

# PEOPLE ON WAR

## Country report Georgia/Abkhazia

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

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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

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## About the People on War project

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

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

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

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

## Greenberg Research, Inc.

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

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

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

The break-up of the Soviet Union helped to trigger numerous conflicts as the States, regions and peoples that emerged from that empire sought to establish their own spheres of sovereignty. One of the most brutal of these gripped the Republic of Georgia and its north-west region of Abkhazia, an agricultural and resort area bordering Russia and the Black Sea.<sup>1</sup> The conflict, which began in August 1992 and raged as open warfare for 14 months, remains formally unresolved to this day.

The conflict pitted against each other peoples who had for decades lived in close proximity, often mixed together in the same communities, sometimes through intermarriage. The ethnic Abkhaz, supported by members of other ethnic groups present in Abkhazia, fought for expanded autonomy or full independence. The Georgians and ethnic Georgians in Abkhazia sought to preserve the territorial integrity of their newly independent Republic.<sup>2</sup> By many accounts, the intense fighting left 10,000 to 15,000 dead<sup>3</sup> and at least 8,000 wounded.<sup>4</sup> The conflict displaced more than 200,000 from Abkhazia – roughly half the region's population – with most of these displaced being ethnic Georgians.<sup>5</sup>

The conflict had at least three major contributing causes. The first was the competing claims of sovereignty between Tbilisi and Sukhumi which date back decades, if not to Russia's annexation of the region in 1864. Soon after the Russian Revolution, in March 1921, Abkhazia attained the status of an independent republic within the USSR, but in 1931 it became part of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Georgia. Tensions simmered for decades, and in 1978, Abkhazia unsuccessfully tried to secede from Georgia.

The second cause was a civil war within Georgia in December 1991, less than a year after it declared its independence from the Soviet Union. Zviad Gamsakhurdia had been elected the first President of the country, but his increasingly authoritarian rule prompted open demonstrations, which were supported by elements of paramilitary forces and national guard units. In January 1992, Gamsakhurdia was toppled by a coup. Three months later Eduard Shevardnadze, who had served as Soviet Foreign Minister, returned to his native Georgia to assume the country's leadership. During 1992, while Georgia was trying to gain full control of its territory, some of its regions took advantage of the unrest in Tbilisi to assert their independence. In July 1992, the Supreme Soviet of Abkhazia reinstated the 1925 Constitution establishing Abkhazia's status as a State. In August, armed conflict erupted in Abkhazia. Throughout the early part of the war, as the government in Tbilisi tried to manage the conflict in Abkhazia, it also faced periodic attack from forces loyal to Gamsakhurdia.

The third factor was the role of Russia. Although Russia initially proclaimed neutrality in the conflict, President Boris Yeltsin also argued that Russia should have a special role as "a guarantor of peace and stability" in what it termed its "near abroad". While it is unclear if Moscow was trying to preserve stability in the region or manipulate the conflict to establish more control over its neighbours, Russian forces clearly contributed to the intensity of the fighting.

Throughout the conflict, both communities resorted to attacks on civilians designed to terrorize ethnic populations and drive them from particular areas. The conflict was also characterized by

<sup>1</sup> In this report, Abkhazia refers to the territory that is under the control of the Sukhumi authorities. According to the last Soviet census conducted in 1989, the ethnic composition of the 525,000 residents of Abkhazia prior to the war was as follows: Georgian (46 per cent), Abkhaz (18 per cent), Armenian (15 per cent), Russian (14 per cent) and Greek (3 per cent). In 1989, the population of the Republic of Georgia totalled just over 5 million people — less than 100,000 of whom were Abkhaz.

<sup>2</sup> In this report, Abkhaz refers to residents of Abkhazia, and Georgians refer to people living in Georgia outside of Abkhazia, regardless of their ethnic origins, except when specified otherwise.

<sup>3</sup> "Georgia Abkhazia: Violations of the Laws of War and Russia's Role in the Conflict", *Human Rights Watch Arms Project*, March 1995, Vol. 7, No. 7, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> According to the Georgian government's Committee on Human Rights and Interethnic Relations. Human Rights Watch interview with Committee Chairman Aleksandre Kavsadze, Tbilisi, 2 January 1995, and the Abkhazian Committee for Human Rights. "Georgia Abkhazia: Violations of the Laws of War and Russia's Role in the Conflict", *Human Rights Watch Arms Project*, March 1995, Vol. 7, No. 7 p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Tore Borresen, UNHCR representative in Georgia, Tbilisi, 4 January 1995.

the mistreatment of captured combatants and the practice of hostage-taking, engaged in by both sides. Sometimes hostages were exchanged for money, sometimes for captives taken by the other side.

The particular ruthlessness of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict stemmed in part from the ill-trained and hastily formed units that took part in the fighting. The ethnic Abkhaz relied on volunteers, also from other ethnic groups, aided by foreign fighters. Georgia relied on its National Guard (*Mkhedrioni*), other paramilitaries and volunteers from Georgia and Abkhazia. In addition, a significant number of freed convicts took part in the fighting, especially on the Georgian side, and contributed to the widespread looting and pillaging that marked the conflict.

More than five years after the cessation of open warfare, the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict continues to smoulder. Despite some limited economic reconstruction, communities continue to pay a heavy price. Border crossings are restricted, which has greatly reduced the flow of commerce. The displacement of hundreds of thousands of people has left a vacuum of manpower in Abkhazia, while imposing a heavy economic burden on Georgia.

The deprivations faced by civilians are exacerbated by a host of other problems. Organized crime is widespread. There have been repeated assassination attempts on Georgian President Shevardnadze. An international presence remains in Georgia and in Abkhazia in the form of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG). The Russians are represented by CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) peacekeepers based in Abkhazia, and the Russian Federation maintains troops in Georgia. All of these contribute to a sense among the people in Georgia and Abkhazia that the conflict of the early 1990s is not history, but remains very much a part of their lives.

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## Country methodology

The findings in this report are based on a consultation carried out by the ICRC in Georgia and Abkhazia.<sup>6</sup> The project was overseen by a research team from Greenberg Research, with the participation of three local partners. In Georgia, Greenberg Research worked with the Institute of Polling and Marketing (IPM), a public opinion research firm based in Tbilisi. With their help and guidance, ICRC staff and members of the Georgian Red Cross Society conducted the various components of the research. In Abkhazia, Greenberg Research worked with the faculty of economics from Sochi State University, the Sukhumi-based Centre for Humanitarian Programmes (CHP), ICRC staff and local volunteers from the region to conduct the consultation.

The research included three components:

- Nine **focus groups** (FG), for which participants were recruited by specially trained ICRC staff. Professional moderators associated with IPM in Georgia and Sochi State University and CHP in Abkhazia facilitated the groups in Georgian or Russian. The moderators received additional training and instructions from senior Greenberg Research staff. Sessions were held with the following groups in Georgia: former combatants and journalists in Tbilisi and internally displaced women and university students in Zugdidi. Sessions in Abkhazia included: elderly women, young men, former combatants and Russian peacekeepers in Sukhumi and formerly displaced women in Ochamchira. The focus groups took place between 17 and 28 May 1999.
- Twenty-one **in-depth interviews** (IDI), carried out by ICRC staff. Greenberg Research trained ICRC staff on how to recruit participants and how to conduct a structured 45-minute interview. Each interview was audiotaped in Georgian or Russian and later translated into English, from which transcriptions were made for further analysis. Interviewees included teachers and professors, a former hostage-taker and former hostages, members of the armed forces, and a doctor who administered medical assistance during the 1992-1993 conflict. The in-depth interviews took place between 20 May and 15 June, 1999.
- A **quantitative national survey** of 1,033 respondents (534 in Georgia and 499 in Abkhazia) of at least 18 years of age and stratified geographically according to population. The Georgian Red Cross administered the survey in Georgia under the supervision of Greenberg Research and IPM. In Abkhazia, ICRC staff and local Abkhaz volunteers administered the survey under the supervision of Greenberg Research and Sochi State University and CHP advisors. Greenberg Research, in conjunction with the ICRC, IPM and Sochi State University, developed the sampling frame used to administer the survey. The surveys took place from 20 May to 15 June in Georgia and 26 May to 15 June in Abkhazia. Percentages reported here are subject to a sampling error of +/- 4.4 percentage points (at a 95 in 100 confidence level). Results in smaller segments, such as the 498 interviews in Abkhazia, are subject to an error of +/- 6.5 percentage points.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> In this report, Abkhazia refers to the territory that is under the control of the Sukhumi authorities.

<sup>7</sup> These estimates are based on population values of 50 per cent. Obviously, many reported percentages are lower or higher than that; higher percentages would have a smaller sampling error. For example, a reported percentage of 90 per cent for the total population would have a sampling error +/- 2.6 percentage points.

## Executive summary

The break-up of the former Soviet Union rekindled age-old tensions and triggered a series of explosive conflicts. Across the former empire, peoples, regions and newly independent States struggled to resolve long-standing and deep-seated differences regarding ethnic identity, political autonomy and legal sovereignty. Few of the resulting conflicts were as brutal as the one that raged in the early 1990s in Georgia's north-western region of Abkhazia and between the Georgian and Abkhaz communities.<sup>8</sup>

The ethnic Abkhaz, supported by members of other ethnic groups present in Abkhazia, fought for an extended autonomy or sovereignty they had long sought during the Soviet era. Georgia, which was just emerging from civil conflict for control of its government, sought to preserve its territorial integrity with the support of ethnic Georgians in Abkhazia. The conflict was complicated and at times intensified by the involvement of Russian troops.

Open warfare erupted in August 1992 and raged with fratricidal fury for more than a year. Thousands died, and more than 8,000 were wounded.<sup>9</sup> Initially, it was mostly the ethnic Abkhaz population that was displaced in the face of advancing Georgian combatants. As the tide of battle turned, the Abkhaz side retook Sukhumi and the rest of Abkhazia so that ultimately more than 200,000 people, mostly ethnic Georgians, were displaced and remain outside of Abkhazia today.<sup>10</sup> Combatants intentionally terrorized civilian populations in order to make them abandon their homes. According to numerous accounts, both sides engaged in looting, torture, rape, hostage-taking and killing of prisoners. Although the most serious fighting ended in 1993, the fundamental issues over which the war was fought have never been resolved.

In many ways, Georgians and Abkhaz experienced the conflict quite differently.<sup>11</sup> The conflict took place almost exclusively in Abkhazia. As a result, Abkhaz (including Georgians living in Abkhazia at the time) were more likely to have been combatants or to have been directly affected by the fighting.

Yet combatants and civilians on both sides share a feeling of horror at the atrocities that occurred, and a sense that the passion of the conflict overwhelmed the rules of warfare and civilized behaviour on numerous occasions. At least four factors in the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict contributed to this widespread breakdown of respect for the law of war.

The first of these was the intense sense of partisanship. Nearly three-quarters of the Georgian and Abkhaz publics (71 and 74 per cent) aligned themselves with a side in the conflict. Moreover, both sides fought with great intensity, as they saw themselves waging a defensive battle – ethnic Abkhaz to defend their home territory from invasion, Georgians, including those in Abkhazia, to defend their country from dissolution and foreign intervention.

The second reason for the breakdown of the limits was the irregular nature of the forces involved in the fighting. The Georgian side, which had been wracked by civil war, had few regular forces, and quickly supplemented them with National Guard members, paramilitaries and even released convicts. The Abkhaz side initially had no regular military, and thus had to organize its forces in the heat of battle. With little training, experience or formal chains of command, combatants on both sides often showed little regard for order and discipline. In addition, neither Georgia nor Abkhazia had succeeded in establishing a high degree of stability.

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<sup>8</sup> In this report, Abkhazia refers to the territory that is under the control of the Sukhumi authorities. See footnote 1 for a breakdown of the ethnic composition in Abkhazia prior to the war.

<sup>9</sup> According to the Georgian government's Committee on Human Rights and Interethnic Relations, Human Rights Watch interview with Committee Chairman Aleksandre Kavsadze, Tbilisi, 2 January 1995, and the Abkhazian Committee for Human Rights, "Georgia Abkhazia: Violations of the Laws of War and Russia's Role in the Conflict", *Human Rights Watch Arms Project*, March 1995, Vol. 7, No. 7, p. 5.

<sup>10</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Tore Borresen, UNHCR representative in Georgia, Tbilisi, 4 January 1995.

<sup>11</sup> In this report, Abkhaz refer to residents of Abkhazia and Georgians refer to people living in Georgia outside of Abkhazia, regardless of their ethnic origins, except when specified otherwise.

The third reason that the fighting in the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict frequently violated international norms is one common to many other conflicts: the passions unleashed by warfare and the thirst for revenge, which simply overwhelmed all sense of restraint. As each side saw or heard about rapes, torture, forced displacements, and prisoner exchanges in which still-warm corpses were delivered in place of live combatants, the inclination to respect any limitations on warfare diminished.

Fourth and last, the in-depth research among both communities reveals that combatants and non-combatants alike were not provided with the education and moral grounding they needed in order to behave honourably in a time of conflict. The atrocities committed during the conflict—and the breakdown of the barriers meant to protect civilians — suggest that a sense of humanity was in short supply.

These are the other major findings of the ICRC consultation:

**The war's toll.** Years of open fighting and random violence have had widespread and brutal effects on both communities.

- The conflict drew — or perhaps merely revealed — deep divisions between the two communities. Of those surveyed, 71 per cent of Georgians and 74 per cent of Abkhaz say they chose sides in the conflict.
- The war took place on unequal terms; while 81 per cent of Abkhaz surveyed lived where the war actually took place, only 4 per cent of Georgians surveyed say the same.

As the fighting was unevenly distributed geographically, so were its negative effects.

- Almost five times as many Abkhaz (19 per cent) as Georgians (4 per cent) say a family member was killed in the conflict.
- While close to half of Abkhaz report their homes being looted (44 per cent) — one of the defining characteristics of the conflict — only 2 per cent of Georgians make the same claim.
- When presented with a list of negative consequences brought on by the war, fully 90 per cent of Abkhaz experienced at least one, compared with only 42 per cent of Georgians. Just as striking, 46 per cent of Abkhaz report suffering four or more negative consequences, while only 3 per cent of Georgians say the same.
- Substantial portions of both sides — 32 per cent of Abkhaz and 21 per cent of Georgians — ascribe the motivation behind atrocities to sheer hatred of the other side.

**Protection of civilians.** As vast numbers of Abkhaz residents were displaced from their homes, people on both sides of the conflict seemed to have become resigned to the cycle of violence that had engulfed their country. Despite this, solid majorities in both communities feel that civilians should be protected during armed conflict.

- Both communities (69 per cent of Georgians and 64 per cent of Abkhaz) think that combatants should attack only combatants and leave civilians alone altogether during wartime.
- Both Abkhaz' and Georgians' feelings about the protection of civilians are strongly rooted in norms and laws, rather than expediency. Among those who believe that there should be



limits on combatants' behaviour, 79 per cent of Georgians and 86 per cent of Abkhaz say that certain actions are "wrong" rather than that "they cause too many problems".

- Both sides actively disapprove of the use of weapons of mass destruction. Forty-six per cent of Abkhaz and almost two-thirds (62 per cent) of Georgians frown on the use of nuclear weapons. Similarly, one-third of Georgians (34 per cent) and over half of Abkhaz (55 per cent) think chemical weapons should not be used.
- As in many other modern conflicts, landmines played a large role in the conflict — yet respondents from both sides have mixed feelings about their use. Georgians are almost evenly split on whether landmines are acceptable weapons — 56 per cent believe they are not, but 43 per cent think otherwise. Abkhaz are even more closely split: 49 per cent would allow the use of mines, whereas 48 per cent would not.
- Sixty per cent of Georgians and 71 per cent of Abkhaz believe that the displacement of civilian populations is just part of war. Further, six in ten Georgians and half of Abkhaz respondents believe there are no specific rules that prohibit the displacement of civilians during war.

