Imprisoned	☐	☐	☐
Kidnapped or taken hostage	☐	☐	☐
Tortured	☐	☐	☐
Felt humiliated	☐	☐	☐
Lost contact with a close relative	☐	☐	☐
A member of your immediate family killed during the armed conflict (son, daughter, father, mother, brother, sister, grandmother, grandfather, grandchild)	☐	☐	☐
Serious damage to your property	☐	☐	☐
Wounded by the fighting	☐	☐	☐
Combatants took food away	☐	☐	☐
Had your house looted	☐	☐	☐
Somebody you knew well was sexually assaulted by combatants	☐	☐	☐
[READ LAST] Somebody you knew well was raped by combatants	☐	☐	☐

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	➜ **GO TO Q32**
Living in area under enemy control	➜ **GO TO Q32**
Both [Volunteered response]	➜ **GO TO Q32**
[Don't know/refused]	➜ **GO TO Q34**
No response	➜ **GO TO Q34**

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	☐	☐	☐
You were physically injured	☐	☐	☐
You were treated correctly	☐	☐	☐
[READ LAST] You had a contact with a representative from an independent organization to check on your well-being	☐	☐	☐

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]

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]**

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.