**Attacks on non-combatants.** Despite an official cease-fire, the conflict between the two communities continues to smoulder. Limits to protect civilians clearly broke down during the conflict, but even with hostilities now "frozen", respondents are still willing to countenance attacks on civilians in certain situations.

- At least one-quarter of the people in both areas (29 per cent in Georgia and 25 per cent in Abkhazia) say that it is allowable for combatants to attack civilians if they voluntarily provide food and shelter to enemy combatants.
- A majority of Abkhaz — 55 per cent — also believe it is acceptable to attack civilians who are voluntarily transporting ammunition for enemy combatants. Forty-three per cent of Georgians agree. When told that civilians are being forced to transport ammunition, these figures drop to 44 per cent for Abkhaz and 28 per cent for Georgians.
- Both Georgians and Abkhaz believe that depriving civilians of basic necessities is an acceptable practice. Substantial portions of all respondents, 40 per cent of Georgians and 34 per cent of Abkhaz see such actions as "part of war" rather than "wrong".

**Prisoners at risk.** Another indication of the lingering bitterness between the two communities is what each side considers acceptable when a member of the enemy's forces is captured.

- More than half of each population (54 per cent of Georgians and 55 per cent of Abkhaz) say they would not save a surrendering enemy combatant who had killed someone close to them. Similarly, 60 per cent of Georgians and 51 per cent of Abkhaz would refuse to help a wounded enemy combatant who had killed someone near and dear to them.
- Both populations are inclined to restrict the rights of captured combatants. Around one-third of both groups would not allow captured combatants to contact their relatives (39 per cent in Georgia and 32 per cent in Abkhazia).

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- A disturbing fraction of both sides condone the use of torture. Nearly one-quarter of Georgians (22 per cent) and nearly twice as many Abkhaz (40 per cent) deem it acceptable to use torture to obtain important military information.
  - When presented with the possibility of the other side killing its prisoners, 17 per cent of Abkhaz and 15 per cent of Georgians would approve the killing of prisoners in retaliation.

**The rules of war.** Substantial portions of both sides believe that the rules of war prevent conflict from getting worse, but they also believe that such rules can only go so far and are liable to be frequently broken.

- A nearly identical portion of Georgians and Abkhaz (60 and 59 per cent, respectively) believe that the Geneva Conventions prevent wars from getting worse. Still, a significant fraction — 32 per cent of Georgians and 27 per cent of Abkhaz — think that the Conventions make no real difference.
- Awareness of the rules of war remains low. Thirty-eight per cent of Abkhaz and 31 per cent of Georgians believe that there are laws prohibiting combatants from depriving civilians of food, medicine or water, while very similar percentages (48 per cent of Georgians and 39 per cent of Abkhaz) think that there are no laws to bar such actions.
- Similarly, little more than one-third of Georgians and Abkhaz – 36 per cent and 38 per cent, respectively – believe there are laws that prohibit combatants from targeting populated areas. More Georgians (43 per cent) and nearly as many Abkhaz (39 per cent) believe that no laws exist to bar such actions.
- Both groups — regardless of their awareness of the technical rules of war — were very enthusiastic about punishing those who had violated the rules of war. Sixty-three per cent of Georgians and almost three-quarters of Abkhaz (73 per cent) believe that there are rules so important that those who break them in wartime should be punished.
- However, both communities look to domestic, rather than international, bodies to mete out punishment. Nearly half of Georgians (46 per cent) and Abkhaz (49 per cent) say their authorities or courts should be responsible for punishment. Most of these — 37 per cent of Georgians and 34 per cent of Abkhaz — favour action by their authorities.

**International institutions.** Neither side looks especially favourably on international institutions. This is most likely due to firsthand experience — most Georgians and Abkhaz view the international actors that attempted to mitigate their own conflict as largely ineffectual.

- Despite the perceived ineffectiveness of international bodies, approximately two-thirds of both populations – 69 per cent of Georgians and 67 per cent of Abkhaz — say they would like to see more intervention from the international community.
  - Georgians and Abkhaz, almost in their entirety, are familiar with the ICRC and Red Cross. Ninety-seven per cent of Georgians and 95 per cent of Abkhaz could identify the red cross emblem. Both groups cite the ICRC/Red Cross as having made the biggest effort in trying to combat abuses, a view supported by 37 per cent of Georgians and 42 per cent of Abkhaz.
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- Conversely, populations on both sides had little regard for peacekeepers or representatives of other international bodies. Only 28 per cent of Georgians and half as many Abkhaz (14 per cent) think the UN and its forces in the region played the biggest role in protecting civilians.
- Impressively, members of both communities are optimistic about the future. Seventy-three per cent of Abkhaz and 68 per cent of Georgians think there will be peace. Only 16 per cent of Georgians and 12 per cent of Abkhaz expect more conflict.



## The war experience

### Mirror image experiences

The Georgian-Abkhaz conflict which took place in Abkhazia was waged with great intensity from 1992 to 1993 between neighbouring peoples and often, literally, between neighbours.<sup>12</sup> The casualties numbered 10,000 to 15,000 dead and at least 8,000 wounded, and more than 200,000 people were displaced.<sup>13</sup> The conflict, and the competing claims of sovereignty that fuelled it, remain unresolved. In a number of ways, Georgians and Abkhaz have similar views of the conflict.<sup>14</sup> First, they both display enormous partisanship with regard to the conflict. Nearly three-quarters in each community (71 per cent of Georgians and 74 per cent of Abkhaz) say they supported a side. The degree to which each population identified with a side has contributed to the intense feelings they both harbour about the conflict.

At the same time, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions reveal a certain bewilderment about why the conflict began and whether it needed to occur. To be sure, participants on both sides of the conflict cite key factors that led to the clash: the drive for an extended autonomy or full independence by the ethnic Abkhaz, supported by other ethnic groups present in Abkhazia; the Georgian desire to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity from both ethnic Abkhaz secession and attacks from forces loyal to former President Zviad Gamsakhurdia; the fanning of ethnic and nationalist passions; the involvement of Russia during the conflict and afterwards. Yet it is striking how many participants on each side regard the war as either somewhat accidental or entirely preventable.

We, Georgians and Abkhaz, were living together leading a normal life. We were relatives and neighbours to each other. There was no ethnic differentiation. We were working and no one was depressed. Even today it is not clear what we did to each other, what happened. Why is it we have become refugees? We find it difficult to explain these [things]. (FG, internally displaced women, Zugdidi)

This war is not justified. So much blood should not have been shed. This conflict should have been solved in other ways. (FG, internally displaced women, Zugdidi)

In many other ways, however, Georgians and Abkhaz experienced the conflict quite differently. For almost all the Abkhaz surveyed, the conflict was immediate. It occurred on their land and in and around their homes. For the Georgians surveyed, who lived outside the conflict zone, the conflict was more remote, with relatively less impact on their immediate relations and surroundings.

This difference contributes to fundamental divergences in how the two communities see the conflict. The vast majority of Abkhaz respondents, 81 per cent, say the conflict took place in an area where they lived. By contrast, only 4 per cent of Georgian respondents report that the conflict took place where they lived. As a result, Abkhaz were far more directly and extensively involved in the conflict than their counterparts in Georgia. More than one-third of Abkhaz respondents (35 per cent) were forced to leave their homes and live elsewhere, compared with 3 per cent of Georgians.<sup>15</sup> However, Georgians clearly were disrupted by the war: only 53 per cent of Georgians interviewed say they live in the same area as they did before the war, compared with 84 per cent of Abkhaz.

<sup>12</sup> In this report, Abkhazia refers to the territory that is under the control of the Sukhumi authorities. See footnote 1 for a breakdown of the ethnic composition in Abkhazia prior to the war.

<sup>13</sup> Georgian government's Committee on Human Rights and Interethnic Relations. Human Rights Watch interview with Committee Chairman Aleksandre Kavsadze Tbilisi, 2 January 1995, and the Abkhazian Committee for Human Rights, "Georgia Abkhazia: Violations of the Laws of War and Russia's Role in the Conflict", *Human Rights Watch Arms Project*, March 1995, Vol. 7, No. 7, p. 5.

"Georgia Abkhazia: Violations of the Laws of War and Russia's Role in the Conflict", *Human Rights Watch Arms Project*, March 1995, Vol. 7, No. 7, p. 5, and Human Rights Watch interview with Tore Borresen, UNHCR representative in Georgia, Tbilisi, 4 January 1995.

<sup>14</sup> In this report, Abkhaz refer to residents of Abkhazia, and Georgians refer to people living in Georgia outside of Abkhazia, regardless of their ethnic origins, except when specified otherwise.

<sup>15</sup> This likely represents about 90 per cent of all Georgians living in Abkhazia before the war.

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A far greater share of Abkhaz respondents also report suffering the immediate deprivations and horrors of war. Nearly one-fifth (19 per cent) of all Abkhaz respondents say a family member was killed in the conflict; only 4 per cent of Georgians had a similar experience. More than two-thirds (67 per cent) of Abkhaz say they lost contact with a close relative during the conflict, compared with less than one-fifth of Georgians (17 per cent). Nearly half (49 per cent) of Abkhaz respondents suffered serious property damage or had their houses looted – a signature event of this conflict – compared with just 2 per cent of Georgians in both cases; 18 per cent of Abkhaz say combatants took away their food, compared with 1 per cent of Georgians.

Abkhaz report fewer incidents of direct physical suffering in the conflict, yet they still record far higher rates than Georgians. This is in large part because almost ten times as many Abkhaz as Georgians (19 per cent versus 2 per cent) served as combatants. Nearly one-fifth of Abkhaz respondents (19 per cent) say they were imprisoned and a significant minority (8 per cent) were either tortured or wounded. And many say someone they knew well was raped (8 per cent) or sexually assaulted (7 per cent). By contrast, only 2 per cent of Georgian respondents report similar experiences.

In all, fully 90 per cent of all Abkhaz respondents report directly experiencing at least one negative effect of the conflict, compared with only 42 per cent of Georgians. The majority of Georgians (58 per cent) report that they did not directly experience any effects of the conflict. Nearly half of all Abkhaz (46 per cent) report suffering four or more negative effects, compared with only 3 per cent of Georgians.

These markedly different experiences left members of these two populations with quite different impressions of the conflict. Both communities found the experience, above all, “horrible” (61 per cent of Abkhaz, 55 per cent of Georgians). But for the Abkhaz, there is a much stronger sense that the conflict invaded their communities and lives. A majority (52 per cent) describe the conflict as “disruptive”, compared with only 11 per cent of Georgians.

Those on the Georgian side, by contrast, register somewhat more abstract reactions. Many Georgians in the focus groups spoke of the “humiliation” of losing part of their country’s territory (although some used this term to describe the experience of physical abuse), and in the survey, more Georgians (36 per cent) choose the word “humiliating” to describe their reactions to the war (compared with 29 per cent of Abkhaz respondents). More than three times as many Georgians (19 per cent) focus on the “uncertainty” created by the conflict than do Abkhaz (6 per cent). And fully 20 per cent of Georgians describe the conflict as “exciting”, compared with only 11 per cent of Abkhaz. (See Figure 1.)

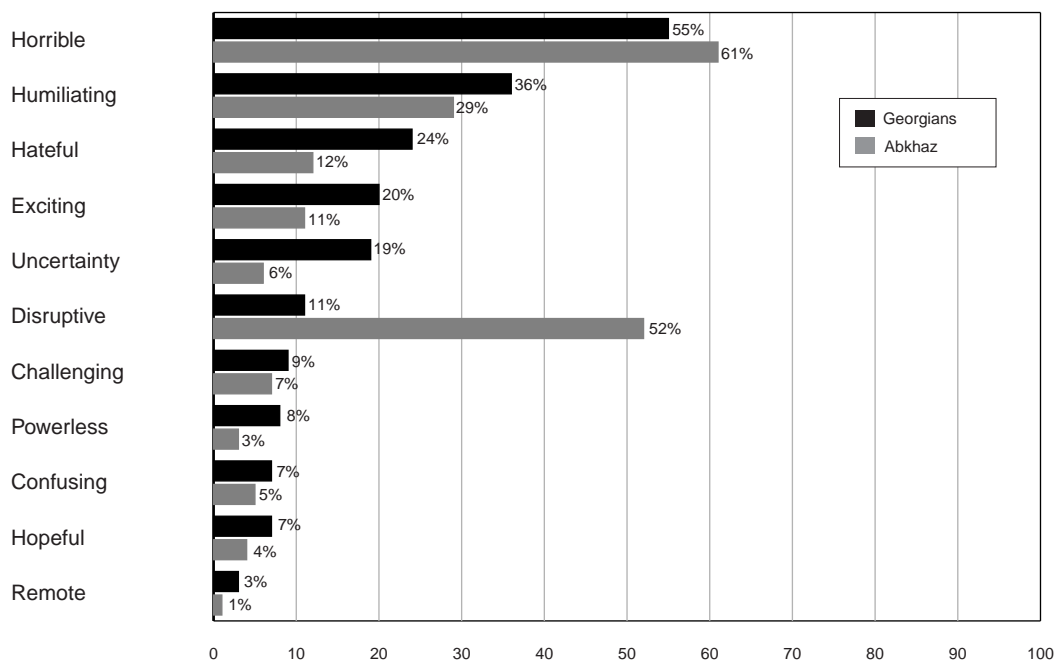
### **An experience of horror**

The Georgian-Abkhaz conflict, as described by in-depth interview and focus group participants, was clearly a horrifying experience for both populations, although in different ways. For Abkhaz, it was the experience of warfare in one’s own backyard, whereas Georgians watched as their country was torn apart and almost 200,000 of their ethnic kin were displaced. It was a conflict characterized by chaos and an intense savagery that was directed as much against civilians as combatants.

What made it so horrible was the fact that the violence started with such suddenness. Certainly, political tensions within Georgia had been acute for months, and tensions over Abkhazia’s relationship to Georgia had smouldered for decades. Yet there was little expectation among the general population that open warfare was about to erupt between Georgian and Abkhaz combatants. As a result of the sudden onset of fighting, many individuals and families, particularly in Abkhazia, were transformed within just hours or days from residents into displaced persons, confronted with advancing forces and forced to flee for safety. The horror of this abrupt transformation from peace to war emerged clearly in a focus group with formerly displaced Abkhaz women.

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**FIGURE 1**  
**Personal description of the war**  
 (per cent of total population responding)



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

The war caught us in town, they began to shoot, then we got the news the conflict had started. (FG, formerly displaced women, Ochamchira)

When the war began I didn't believe, I thought it was going to be like in '89. Never thought that the government would leave us face to face with invaders. (FG, formerly displaced women, Ochamchira)

Georgian troops of course had the right to come into Abkhazia because it was Georgian territory, and hopefully it will be. But Georgian troops entered in order to protect the railway and it turned out that afterwards they started attacking [the] population, innocent people that had no idea what was going on. (FG, formerly displaced women, Ochamchira)

On the first day of war, eight armed-to-the-teeth soldiers entered our house. They broke everything and [sorted] through the house... looking for my husband but he was out. (FG, formerly displaced women, Ochamchira)

The main reason for the pervasive sense of horror, however, lay in the brutal methods of violence and intimidation used to displace Abkhaz and Georgian civilians from their homes and villages in Abkhazia. In in-depth interviews and focus groups, participants talked of a range of atrocities, either from direct experience or from stories they had heard. These actions clearly shocked everybody and left many with the impression that terrorizing the civilian population was in itself a primary objective of many combatants.

When they fought they did such things even the fascists didn't do. They raped women in front of their husbands. Once they raped [an] 11-year-old girl and threw

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her from the second floor. They tortured and killed children, women and old people. Burned archives. Destroyed monuments. (IDI, collective farmer, Ochamchira)

Combatants, whether Abkhaz or Chechen, ruthlessly killed civilians showing no mercy to women or children. They tortured and killed civilians, burnt their houses, stabbed pregnant women... First they used to stab them in the stomach and afterwards killed them. (IDI, hostage-taker, Zugdidi)

They would even play with grenades over our heads and we were to catch them. They also did all kinds of other humiliating things. They even made us dig our own graves. Then they said it was enough, so we expected death any moment. I think anybody can realize what we felt then. (IDI, former hostage, Zugdidi)

In Gagra, people were burnt alive. They poured kerosene on them and set [them] on fire. (FG, elderly women, Sukhumi)

My children were killed. The son and the daughter because they refused to take part in the war. They were axed, poured gas over and burned. (IDI, farmer, Ochamchira)

### **Terror of civil war**

Most participants in the consultation perceive the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict to have been largely internal in nature, and this added to its horror. Many spoke of it as a civil war – separate from the civil war that raged outside of Abkhazia between the forces of Shevardnadze and those loyal to Gamsakhurdia. There was general agreement that internal, civil conflicts are more savage in nature than attacks from a wholly foreign country.

The internal or quasi-internal nature of the conflict also made it more baffling and senseless to many people. Numerous participants on both sides of the conflict found it difficult to fathom why the residents of Abkhazia – who had lived side by side in the same communities and intermarried prior to the conflict – would suddenly turn on each other so savagely.

The difference is that when fighting an external enemy we defend our own territory. But during an internal conflict it is not clear who and what we defend, what we do in general. We just kill each other. It's a senseless war. (FG, formerly displaced women, Ochamchira)

If we were attacked by the invaders who came to exterminate our nation, then it would be understandable. But when our neighbours attacked us with whom we shared bread and without the twinges of conscience they did all that. It's beyond my understanding. This is the most fearful. We suffered from local people. (FG, formerly displaced women, Ochamchira)

In reality we had civil war. If a neighbour went to fight against a neighbour and a neighbour could come to kill his neighbour, it means civil war. And here we don't have limits to savageness. It has always been like that. (FG, elderly women, Sukhumi)

They attacked each other because people from the Caucasus have "hot" blood. (FG, Russian peacekeepers, Sukhumi)

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The enemy during the Great Patriotic War<sup>16</sup> was from outside and during this war [it was an] internal one and it seems to me crueller. (FG, elderly women, Sukhumi)

They were furious, since they all used to live in peace, there was no enemy, and we were all too close. And then this closeness turned into the even greater ruthlessness. (IDI, Russian teacher, Zugdidi)

In part because it was hard to fathom why such an internal conflict would break out, many of those surveyed attribute the causes of the conflict to meddling by Russia. This is particularly true of Georgians. Some Georgians expressed a belief that Moscow had long ago planted political “time bombs” of ethnic tension as it assembled the Soviet empire, and that Russia then helped trigger the war for mostly political purposes. For some participants, the involvement of Russian and other outside forces was a significant factor in explaining the savageness of the conflict.

In my opinion, it was caused by certain forces, mainly Russian. I am 42 and never in my life there were any conflicts or misunderstandings between Georgians and Abkhaz. We have very close ties. We usually went to weddings together. Georgians married Abkhaz, we are relatives. We are ourselves surprised why we killed each other so ruthlessly. (IDI, hostage-taker, Zugdidi)

When that world [the USSR] collapsed, then contradictions emerged that were rooted during the Twenties when the USSR was in the process of formation. Especially in the Caucasus, where the interests of peoples who inhabited this area were not taken into consideration. In some way it was like a time bomb, which was concealed from the outside world but inside everybody felt tension. (IDI, businessman, Sukhumi)

Georgians and Abkhaz, I'm sure we were fighting against Russia. A delayed-action bomb had been laid there. It burst and happened just what had been expected, and not only in Abkhazia but in other points as well. (FG, journalists, Tbilisi)

As for Armenians, it was not their business, nevertheless they did the most evil, more than Abkhaz or Georgians did. (IDI, veteran, Tbilisi)

### Looting

One of the defining characteristics of the conflict that left a deep mark on many respondents was the looting that was widely reported to have occurred. Respondents cite many causes: an amnesty granted to Georgian convicts that enabled convicted criminals to terrorize the countryside; the lack of well-organized militaries on both sides, which forced many combatants to steal the provisions they needed to survive; and a desire to drive non-combatant populations from their homes and communities.

Asked to name reasons why combatants would attack civilians, both Georgian and Abkhaz respondents volunteer robbing, stealing or looting as the main reason. More than one-third (35 per cent) offer this answer – a very high level relative to the responses in the other countries where consultations were conducted, and more than twice the level for the next most frequently offered explanation.<sup>17</sup> In addition, another 19 per cent of all Georgians seem to be searching for a justification for such activities; they offer the related explanation that combatants are hungry and looking for food and drink.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Many older residents of the former Soviet Union refer to World War II as the Great Patriotic War.

<sup>17</sup> This aggregate figure includes 40 per cent of all Georgian respondents, and 31 per cent of all Abkhaz respondents.

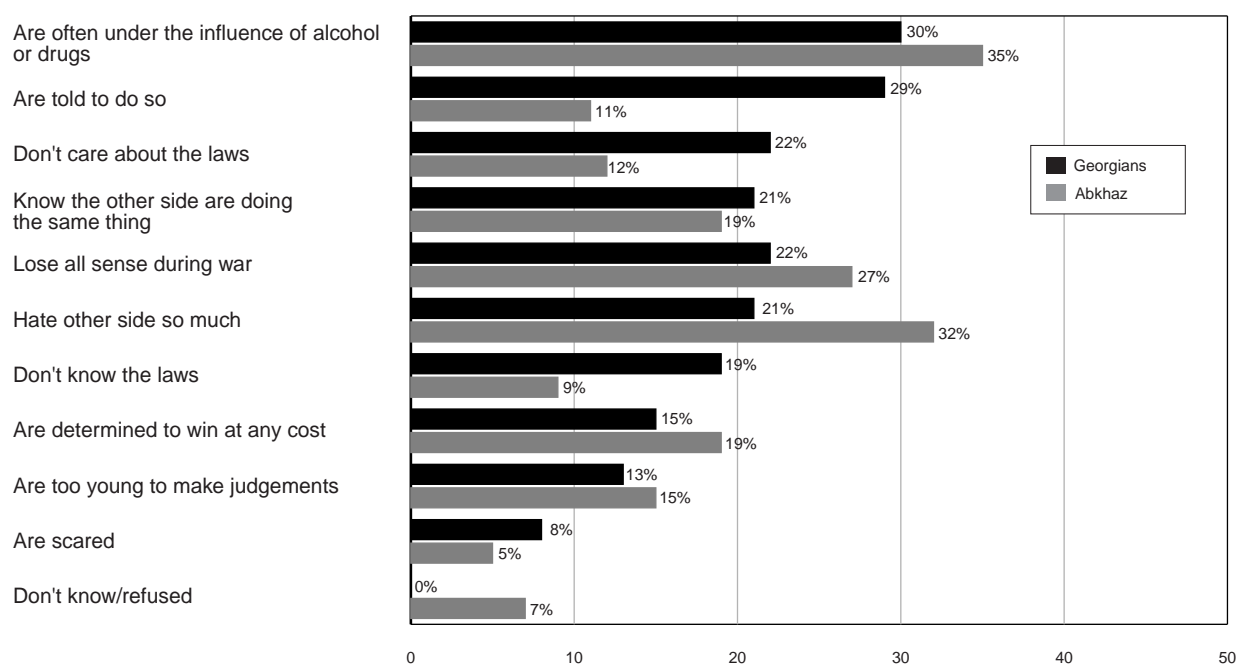
<sup>18</sup> Only 7 per cent of Abkhaz offer this answer. This difference can be ascribed in large part to the fact that 18 per cent of Abkhaz, versus only 1 per cent of Georgians, report that combatants stole their food.

In the in-depth interviews and focus groups, participants described looters as little more than thugs and criminals, often drunk or drugged. When asked to choose from a list of reasons why combatants might hurt civilians, the top reason chosen by survey respondents from both communities is that they “are often under the influence of alcohol or drugs” (35 per cent of Abkhaz and 30 per cent of Georgians). (See Figure 2.) This finding is unique to the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict — in none of the other countries that took part in the People on War project did respondents cite drugs and alcohol as the dominant reason for abuses against civilians.

FIGURE 2

**Why combatants attack civilians**

(per cent of total population responding)



Question: 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...?

The looting that took place during the conflict was mentioned frequently in the focus groups and in-depth interviews. Indeed, several Georgian veterans complained that the press and public now assume that *any* Georgian who served in the conflict was in reality a plunderer and criminal rather than a combatant. This aspect of the conflict provokes a bitter undertone of resentment from the Abkhaz, and shame from the Georgians.

In Tbilisi in January 1991, when all that criminal mass spread in the city as a result of declaring an amnesty, those who afterwards were entitled with various military formations, caused very serious results... They went to west Georgia and looted it. [Then] they had to go somewhere after this and only Abkhazia was left. (IDI, university professor, Batumi)

A lot of prisoners were released and sent to fight in Abkhazia. There were a lot of drug addicts as well. They went there for plunder not for fighting. (FG, university students, Zugdidi)

There were abnormal soldiers on our side as well. They attacked our people. There were many former prisoners — not war prisoners, but criminals. What do you think a person that was convicted to death and then was freed will do with you? (FG, formerly displaced women, Ochamchira)

They were not warriors in the first place. In the second place they were all prisoners mainly who were thrown out in the street and told “fight”. And because of their short-sightedness they were given power. So they went not to fight but to rob. (FG, former combatants, Sukhumi)

Georgian soldiers were not ready for war. They did not have food. Probably this was the cause of their attacks on civilians. It is a shameful fact but there were some soldiers that went to Abkhazia not for defending their homeland, but for robbing. (FG, university students, Zugdidi)

There were certain groups of people, i.e., gangs, who didn't obey anyone and went to Abkhazia for plunder. They attacked Georgians as well as Abkhaz. They didn't obey the Georgian government. (FG, students, Zugdidi)

### **Internally displaced persons**

One hallmark of the conflict was the displacement of civilians from their homes, sometimes to escape fighting between combatants, but often as a result of direct intimidation and terror against them by combatants. Initially, the ethnic Abkhaz were the most frequently displaced, as they fled the capital city of Sukhumi and other towns in the region in the face of advancing Georgian combatants. Later, it was mostly ethnic Georgians in the region who fled, as the tide of battle turned, the Abkhaz side retook Sukhumi and the rest of Abkhazia, and Georgian civilians in Abkhazia became the subject of terror and attack. More than 200,000 of these people, mostly ethnic Georgians, remain displaced outside of Abkhazia today.

The displacement was one of the most frightening aspects of the conflict for many of the survivors, as it often led to the loss of one's home and possessions, the separation of family members, and at times the death of a loved one:

We spent two weeks in the port. Those were horrible days. We were seeking refuge and we were refused and at the same time they were bullying in front of the kids. Then we managed to leave on [a] ship and it was nearly shelled. (FG, formerly displaced women, Ochamchira)

What I will never forget about the war is loads of [displaced people] who came to the river Enguri and crossed it on foot or by means of transport. Confused, shocked people who did not know where to go. (FG, university students, Zugdidi)

What I will never forget about the war is the horror of it, the results of it, the faces of those suffering people who will never see their homeland. (FG, university students, Zugdidi)

Yet, despite the pain caused by the displacement, many Georgians and Abkhaz were resigned to its causes and remedies. Six in ten Georgians (60 per cent) and seven in ten Abkhaz (71 per cent) view the displacement of populations as “just part of war”. Although some focus group participants felt that displacing civilians is wrong, they nonetheless said that it was an inevitable part of violent conflicts. Moreover, more than half – 60 per cent of Georgians and 50 per cent of Abkhaz – believe there are no special rules concerning the displacement of civilians during war. Among both populations, older women –

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8 among the most vulnerable to displacement and its consequences – believe there are no laws to protect displaced persons. Two-thirds (66 per cent) of older Georgian women (50 years and older) believe this and just over half of older Abkhaz women (56 per cent).

Most Georgians and Abkhaz see the prospects for the tens of thousands of displaced people to return home any time soon as being quite dim. The Abkhaz generally believe that only those Georgians could return to the region who had no complicity in the fighting. Some Abkhaz, however, suggest that only the guilty would have fled, while others believe Georgians from Abkhazia had no right to return. For their part, Georgian focus group participants – either those displaced from Abkhazia or those who had always lived outside that region – felt that internally displaced persons could only return safely once a political solution had been found to the conflict and civil order restored.

[Moderator: Do those people have the right to return home who have left due to war?]

Only those who helped us. (FG, formerly displaced women, Ochamchira)

[Moderator: Have those displaced due to the conflict the right to return to their homes?]

Innocent people have the right who didn't sell out the Abkhaz, didn't take part in the hostilities, didn't collaborate with the enemy, let them come back. They lived together with us. (FG, young men, Sukhumi)

What I will never forget about this war is [when] I left my home for the last time. I remember a bomb that was shot from the side of the sea. It exploded in my garden and killed people of my generation, just in front of my eyes. Our house was burned, we were exiled. (FG, internally displaced women, Zugdidi)

[To return] he must meet several of our terms. [Which ones?] He must recognize that Abkhazia is a sovereign state, swear that he'll never use guns against it and defend it. (FG, young men, Sukhumi)

Some of those who fled don't return. Though it's not complicated... I mean that the war was not the only reason to leave. Of course, somebody left due to war and someone could have fled because he had done some wrongful things. (FG, formerly displaced women, Ochamchira)

For Abkhaz, there was nowhere to go; we have one Motherland. I think [a] refugee is a person who is forced to leave his home. But Georgians have their own Motherland. (FG, formerly displaced women, Ochamchira)

[Moderator: Have the internally displaced people the right to return?]

Of course they have, and they have it without any reserve. The main obstacle in that way is the disorder in the region and the lack of safety. (FG, journalists, Tbilisi)

The return of refugees will be carried out only in mono-ethnic regions, say in Gali, where the return is not prevented by ethnic problems. (FG, journalists, Tbilisi)

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First of all, Georgian jurisdiction should be restored on the territory of Abkhazia. Only then internally displaced people can return. They should be given a guarantee that they will stay alive. (FG, university students, Zugdidi)

### **Attacks on monuments and culture**

Georgians and Abkhaz both believe that the other side targeted cultural monuments and archives as part of an effort to erase ethnic and national identities, which was a central element of the broader conflict. Overwhelming majorities from each community believe that it is wrong to attack cultural and historical monuments. More than nine in ten Abkhaz – 91 per cent – share this view, along with fully three-quarters (75 per cent) of Georgians. More of those surveyed in each population say attacking historic and cultural monuments is wrong than those who say it is wrong to deny civilians food, medicine or water, to target areas populated with civilians, to take civilians hostage or to force the displacement of civilian populations. For Georgians and Abkhaz alike, it is a sentiment that cuts across all demographic categories and differences regarding their war experiences.

While focus group participants did not discuss this aspect of the conflict in great detail, in-depth interviewees who were asked directly about these types of attacks responded quite passionately, saying that the targeting of cultural heritage is both deeply wrong and a sign of great cowardice.

Architectural monuments and cultural values cannot harm either side. They don't carry guns and lay mines and therefore they cannot be destroyed. The Georgian army during retreat or offensive damaged monuments of such patriarchs of Abkhaz literature as Gulia, Chochua and other national figures... Destruction of monuments is psychological pressure on the nation. If they destroy monuments, it means they wipe off history, the past, and the nation cannot exist without its past and its history. (IDI, student, Sukhumi)

To destroy history is vandalism. Our archives were burned. And this is the destruction of history, memory and past. We must fight not against the monuments but against the enemy. (IDI, civil servant, Novy Afon)

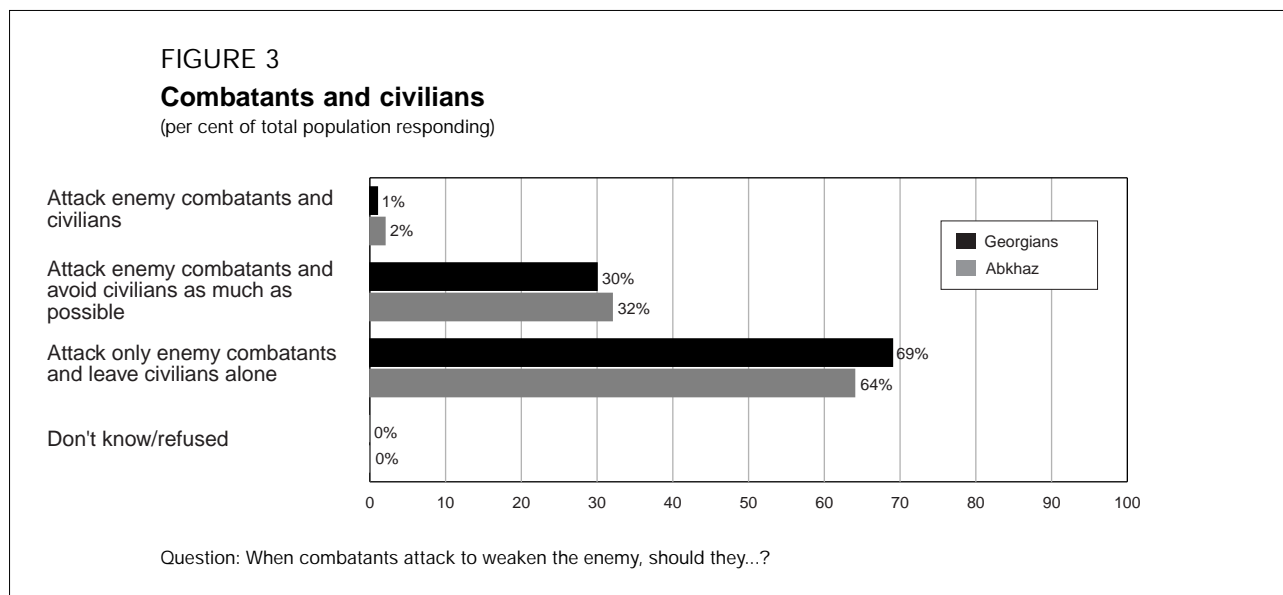
It is not acceptable when people destroy and burn down cultural heritage... Because future generations should know what culture their ancestors had, what type of people lived in those territories. (IDI, hostage-taker, Zugdidi)

Only cowards do that. A man if he is a warrior must shoot at the enemy, but not monuments. He is a coward. (IDI, civil servant, Novy Afon)

## Protection of civilians

### Limits on wartime behaviour

Despite repeated abuses against civilians during the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict, respondents in both communities feel strongly that civilians should be protected from harm during times of war. About two-thirds of both Georgians and Abkhaz (69 per cent and 64 per cent, respectively), believe that combatants should attack only enemy combatants and leave civilians alone. (See Figure 3.)



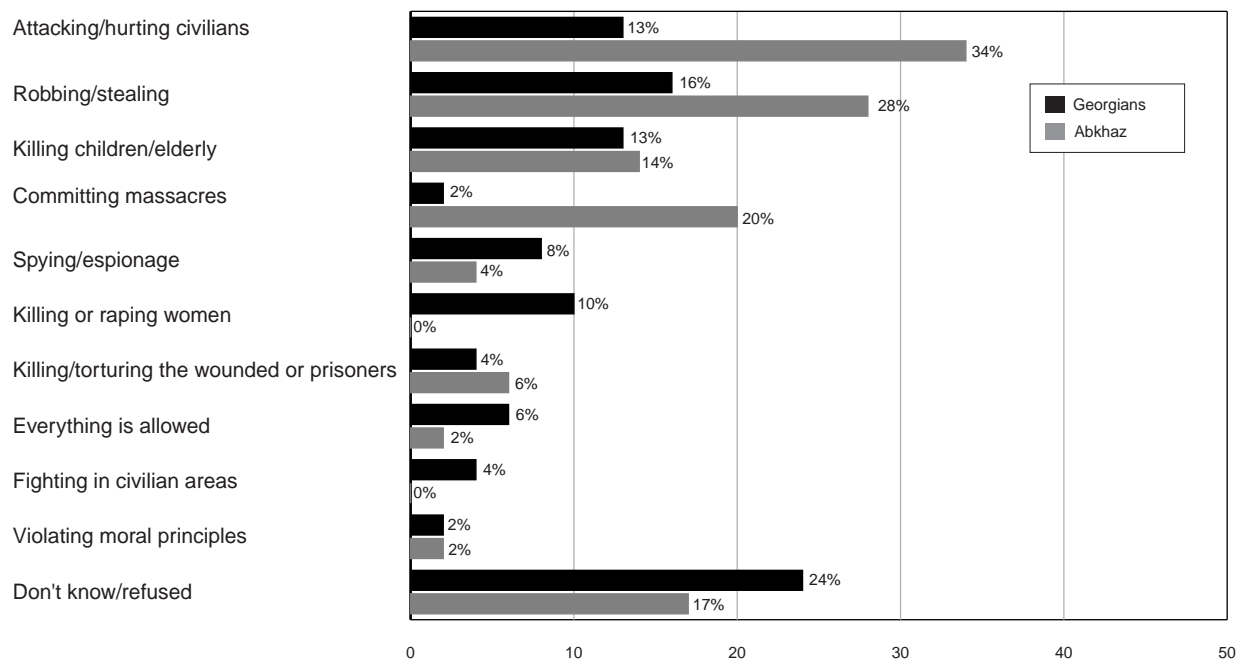
When asked if there is anything combatants should not do, both Georgians and Abkhaz focus on actions that target civilians and other vulnerable populations. Among Georgians, more than one in four (26 per cent) say combatants should not attack, hurt or kill civilians, in particular children and the elderly, while another 10 per cent specifically mention not killing or raping women. Sixteen per cent of Georgians say robbing and looting should be out of bounds. Yet almost one in four Georgians (24 per cent) say that they cannot think of anything combatants should not do or simply refuse to answer; and 6 per cent say that everything is allowed in war — attitudes that help explain why civilians became targets in the conflict.

The emphasis on protecting civilians is even stronger among the Abkhaz: 34 per cent say civilians should not be attacked, hurt or killed, with another 14 per cent specifically mentioning children and the elderly. Twenty-eight per cent of Abkhaz say combatants should not rob or steal. One in five Abkhaz (20 per cent) specifically mention massacres and slaughter as actions that should not be allowed. Only 2 per cent say everything should be allowed in war. (See Figure 4.)

When the question is posed in general terms as part of an in-depth interview or focus group discussion, participants were resolute in their belief that civilians must not be harmed during warfare – views reinforced by some of the scenes and actions witnessed during the conflict:

Non-combatants must not suffer during the war. Not in any way. The war is between two armed armies, which have definite tasks. We must avoid sufferings of non-combatants. Because they are innocent people. I saw killed children, women, who were hit with bombs and shells... I always felt badly when one or the other soldier stepped out of line. For me, a warrior must be a knight, and for the knight a child must be a child, a woman must be a woman, and an old man is an old man. So you have a right to use your gun only when an armed man opposes you and he can use his gun first. (IDI, businessman, Sukhumi)

FIGURE 4

**What combatants should not do**(per cent of total population responding) (open-ended question)<sup>19</sup>

Question: Is there anything that combatants should not do when fighting their enemy?

They have no right to kill innocent people, a difference should be made between civilians, soldiers and fighters. They should imagine that someone could treat their mothers in the same way. (IDI, hostage-taker, Zugdidi)

It's not allowed shooting children, women and elderly people. Looting is not allowed too. (FG, Russian peacekeepers, Sukhumi)

Even if it happened so that a fighter has got beyond the borders of his country and there finishes off his enemy, it must be implanted in his mind that he fights not with women or children but only with his opponent soldiers, with those who raised guns against you. (FG, formerly displaced women, Ochamchira)

Regular troops and soldiers must fight between each other, but not terrorize civilians and... women and children. (FG, formerly displaced women, Ochamchira)

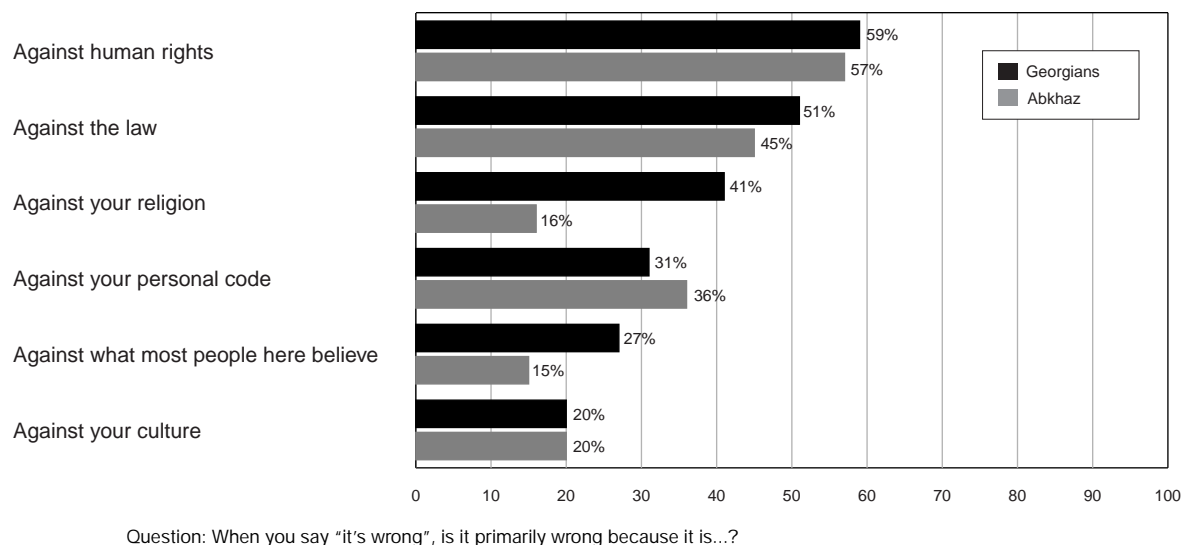
For Georgians and Abkhaz, the belief that civilians are out of bounds during war is strongly rooted in a sense of human rights and law, as opposed to mere practicality. Among those who believe there are certain things combatants cannot do during war, more than three-quarters – 79 per cent of Georgians and 86 per cent of Abkhaz – say it is because such actions are “wrong”, as opposed to “just cause too many problems”. A solid majority in both communities (59 per cent of Georgians and 57 per cent of Abkhaz) who say such actions are wrong do so because they believe these actions are “against human rights”. A comparable percentage in both communities (51 per cent of Georgians and 45 per cent of Abkhaz) say they believe such actions are against the law. (See Figure 5.)

<sup>19</sup> Respondents were asked to volunteer a response to the question rather than being provided with a list of options.

FIGURE 5

**Basis for the norm**

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



Religion plays a relatively small role in defining the limits in war, especially for Abkhaz. Forty-one per cent of Georgians say they believe certain actions to be wrong because they are against their religion, but only 16 per cent of Abkhaz cite this reason.

**Limits on weapons**

Georgians and Abkhaz feel strongly that certain weapons should be off-limits during war. When they consider what weapons are unacceptable, they focus first on nuclear and chemical weapons. A near majority of Abkhaz (49 per cent) and a solid majority of Georgians (64 per cent) say that nuclear weapons should never be used during war. One-third of Georgians (33 per cent) and the majority of Abkhaz (52 per cent) say chemicals weapons should not be allowed.

While nuclear and chemical weapons are relatively abstract concepts in the context of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict, participants have a much more immediate and emotional reaction to the use of cluster bombs and needle-spewing munitions – as they were reportedly actively employed during the conflict. Although these weapons are cited relatively infrequently in the survey (and almost exclusively by Abkhaz rather than Georgians), comments in the focus groups and interviews placed far more emphasis on the need to ban such weapons.

I didn't manage to see it. But I know from the stories that cluster bombs were used designed for manpower. My brother was a doctor and told about such cases. It would be great if there were no weapons at all. But when the war is on then the humane types of weapons must be used. (IDI, civil servant, Novy Afon)

I experienced the use of cluster bombs. These are really horrible weapons. I suffered real moral depression and I didn't see such destruction as from the cluster bombs. If we had got under such blast then there would have been many victims. (IDI, intellectual, Novy Afon)

Yes there were. Cluster bombs. They wounded several people. And some other poisoned mines. My younger son was wounded by such a bomb and if they were not poisoned than he would have survived. (FG, former combatants, Sukhumi)



All uncontrolled types of weapons. For instance, cluster bombs, because they are dispersed. (FG, Russian peacekeepers, Sukhumi)

Georgian and Abkhaz alike hold mixed views about whether landmines should be banned. This ambivalence likely reflects the heavy dependence of both sides on this weapon in the course of the conflict. Only 4 per cent of Abkhaz and 2 per cent of Georgians volunteer landmines as an example of weapons that should never be used. Although the majority of Georgians (56 per cent) say it is not acceptable for combatants to plant landmines in order to stop the movement of the enemy, a substantial share (43 per cent) accept the use of landmines "even though civilians may step on them accidentally". The Abkhaz are slightly more inclined to accept the use of landmines, although the share who find them unacceptable is also high: 49 per cent would allow them, while 48 per cent find them unacceptable.

This disparity in attitudes is reflected in the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions where participants stressed the military utility and necessity of landmines. But virtually all who discussed these weapons agreed that minefields should be carefully mapped in order to permit de-mining and to minimize civilian deaths and injuries once the conflict is over.

I think the mines should not be banned, we must use them properly. (FG, young men, Sukhumi)

Mines were needed because it was impossible to wage war only with submachine guns against the tanks. (IDI, civil servant, Novy Afon)

No, landmines should not be used under any circumstances. It does not matter who you are fighting with. The use of landmines should be prohibited all over the world. It is an awful weapon. When you use a gun and shoot a person with it you kill him almost instantly, without pain. With landmines people suffer its results for the rest of their lives. The loss of both legs or an arm renders people disabled and they do not want to live. (IDI, hostage-taker, Zugdidi)

Uncontrolled types of weapons must be banned, which can kill civilians. If the two sides are in war with each other, then they fire from submachine guns. This more or less is controlled, where they level at and strike. And mines are uncontrolled types of weapons and because of them civilians die. (FG, Russian peacekeepers, Sukhumi)

Generally speaking, it's better not to lay mines even if it will weaken the enemy. And if [you do] lay them then it's necessary to make a scheme of [the] minefield so that later on [they can] be cleared. Not long ago a girl was killed in Goumista because of such [a] mine. (IDI, civil servant, Novy Afon)

Whatever mines you plant... you must make up a map, a clear scheme of the minefield so that later you'll be able to clear them... Unfortunately, in such minor wars the mines are planted not by professionals... And the man who planted the mines either [was] killed or lost the scheme. The consequences we see until now. Yes there was a necessity to lay the mines, but it should have been organized. We couldn't do it... But I think that mines must be banned as weapons. Mines don't settle the problem. (IDI, businessman, Sukhumi)

## Civilians and captured combatants at risk

### Blurring the lines between combatants and civilians

Despite general agreement among Georgians and Abkhaz that civilians should be spared the brutality and horror of war, this resolve nonetheless broke down during the conflict. Even now, with the conflict “frozen”, many Georgians and Abkhaz say that it is acceptable to target civilians under certain circumstances.

The line begins to blur in cases that involve civilians actively helping enemy combatants. One-quarter or more of both Georgian and Abkhaz respondents (29 per cent of Georgians and 25 per cent of Abkhaz) say that it is allowable for combatants to attack civilians if they voluntarily provide food and shelter to enemy combatants. Such attacks are seen as less legitimate if the civilians are *forced* to provide such food and shelter. Yet even then, one-sixth or more on each side – 16 per cent of Georgians and 19 per cent of Abkhaz – say that targeting civilians is acceptable.

The line between civilians and combatants becomes even murkier when civilians are seen to be helping to transport ammunition to the enemy. The majority of Abkhaz respondents (55 per cent) say that civilians can be attacked if they are voluntarily transporting ammunition. Attacks on civilians lose some of their legitimacy when the civilians in question are being forced to transport the ammunition. In this case, support among the Abkhaz drops by one-fifth to 44 per cent. Georgians are not as willing to accept such attacks on civilians, yet 43 per cent find them acceptable if civilians are helping voluntarily. Support drops to 28 per cent when civilians are being forced to help.

This permissiveness towards attacks on civilians carries over even when civilians are not actively involved in assisting enemy combatants. Forty-four per cent of Georgians and 37 per cent of Abkhaz believe that depriving civilians of food, medicine or water is simply “part of war”. The number of respondents in each community who believe such actions to be “wrong” – 43 per cent among Georgians and 56 per cent among Abkhaz – is one of the lowest in any of the countries where this research was conducted. Similarly, both Georgians and Abkhaz believe that it may be warranted to attack an area densely populated with civilians if doing so would weaken the enemy: nearly half of Abkhaz respondents (46 per cent) and 39 per cent of Georgians say that such attacks are just “part of war”. (See Figure 6.)

In-depth interviews and focus group discussions offer insight into the rationale behind these views. Many participants feel that military necessity often overrides the importance of protecting civilians and non-combatants:

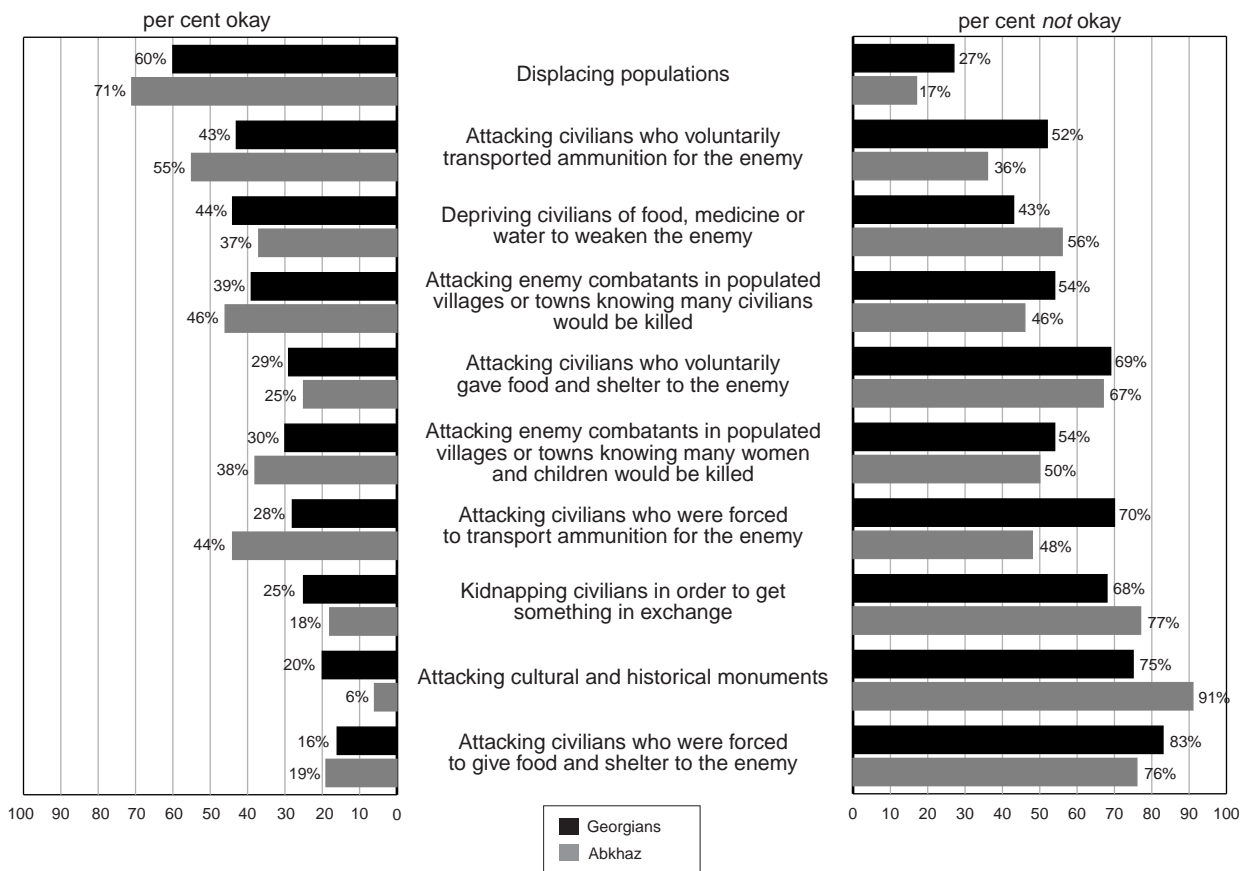
The area [densely populated with civilians] should certainly be attacked, if it is a strategically important place. (IDI, veteran, Tbilisi)

Here is an example. We went on operation and approached the houses. We have to check them. And we don't know who's inside – civilians or combatants. Let's assume that something seemed [wrong] to me and I began to shoot. The question is not that simple. Opinions are divided. (FG, former combatants, Sukhumi)

[Moderator: Why do you think it is acceptable to attack civilians who have volunteered to help fighters, such as by transporting ammunition?]

Because the population is the only support of soldiers and fighters. They help the soldiers and fighters with products, military ammunition – all they need. So this is

**FIGURE 6**  
**Acceptance of war practices**  
 (per cent of total population responding)



why it is necessary to attack them, in order to annex the whole territory. (IDI, former hostage, Zugdidi)

I think [depriving civilians of food, water or medicine] is an integral part of war. It's inevitable. Historical examples show that during the hostilities towns and villages are occupied with the aim of weakening the enemy. As a result non-combatants suffer. (IDI, student, Sukhumi)

I will certainly attack, if the population supports the enemy and acts against me. (IDI, former hostage, Zugdidi)

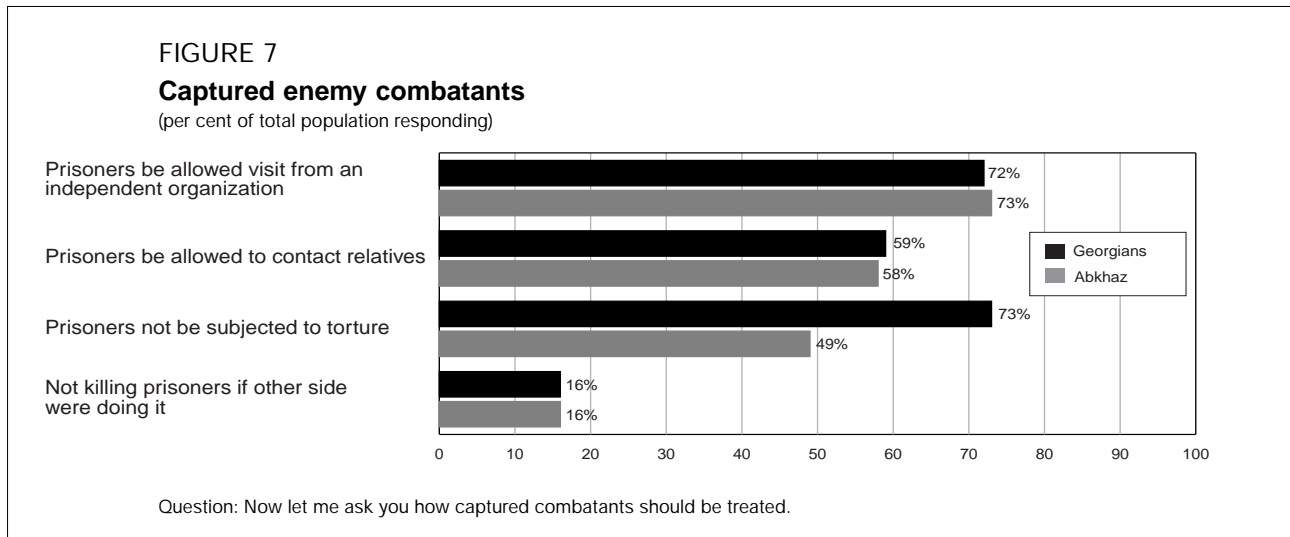
#### **Captured combatants at risk**

Perhaps one indication of the continuing bitterness between Georgians and Abkhaz is the willingness on both sides to ignore the suffering of or mistreat surrendering, wounded or captured combatants. More than half of each population (57 per cent of Georgians and 53 per cent of Abkhaz) say they would *not* save a surrendering enemy combatant if that person had killed a person close to them. In addition, the majority of Georgians (57 per cent) and Abkhaz (53 per cent) would not help a wounded combatant.

The unwillingness to assist wounded or surrendering enemy combatants increases sharply among those on each side who were affected most by the conflict. Among the 19 per cent of Abkhaz respondents who suffered six or more negative consequences of the conflict, 74 per cent say they would

16 not help a wounded enemy combatant. Although Georgians overall experienced the conflict less directly, the 14 per cent who did (two or more negative consequences) share the indifference to surrendering or wounded enemy combatants: 72 per cent say they would not help such a person.

Both the Georgians and the Abkhaz show an inclination to limit the rights of captured combatants: 59 per cent of Georgians and 58 per cent of Abkhaz would allow captured combatants to contact their relatives, and a still-significant share say that captured combatants should be allowed a visit from a representative of an independent organization (72 per cent of Georgians and 73 per cent of Abkhaz). (See Figure 7.)



The most disturbing attitudes, however, are those involving the torture and killing of captured combatants. The views among Abkhaz are especially striking on this set of issues. Thirty-seven per cent of Abkhaz and one-quarter of Georgians (25 per cent) find it acceptable to subject captured combatants to torture in order to obtain important military information. As one Russian peacekeeper summarized, "People think that he possesses some sort of information. And if he says something then they want to know some more, therefore he's tortured."

These rates in both communities are much higher for men under 40 years old, with 31 per cent of young Georgian men and 43 per cent of young Abkhaz men saying that torture of captured combatants is acceptable in such circumstances. The willingness to torture captured combatants is also extraordinarily high among those who felt the greatest impact of the conflict.<sup>20</sup>

There is a smaller, but still important share of Georgians and Abkhaz (15 and 17 per cent, respectively) who would approve of killing captured combatants if the other side were doing the same. Unlike in Georgia, this view is even more strongly held by women than men in Abkhazia: 17 per cent of Abkhaz women, and 25 per cent of women under 40, believe it would be acceptable to kill prisoners if the other side were doing the same. The figure is also especially high in Abkhazia among those who went through the greatest number of conflict-related experiences. Fully one-quarter (25 per cent) of those who report six or more such experiences say that it would be permissible to kill captives. Although the percentage of Georgians and Abkhaz who believe that prisoners sometimes deserve to die is relatively small, twice as many Abkhaz as Georgians hold this view (17 per cent compared with 9 per cent).

In the focus groups and in-depth interviews, the majority of participants expressed a clear conviction that the mistreatment of captured combatants is wrong. Many stressed the helplessness of these combatants and expressed disdain for those who would harm such people.

<sup>20</sup> Among 14 per cent of Georgians who experienced two or more negative consequences of the conflict, more than one-third (34 per cent) say that torture of captured combatants is acceptable. Among Abkhaz who experienced six or more conflict-related consequences, a majority (56 per cent) say that such torture is acceptable. The figure is roughly the same (53 per cent) for the nearly one in five Abkhaz (19 per cent) who report having been combatants in the conflict.

To wipe [out] captives is the most disgraceful business which a commander can allow. What does a captive mean? This is a man who raises his hands and surrenders at discretion, he is already defeated. Why to finish him off? It's the same as to kill a woman, a child, or an old man. I condemn this. (IDI, businessman, Sukhumi)

You can't kill him. It's not mannishly. Captives must be exchanged. Captured soldiers or fighters mustn't be killed. (IDI, farmer, Ochamchira)

[Moderator: Imagine such a situation. You take captive a wounded man, who killed one of your relatives. What are you going to do?] We must help him so he won't suffer. (FG, former combatants, Sukhumi)

Execution of captives occurs on both sides, but it cannot be justified. [Why not?] Because he is a captive, a soldier and, if possible, we should use him otherwise, but try to save his life. He is a man – a man in [a] helpless situation. (IDI, former hostage, Zugdidi)

For me personally, killing a captured enemy is not acceptable. It is inhuman. If a prisoner needs medical treatment he should be treated and handed over to the government... Once I saved an Abkhaz soldier. I administered first aid to him and then took him to hospital. I also saved one Chechen soldier. (IDI, hostage-taker, Zugdidi)

We had some cases in Goudauta which I didn't welcome. Somebody's relative was killed, he was out of his mind, came running to the captives. Grabs the first one he got and drags him to the cemetery. So, he says, my relative was killed and I'll do you in... If you want to take a revenge, make a sortie and catch. But to shoot a captive is just the same stuff like killing a rabbit in the cage. Therefore there shouldn't be such things... (FG, former combatants, Sukhumi)

Yet several people, ranging from ex-combatants to farmers to a rural housewife, in the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions expressed more conflicting attitudes and even an outright willingness to mistreat wounded or captured enemy combatants under certain circumstances. Although they felt that their views may have changed since the conflict ended, during the conflict they tended to find such mistreatment acceptable.

A prisoner can only be mistreated in order to get important information. (FG, internally displaced women, Zugdidi)

I don't know how it's going to look like, but I know that guy who killed my sister-in-law. I remembered him really well. And if I met him I would kill him. This has been decided for me. (IDI, farmer, Ochamchira)

[Moderator: Would you help a wounded enemy soldier who had killed someone close to you?] No. [Would you save a man in your community who killed someone close to you due to his political convictions or nationality, would you save him?] For sure not. (IDI, Georgian woman, Gali)

[Moderator: You take captive a wounded man, who killed one of your relatives. What are you going to do?] To shoot him for sure. (FG, former combatants, Sukhumi)

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There is no prisoner that is not guilty. They kill people or commit other crimes. (FG, internally displaced women, Zugdidi)

If the enemy has no mercy on civilians, what mercy should they have on prisoners? (FG, internally displaced women, Zugdidi)

Perhaps you remember how snipers used to be treated. Sniper is a killer, everybody is a killer, but sniper is a deliberate killer. Snipers were not spared. On the opposite side there were lots of women snipers, neither were they spared. (FG, former combatants, Tbilisi)

[Moderator: Would you save a wounded enemy combatant who killed someone close to you?] If I were asked such a question during the war, I would have answered for sure "no". But when now the war has passed into insignificance and much time has passed, I think I would save. (IDI, former detainee, Sukhumi)

One of the most salient aspects of the treatment of captured combatants in the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict was the practice of prisoner exchanges. In the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, participants reported that hostages were taken at times for the sole purpose of exchanging them for captured combatants – a practice both Georgians and Abkhaz reject. More than two-thirds in both communities – 68 per cent of Georgians and 77 per cent of Abkhaz – say it is wrong to take civilian hostages in order to get something in return. One-quarter or less in each community say it is simply part of war.

Georgians and Abkhaz alike express extreme dismay at the abuses that accompanied the hostage-taking and prisoner exchanges. They view the practice employed by both communities of killing captured combatants just before returning them as a deliberate provocation and attributed this practice to the cycle of killing and mistreatment of other captured combatants that developed out of retribution. Others participants offered money as the motive — the recovery of captured combatants, alive or dead, had been a reprehensible, but lucrative form of business during the conflict.

When the Abkhaz side started an offensive and failed, the question of captives exchange arose. The decision was taken to trade alive soldiers for alive ones. Abkhaz side handed over alive soldiers and the Georgian side brought killed fighters. It was so cynical, and I think because of that, offences proceeded from our side. (IDI, student, Sukhumi)

The delivery of corpses to the opposite side is an unwritten law. But there the dead bodies were subjects for bargaining. A lot of people made money on that business. Relatives paid for getting their dead from there. It is terrible and there can be no excuse for it. As a rule, when war is over, the sides always exchange corpses. But here it has become a way of making money. (FG, journalists, Tbilisi)

On our eastern front there was such a case. We went on a scout. Took some guys along and agreed to exchange them but they gave us corpses, blood was fresh, it was obvious. (FG, former combatants, Sukhumi)

It was [a] rare case when a captive was not creamed. There were such cases when the captives were returned dead, yet warm. (FG, young men, Sukhumi)

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## Breakdown of limits

Although most Georgians and Abkhaz feel that there should be certain limits on the conduct of warfare, they also believe that it is very difficult, and sometimes impossible, to respect or enforce such rules. A complex set of reasons helps explain why these limits broke down during this conflict: intense partisanship; the savage nature of the early fighting; the internal nature of the conflict; the composition and conduct of the forces; the lack of clear or strong civil authority prior to the conflict; and a general lack of moral training.

### Intense partisanship in the context of an internal dispute

The starting point for the breakdown of limits in war in the case of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict was intense partisanship. As noted earlier, nearly three-quarters of the Georgian and Abkhaz publics (71 and 74 per cent, respectively) aligned themselves with a particular side in the conflict—more than in any of the other wars and armed conflicts surveyed by the ICRC. In the focus groups and in-depth interviews, virtually no one described the fighting as a remote event, or the combatants as some distant force. Rather, while many spoke of close ties between the Georgian and Abkhaz communities prior to 1992, people now place themselves clearly one side of the conflict or the other, and see themselves as directly affected by the fighting.

This partisanship in the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict influenced the fighting in two ways. First, it forced people who had long been intermingled to create, quite quickly, not only physical distance, but also an emotional gulf between each other – to turn human neighbours into less-than-human targets. This wrenching shift is a part of the bitterness that participants in the consultation described as a consequence of internal or civil conflicts in general, and this conflict in particular.

Enemy is a common notion. If somebody becomes an enemy, then it makes no difference if it's internal or foreign enemy. [A] foreign enemy could be drafted and happened to be on our land for reason beyond his control. But if somebody raised his gun on those with whom he had shared bread or lived next to then your rage doubles. (FG, young men, Sukhumi)

Internal hostility is much more fearful, the most brutal senses arise, it's like racial hostility, they don't take people with whom they fight for human beings. They are capable of killing children. (FG, elderly women, Sukhumi)

The intense partisanship also served to obscure the distinction between civilians and combatants. The whole community, not just its combatants, were the antagonists; the conflict existed between the two societies, not just its armies. As one young Abkhaz man put it, "Not every person can fight. Somebody can hold a submachine gun and somebody only a ladle. But it doesn't mean a cook is less responsible than a soldier." (FG, young men, Sukhumi)

In addition, both sides perceived themselves to be fighting a defensive war in many ways. The ethnic Abkhaz saw themselves as defending their homeland against an armed attempt by Georgia to impose a greater political, cultural and territorial control over Abkhazia. Many Georgians, in turn, saw themselves as defending their country and ethnic kin in Abkhazia against discrimination and, later, ethnically motivated attacks from Abkhaz forces, as well as from outside intervention from Russia, which they saw as trying to fan and manipulate Georgian-Abkhaz tensions for its own political and economic purposes.

### Irregular forces and unstable societies

Another major contributing factor to the breakdown of the limits in war during the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict was the lack of stability or structure in the militaries and the broader societies. The Georgian side was engaged in civil war even before the conflict in Abkhazia began. The ethnic Abkhaz were struggling to create a sense of nationhood. Neither side could fall back on the habits or rules that might have derived from long-standing civil and military institutions.

Neither side had created well-ordered fighting forces. In the in-depth interviews and focus groups, participants described armies that had been hastily mustered, consisting of a large number of untrained, unprofessional and even unscrupulous combatants, including paramilitaries and freed convicts. As noted above, both populations regarded looting as one of the primary motivations of many of the combatants, and that this kind of criminal activity was the most prevalent abuse against civilians.<sup>21</sup> As one former Abkhaz fighter said, "They went not to fight but to rob." (FG, former combatants, Sukhumi) Given the composition of the armed forces, it is not surprising that the rules of war were either unfamiliar or irrelevant to them.

I think that two-thirds of those fighting in Abkhazia were criminals, so demanding from them to observe the laws would be similar to demanding an unprofessional person to complete some important tasks. Suppose I was told to conduct an orchestra, while not being a conductor. (IDI, university professor, Batumi)

Georgia itself did not have classically established armed formations. These were not regular armed forces, but Georgian armed units that were just in the process of formation. These were *Mkhedrioni* [National Guard], volunteers with amorphous views, people having no military background or training, unqualified specialists. (IDI, university professor, Batumi)

Here we had volunteers, trainers as well as convicts. About what rules can we speak to them? For the latter the main thing was to loot. (FG, formerly displaced women, Ochamchira)

There is such a law, "three days are given for plunder". I don't know really why such [a] law has been invented. [Is there really such a rule?] No, but it's a law of war. (FG, young men, Sukhumi)

When you bring inexperienced military units, inexperienced people into an area of military action, engage them in war, and there is nobody behind them to support them, no fresh forces, no provisions, and they are hungry, cold, ill, they don't have any medicines, of course they will start robbing, stealing, because they are looking for food, mattresses, blankets, plates, glasses. After that they start committing more serious crimes. (FG, former combatants, Tbilisi)

During military conflicts it is practically impossible to follow the rules. [Why?] When one country is fighting another, some soldiers and fighters participate for some personal reasons, other fighters are hired persons, so-called illegal armed formations, who kill people for money. (IDI, hostage-taker, Zugdidi)

Troops undergo certain training, particular sorts of rules, some sort of laws and everybody knows it. And it happened so that so-called troops came, the locals joined them, all those who wanted to crush and devastate us, and they didn't follow any rules. (FG, formerly displaced women, Ochamchira)

<sup>21</sup> As noted above, more than one-third (35 per cent) say robbing, stealing and looting was the main reason combatants attack civilians – more than twice the level of the next most frequently cited explanation.



The political and military battles in Georgia between the forces loyal to Gamsakhurdia and those of Shevardnadze had undermined the establishment of the rule of law. And given the disputes over Abkhazia's political status, political institutions in that region had had little time or space to grow.

As a result, the conflict was prosecuted in a chaotic fashion, against the backdrop of relatively chaotic societies. In such an environment, the restraining power of rules and norms was relatively weak.

We can't control violations towards civilians even in the peacetime, to say nothing of war conditions. (FG, journalists, Tbilisi)

Police had no power at that time, they were not doing anything, there was no one that would judge people. (FG, internally displaced women, Zugdidi)

When the war started, there were no rules, and it didn't matter if there were a regular army or not. (FG, formerly displaced women, Ochamchira)

One-third of international laws are being broken by officers because they know nothing about them, and about 80 per cent are sure they will not be punished... I was talking to a person who had been looting in Abkhazia. He said it was not robbing, it was just trophy from Abkhaz... Because of the sense of not being punished, they knew they'd get away with it, and so it happened. (IDI, university professor, Batumi)

### **The difficulty of restraint**

The impact of partisanship and the absence of strong civil and military institutions helped push the conflict well past internationally accepted limits in war. Many participants in the in-depth interviews and focus groups simply felt, however, that in any war or conflict it is simply practically and psychologically difficult to prevent rage from overwhelming moral and rule-based considerations.<sup>22</sup>

War is always a mess. Ask the soldier of any nationality and let him say if he fought in accordance with the rules. You won't find such a soldier. When the Georgians came to our land they mocked non-combatants. And when our offensive started, our fighters did the same in revenge. (IDI, civil servant, Novy Afon)

War has its own rules, different from those of civil life... Having gone away to forests, being embittered and with their dead friend just shot and dying beside them, soldiers may tear up a tongue or make something horrible with the enemy. No one can prevent them from doing so. Unfortunately, we have no mechanism for controlling such cases and beside, there is a saying, "war is war". (FG, journalists, Tbilisi)

Certainly one should observe the requirements of the conventions, at least, whatever I have read. But the law has its own rules, war has its own logic. And the principle of war is simple: the enemy should be destroyed. And the other side usually uses any possible means to reach the goal. (IDI, theatre director, Tbilisi)

Given the degree to which people took sides in the conflict, it is not surprising that many Georgians and Abkhaz believe that a primary reason combatants sometimes attack civilians is because they "hate the other side so much". Comparable numbers of Georgians (22 per cent) and Abkhaz (27 per cent) say that people involved in the conflict "lose all sense during war". The momentum of revenge

<sup>22</sup> See page 25 for respondents' views of the efficacy of the Geneva Conventions.

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22 becomes unstoppable and what one former Abkhaz fighter called the “recidivism of brutality” takes over. (IDI, businessman, Sukhumi) This sense of losing control in the heat of conflict was a pervasive theme in the consultation.

It used to be that our side received still warm corpses of captives. Then we couldn't contain ourselves and our guys did the same thing. (FG, young men, Sukhumi)

When a man goes to war and some of his relatives are killed then he simply loses his head. He can wipe out even those who would try to stop him. (FG, young men, Sukhumi)

One Armenian managed to cross the front line armed and his family stayed behind it. When he returned he saw his mother, daughter and wife dead. They were shot. After that he left nobody alive. It's hard to arbitrate. I guess the war makes people much [more] cruel. (FG, young men, Sukhumi)

We are sitting now in [a] quiet atmosphere and speculatively discussing about all this. But much of what is being said here is wrong. If a battle starts now and my friend gets wounded nothing will stop me to revenge. (FG, young men, Sukhumi)

It didn't cost much to begin the war, because we have [a] vendetta custom. One man was shot dead, then killed another one, so it spread. (FG, young men, Sukhumi)

Imagine going to a deserted village and seeing bodies of slaughtered children and women... This might have such a strong psychological impact on you, that you might not spare the very first person you meet – and it does not matter whether it is a child, man or woman. (FG, former combatants, Tbilisi)

When there is a war it is very difficult to make out who is killing whom. It is hard to forgive when they kill your friend just by your side in a trench. It is easier said than done. (FG, university students, Zugdidi)

It is difficult to act humanely in a war, to treat well a person who might have killed your relative or your friend. (FG, university students, Zugdidi)

### **The role of education and moral training**

As Georgians and Abkhaz seek to explain why some combatants disregarded the limits of warfare and others did not, many of them fall back on concepts related to differences individuals have in their moral upbringing and sense of humanity. In the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, participants argued that a combatant will respect the rules governing the conduct of war only out of a deep understanding that he is dealing with other human beings. There was a sense that it is ultimately up to the family and society to provide the education and moral grounding that can give a young person the bearings he or she needs in order to behave honourably in a time of conflict.

[Moderator: Why when people are taken captive are they killed and treated brutally?] I think due to low morality of those soldiers who do this. They don't teach that at school, but I think in families don't cultivate certain qualities to people. In my view [a] truly decent person is not able to do evil. (FG, formerly displaced women, Ochamchira)

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It often depends on a commander. But a lot depends on a fighter, too. It's easier to work with [a] category of people who have [a] certain level of education. You can adjust them on certain mood and demand from them and demand very toughly. Unfortunately, the war attracted mentally not very adequate people... (IDI, businessman, Sukhumi)

From the point of view of morality, it's not permissible. My brother's relatives were killed and some of the captives got into his hands – 17-year-old guys. His friend told him to shoot them to revenge for his son. He answered, "I imagined my son in his place so I can't." Doesn't matter what kind of war we have, a human being must be a human being and empathize [with] the others and not mete out punishment. If it were like this in all wars they wouldn't be so hard. (FG, formerly displaced women, Ochamchira)

I believe that a man hasn't become a soldier immediately. He studied, brought up. He lived in the society. He must have some understanding about humanness. One thing is war, confrontation. But if you were taken captive, nobody gave the right to bully him. Who gave the right to take away life? From where comes such brutality? A man if he is a human being must allow such things... It means a human being has a soul, which differentiates him from the beast and those who commit such brutalities. (FG, formerly displaced women, Ochamchira)

Humanity is only in theory, but in reality it's very hard to manifest it when your son or daughter is being killed in front of your eyes, and then this man incidentally gets into hands. Only a man with a strong will and indiscriminate forgiveness can control himself. (FG, elderly women, Sukhumi)

It is very easy to speak about it here, but there, when you have only a few seconds to make a decision, no one can think in a proper way. This is a very hard psychological moment and in these circumstances if a person is not brought up with human ideas and this humanity and the rules of war are not within his reflexes he cannot keep his balance. (IDI, university professor, Batumi)

The atrocities committed during the conflict suggest that this sense of humanity was in short supply during the conflict. Yet some of those involved in the consultation cite exceptional cases of restraint and compassion. Indeed, one of the only positive aspects of the conflict that Georgians and Abkhaz could cite was the opportunity it provided for a few people to show their most humane qualities.

The most positive thing about the conflict [was] that there were people from either side who rescued people irrespective of their political convictions and nationality. There were many cases when we had picked the wounded from the battlefield and I insisted on immediate operations. The people were hopeless but they were saved. There were people who realized that human life is the most valuable thing on earth and must be treasured. (IDI, businessman, Sukhumi)

The only positive result, perhaps, is that this confrontation revealed the morality and ethics of certain persons involved in it. (IDI, doctor, Tbilisi)

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People revealed themselves. Human nature became more vivid. Perhaps a man is not born as a bastard or totally positive, but during the war, people paid attention to different values, different human relations. I think that people realized many things, estimated and re-estimated lots of human features. This was a revelation. People learned to appreciate the life, water and light. (IDI, teacher, Zugdidi)

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## Awareness of the law of war and punishment of violations

### Awareness of the Geneva Conventions

One reason for the number of atrocities during the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict may well be the low level of knowledge about the rules of war. Knowledge of the Geneva Conventions themselves is low. And although individuals in both communities talked about the norms that should guide warfare – such as avoiding harm to civilians – they most often viewed them as humanistic rather than juridical.

Awareness of the Geneva Conventions varied by population. Among Georgians, awareness is particularly low: only 18 per cent say they have heard of these laws. Of those who had heard of them, 58 per cent could accurately describe them, saying their purpose was to limit or stop war (28 per cent); promote peace or human rights (21 per cent each); and protect civilians, other vulnerable populations, the wounded and captured combatants (11 per cent).

Conversely, a little more than half of the Abkhaz surveyed had heard of the Geneva Conventions (52 per cent), and of those, the majority (53 per cent) could accurately describe their purpose. The top responses were to protect human rights (38 per cent), protect vulnerable populations, the wounded and captured combatants (37 per cent) and to stop or set limits in war (29 per cent).

The low level of awareness of the Geneva Conventions is paralleled by the minority on each side who believe there are laws that prohibit certain actions by combatants against civilians. Thirty-one per cent of Georgians and 38 per cent of Abkhaz believe that there are laws that prohibit combatants from depriving civilians of food, water or medicine; and slightly more than one-third of Georgians and Abkhaz – 35 per cent of Georgians and 37 per cent of Abkhaz – believe there are laws that prohibit combatants from targeting populated areas.

Less than half of respondents in each community (40 per cent of Georgians, 43 per cent of Abkhaz) say they are aware of special rules that govern the displacement of populations during a war. A much higher share say they are unaware of such rules (60 per cent of Georgians and 50 per cent of Abkhaz), even among those who report being forced from their homes during the conflict. Yet the very few respondents who answer that they do not know (virtually none in Georgia and only 6 per cent in Abkhazia) suggests that this is an issue that continues to have a direct impact on the lives of people in the region.

The low level of awareness of the Geneva Conventions, in particular, and of laws governing warfare in general, was evident from the comments of participants in the focus groups and in-depth interviews. This was particularly true of Georgian respondents.

[Moderator: Are there rules against attacking populated areas?] Of course this is wrong. But such things happen during war. The war doesn't have rules. (IDI, Georgian woman, Gali)

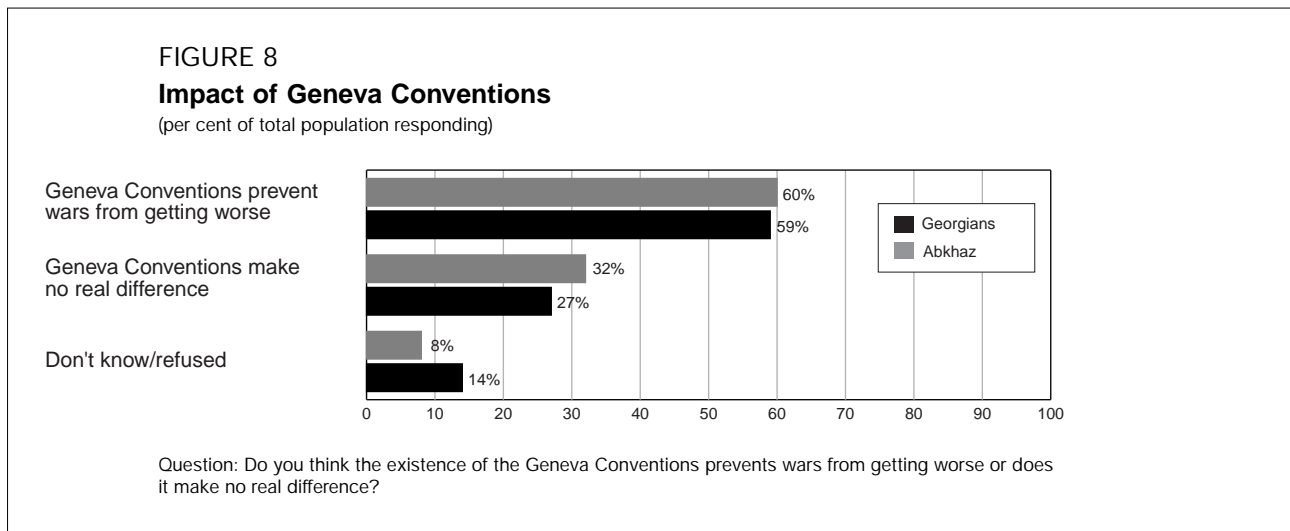
I know nothing of such laws. But there should be some, perhaps there are some.

[Moderator: Have you ever heard of Geneva Conventions?] No, nothing at all. (IDI, veteran, Tbilisi)

When I have to speak to various auditoria and start speaking about the laws of war, listeners look at me ironically. They are surprised how war can have any rules and laws... Nobody in Georgia knows about the laws of war, so I assume that even combatants, officers and generals might not know these laws. And I am absolutely sure that [former Minister of Defence] and [Head of *Mkhedrion*] had no idea about this. Those who knew the laws were not given any consideration

during the conflict, nobody listened to their words. I think that if anyone had said that the laws were being violated in this conflict he would have been declared traitor and even sentenced to death. (IDI, university professor, Batumi)

Both the Georgians and Abkhaz surveyed believe that rules of war could prevent wars from getting worse. When informed that the Geneva Conventions are a set of international treaties that impose limits in war, nearly six in ten respondents (60 per cent of Georgians, 59 per cent of Abkhaz) say they believe the Conventions prevent wars from getting worse. (See Figure 8.)



Yet a significant share of Georgians and Abkhaz doubt the efficacy of such rules. About three in ten on each side – 32 per cent of Georgians and 27 per cent of Abkhaz – say that such rules make no real difference. Several participants in the in-depth interviews and focus groups forcefully expressed scepticism: although they admire the goals of such rules, they nonetheless doubt that the rage of war could ever be contained:

There are certain international conventions that forbid these actions. But during war, soldiers pay no attention to the requirements of conventions and are guided by general human features. (IDI, former minister, Tbilisi)

The laws of war never work. A soldier is educated in his own way. If he doesn't stick to the law because of his own considerations then not a single rule would stop him. (FG, young men, Sukhumi)

There exists the law according to which warfare must be conducted. I think it is called convention, i.e. not to shoot captives, not to attack non-combatants and not to loot. But this is unreal. Even the current war [Kosovo] shows that the war with high-precision weapons doesn't exclude victims among civilians. This must not be done, but nobody sticks to this. (FG, young men, Sukhumi)

Nobody can defend unarmed people, nobody. (FG, elderly women, Sukhumi)

The survey data, in fact, provide only limited evidence that greater awareness of the Geneva Conventions might have led to better treatment of civilians and prisoners during the conflict. Georgians who have heard of the Conventions are somewhat less likely to say it is acceptable to torture prisoners (17 per cent, compared with 28 per cent among those who have not heard of the Conventions). Abkhaz

who have heard of the Geneva Conventions are less likely to believe that captives can be denied a visit from a representative of an international organization (12 per cent, versus 20 per cent). Yet among both groups, on a range of other issues – attacks on populated areas, denying civilian populations food, medicine or water, kidnapping civilians, attacking historical or cultural monuments, displacing populations – those who have heard of the Conventions show little more inclination to abide by the rules of war.

### Punishment of war crimes

Despite the low awareness of the rules of war and a good deal of scepticism that limits on wartime behaviour can be enforced, there is widespread belief among both Georgians and Abkhaz that certain actions must be punished. Nearly two-thirds of Georgians (63 per cent) and nearly three-quarters of Abkhaz (73 per cent) say that there are rules so important that the person who breaks them during a war must be punished.

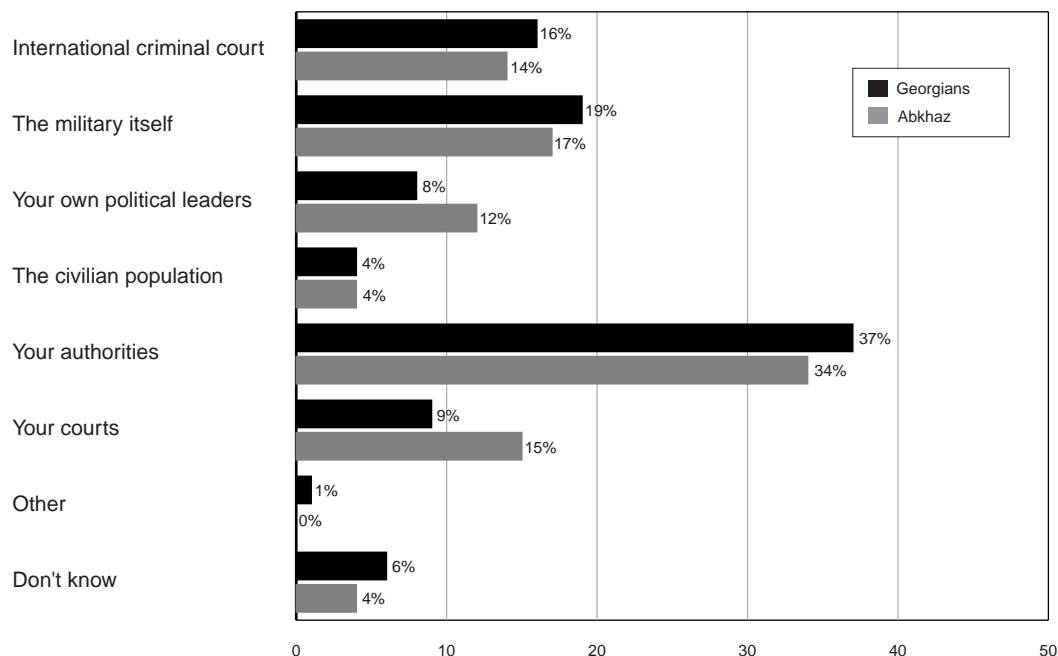
Men in both populations are more likely than women to want to punish wrongdoers (70 per cent of Georgian men versus 57 per cent of Georgian women; 78 per cent of Abkhaz men versus 68 per cent of Abkhaz women).

Among Georgians and Abkhaz who believe that some wartime crimes must be punished, there are significant differences between them as to the types of crimes. Among Abkhaz, rape is mentioned most often (24 per cent) as a punishable crime, followed by human rights violations (14 per cent). By contrast, Georgians most often cite treason or betrayal (23 per cent). Georgians also refer more generally to violations of rules or limits in war (14 per cent, compared with 2 per cent of Abkhaz).

FIGURE 9

### 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?

Both communities exhibit a strong belief that national, rather than international, institutions are the appropriate vehicle for bringing wrongdoers to account. Nearly half of Georgians (46 per cent) and Abkhaz (49 per cent) say their authorities or courts should be responsible. Most of these favour action by

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**28** the authorities. About one-third in both communities – 37 per cent of Georgians and 34 per cent of Abkhaz – say that it is their authorities who should be responsible for meting out punishment. Nearly another fifth – 19 per cent of Georgians and 17 per cent of Abkhaz – believe the military should have this responsibility. These are generally higher rates of faith in national governments and militaries than are found in the other countries examined by the ICRC as part of the People on War consultation. (See Figure 9.)

International institutions are not viewed favourably by either community. Only 16 per cent of Georgians and 14 per cent of Abkhaz believe that an international court should be given the responsibility of trying and punishing transgressors. The strong faith in punishment by national bodies is striking given the relative weakness of the institutions of justice on both sides, and may be more a reflection of the strong nationalist passions at play in this conflict.

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## International institutions

Those who experienced the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict have a limited faith in the ability of international organizations to prevent or moderate conflicts or wartime abuses, mostly because they perceive that these organizations did little in the case of their own conflict. From the perspective of the focus group and in-depth interview participants, the conflict flew under the radar of the international community's attention and concern. There was also a sense that, to the extent international organizations did play a role, they lacked the force or influence to prevent the worst abuses of the conflict:

Nobody. Nobody did anything! Nobody paid any attention to these organizations. Neither side did. We used to wipe out everything and they used to wipe out everything. (IDI, hostage-taker, Zugdidi)

As we know, the Red Cross and Red Crescent organization bans such activities but they happen nevertheless. (FG, university students, Zugdidi)

Now it is UN and Red Cross. They help the sick, give medicine and food. And during the war there were no such, they didn't work. (IDI, civil servant, Novy Afon)

Despite these reservations about the efficacy of international organizations, two-thirds or more on each side – 69 per cent of Georgians and 67 per cent of Abkhaz – say they would like to see more intervention from the international community in order to address the kind of humanitarian issues that arose during their conflict. Yet not all share this perspective. Some expressed weariness with outside organizations that have long played a role in a conflict that is internal to the Georgian and Abkhaz peoples, and stressed the need for the people of the region to solve the problem themselves.

Just as Russia has its policy, those other international organizations will want to conduct their own policy. Let's exclude these organizations, let us Georgians and Abkhaz sit together and resolve this conflict by diplomatic ways without their intervention. (FG, university students, Zugdidi)

I think the best aid is not to interfere. Just let them not feed the Georgian army. (FG, young men, Sukhumi)

In my view the problem is with us. (FG, young men, Sukhumi)

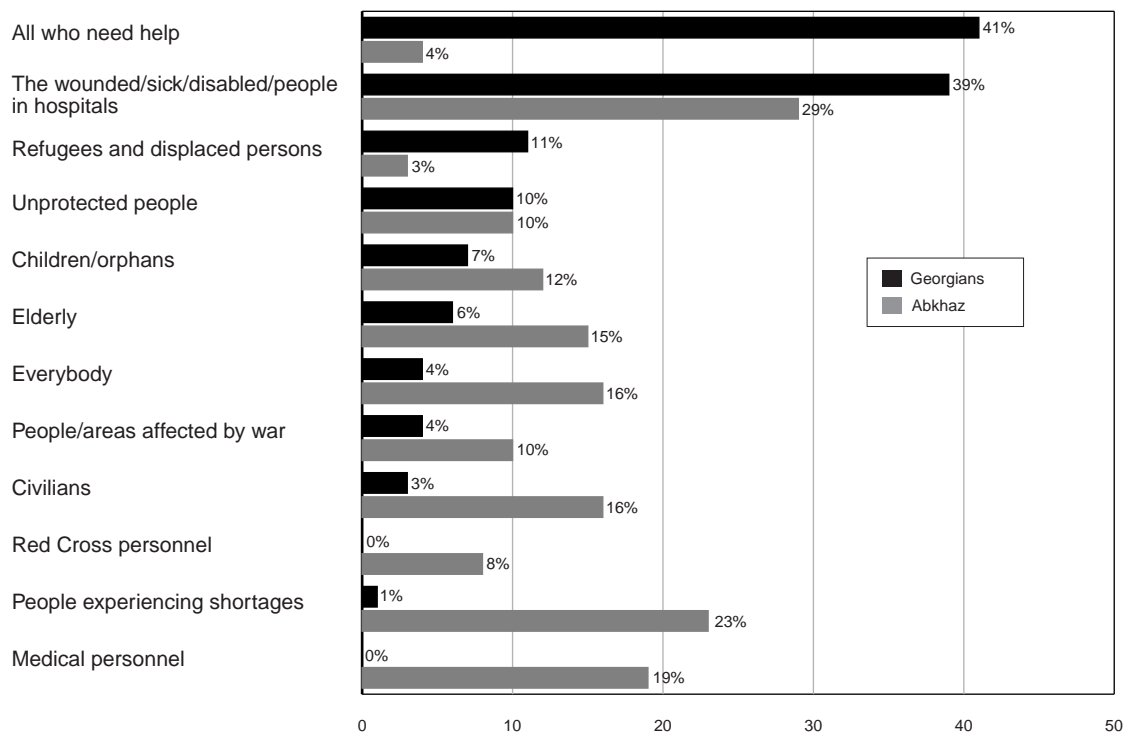
### The role of the ICRC and Red Cross

Of all the international organizations, Georgians and Abkhaz are most familiar with the ICRC/Red Cross and view it most favourably. Nearly all respondents (97 per cent of Georgians and 95 per cent of Abkhaz) could identify the red cross emblem. The two communities mostly associate the emblem with medical personnel or medical treatment for the sick and wounded (39 per cent of Georgians, 48 per cent of Abkhaz) and relief for those in need of food or other kinds of help (42 per cent of Georgians and 27 per cent of Abkhaz). The emblem's role in protecting civilians, captured combatants and persons displaced by conflict is also familiar to a significant share of the publics, especially in Abkhazia; these functions are cited by 29 per cent of Georgians and 41 per cent of Abkhaz. (See Figure 10.)

In comparative terms, both Georgians and Abkhaz see the ICRC/Red Cross as having made the greatest contribution during the conflict in trying to combat abuses. About four in ten on each side – 37 per cent of Georgians and 42 per cent of Abkhaz – cite the Red Cross as playing the biggest role of this kind. The UN is cited significantly less often – by only 28 per cent of Georgians and 14 per cent of Abkhaz.<sup>23</sup> (See Figure 11.)

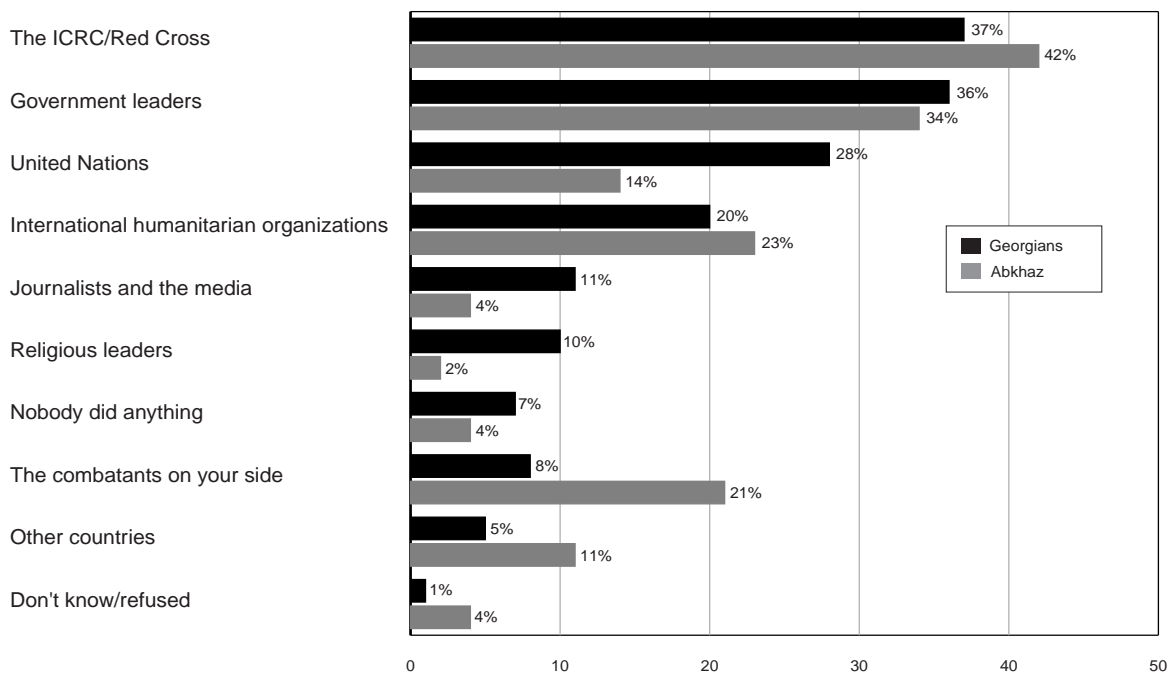
<sup>23</sup> It is possible that respondents provided a somewhat more favourable assessment of the Red Cross owing to an awareness that the organization was playing a role in the survey.

**FIGURE 10**  
**Red Cross and protection**  
 (per cent of total population responding)



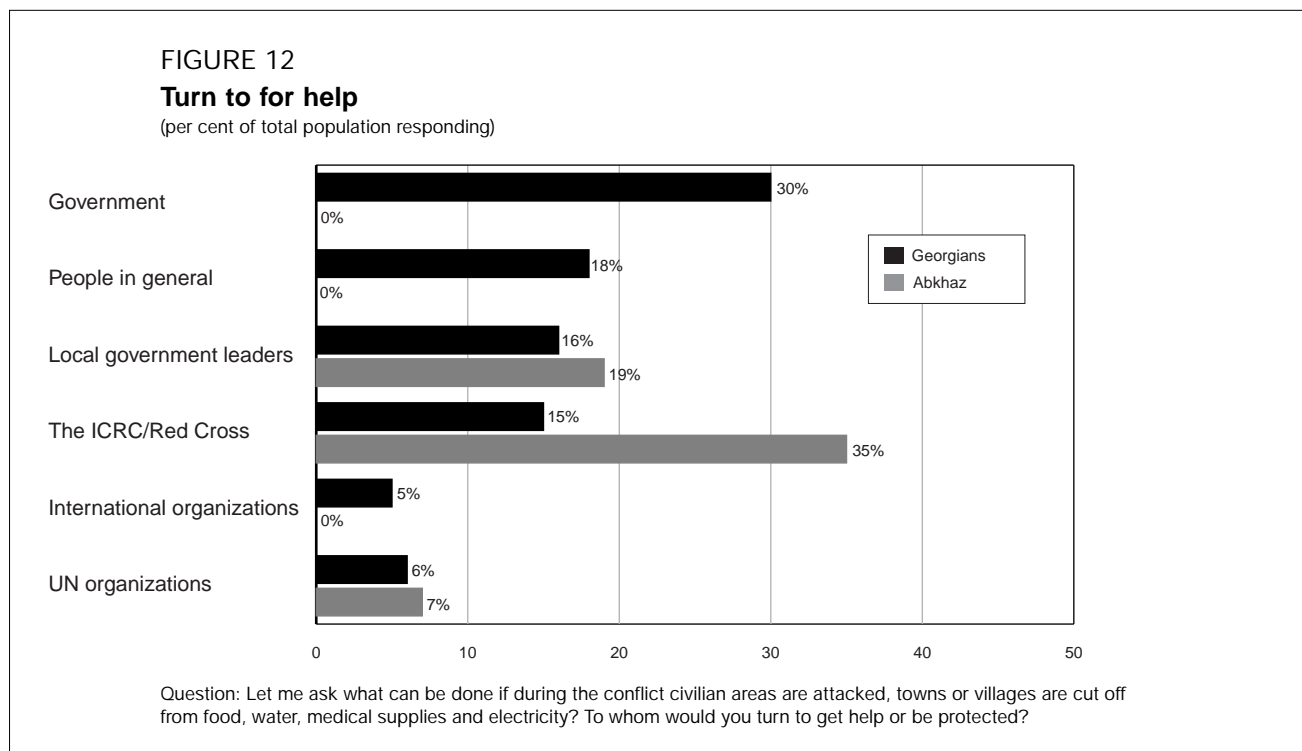
Question: What kind of people or things does this symbol (red cross emblem) protect?

**FIGURE 11**  
**Biggest role**  
 (per cent of total population responding) (top two responses)



Question: Please tell me which *two* of these organizations have played the biggest role during the conflict to stop civilian areas from being attacked or cut off from food, water, medical supplies and electricity.

More Abkhaz than Georgians believe in the efficacy of the ICRC/Red Cross. More than one-third of the Abkhaz surveyed (35 per cent) say they would turn to the ICRC/Red Cross if they were cut off from food, water, medical supplies and electricity. As one Abkhaz civil servant noted: "To say the truth, International Red Cross helped a lot. They saved from captivity, hunger and death dozens of people. I don't know any other international organizations which saved people during the war." (IDI, civil servant, Sukhumi) That figure was significantly lower among Georgians (15 per cent), likely reflecting the fact that Georgians had far less direct contact with the conflict and the ICRC than Abkhaz did. (See Figure 12.)



### The United Nations and UNOMIG

The UN plays several roles in the eyes of Georgians and Abkhaz, although they do not see the organization as playing any of these roles very well. First, it is felt that the UN could have intervened early to prevent the war. There was almost no sense that the UN had done this. In particular, Abkhaz accurately perceive the UN as having supported Georgia's claims of sovereignty over the entire region. As one young man in Abkhazia said, "UN and NATO are for the integrity of Georgia and fully support Georgia in this respect." (FG, young men, Sukhumi)

Second is the role the UN might play in providing peacekeeping forces to prevent the conflict from re-igniting. Several participants in the consultation liked the idea of this role, as they saw the UN's peacekeepers as more impartial than the CIS peacekeepers now stationed in the region. Not surprisingly, Georgians – who tend to resent the Russian influence which they see represented by the CIS forces — expressed this view, calling the UN forces "fairer" and saying "they won't take one side". (FG, university students, Zugdidi)

A third aspect of the UN's role is the UNOMIG, which now maintains about 100 military observers supported by international and local civilian staff in the region.<sup>24</sup> Their mandate is to monitor and verify the implementation of the 1994 cease-fire, observe the operation of the CIS peacekeeping force and to investigate violations of the cease-fire and attempt to resolve them. At most, Georgians and Abkhaz believe these UN personnel make a very modest contribution by providing information to the international community. More commonly, the population sees them as foreigners who are doing very little apart from collecting generous salaries. Some even regard them as spies.

<sup>24</sup> United Nations peacekeeping document, 15 January 1998.

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I don't understand what they are doing. Either they collect information or something else. (FG, formerly displaced women, Ochamchira)

[Moderator: How do you assess the UN observer mission?] Like nothing. They are zero. (FG, young men, Sukhumi)

I have heard nothing about the organization, even though I work on TV station. (FG, former combatants, Tbilisi)

Spies. (FG, young men, Sukhumi)

They have an impression of having vacations here not work. Simply we don't see what they are doing here. Even if they take part in something they do it merely for the quantity. At least they leave such an impression. (FG, young men, Sukhumi)

They get big salaries and that is all. (FG, former combatants, Tbilisi)

You know what, they aren't doing much there. But they live comfortably in well-furnished houses, getting high salaries. Nonetheless, their presence there is important. (FG, journalists, Tbilisi)

We can't accuse them much. They have [a] narrow mandate. Their mission is to write down and inform the government what is going on. They don't have police functions and God preserve us they won't be delegated. They just can't do anything. (FG, young men, Sukhumi)

Overall, the UN has lost the confidence of many Georgians and Abkhaz, not only because of its performance in the conflict, but also because of what is seen as a relatively ineffectual job in the Balkans conflict. However, these views may reflect the temporary influence of the war in Kosovo, which was ongoing when this consultation was conducted.

And now NATO actions in Serbia demonstrated that there is no UN any longer. UN is the organization that can ask, beg, either Milosevic or the US side not to kill any more. Just it and nothing more. UN blue berets are just ridiculous. They are just dolls, well-dressed and well-selected boys, that I'm sure, will run away after they hear the first shooting in a serious conflict. (FG, former combatants, Tbilisi)

### **CIS peacekeepers**

The most controversial of the outside personnel in Georgia and Abkhazia are the Russian peacekeeping forces of the CIS. Although some think they do too little, many Abkhaz and, indeed, the peacekeepers themselves believe that they represent an important form of protection against a recurrence of the violence and aggression of the early 1990s.

The peacekeepers have been placed here and they don't fight, they maintain peace and order. Nobody shoots from either side as it used to be before. (FG, Russian peacekeepers, Sukhumi)

They don't let the war start again. (FG, Russian peacekeepers, Sukhumi)

Service in Abkhazia is to safeguard peace and to prevent hostilities. (FG, Russian peacekeepers, Sukhumi)

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The main thing while we are here is to make peace between them. In which way they will do it, either they unite or recognize independence, we don't care. We are here to sink that feud. (FG, Russian peacekeepers, Sukhumi)

Yet to many Georgians, these forces represent a continuing symbol of Russia's attempts to maintain influence in the region, which many of them see as one of the prime causes of the conflict in the first place.

I expected more from them. If they are placed as a shield then they must deter hostilities from either sides. But the hostilities are still on. That's how they guard the border! (FG, young men, Sukhumi)

The peacekeepers simply don't care much. If it were their own land they would guard it much better. (FG, young men, Sukhumi)

Marks using 5 grade scale I would give them "3". (FG, young men, Sukhumi)

And still we are grateful to peacekeepers, we sleep peacefully, we feel that somebody is guarding us, but they still must take compassion upon [the] Abkhaz nation and help us to settle the conflict. (FG, elderly women, Sukhumi)

If Abkhazia is part of Georgia then [the] Georgian army should be controlling it and not the third force. Nothing will change as long as [the] Russians are here. (FG, internally displaced women, Zugdidi)

When Russian troops leave Georgia, everything will be settled. (FG, internally displaced women, Zugdidi)

I would like to add a few words about the role of CIS troops. There are no such troops, they are Russian troops implementing Russian policy... In particular, they marked demarcation borders, separating Georgia from its own territory — I mean Abkhazia — and keeping the territory. So there is no political basis for claiming the troops are peacekeeping. The purpose of peacekeeping forces is to prevent conflict between two nations. *Between two nations*: I am emphasizing it but there is no such thing in this case. (FG, former combatants, Tbilisi)

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## Outlook for the future

In contrast to their grim experiences in the early years of this decade, Georgians and Abkhaz now express a strong sense of optimism for the future. This optimism is surprising, not only because of what they experienced during the conflict, but also because of current conditions. Both Georgia and Abkhazia are suffering from economic hardship, much of it caused by the devastation of war or by trade and border restrictions that remain imposed on them. Crime is endemic. Sporadic violence continues to erupt as a result of the unresolved conflict.

Yet the overwhelming expectation on both sides is that the future holds peace rather than more fighting. Nearly three-quarters of Abkhaz (73 per cent) and more than two-thirds of Georgians (68 per cent) believe that peace will last, rather than deteriorating into more armed conflict.

There are ample reasons to doubt that the peace will be as durable as the Georgian and Abkhaz people expect. The fundamental issues of autonomy and sovereignty that lay at the heart of their conflict remain unresolved. The existence of more than 200,000 displaced persons from the conflict, mostly Georgians, continues to create tension and offers grounds for grievance.

Yet the hopes for the future among the people of the area are real, and are made clear by their reflections:

We never thought that we would have war in Abkhazia. It came out of the blue. The war at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was savageness... I felt fear before the future and I'm still worried. We need stability. I was wounded... A man can survive anything. But you must change yourselves, get rid of the fear and adjust yourselves for [a] peaceful life. (IDI, civil servant, Novy Afon)

I'll try in any way to bring up my child — I have got one child — to be a civilized, free and peaceful person. (FG, journalists, Tbilisi)

There is... progress in [the] economic field, production development... It's slow, but it's marvellous. (FG, university students, Zugdidi)

I hope I will go back because one lives with a hope. I will return to my land where I was born and brought up and my future generations will continue their lives there. I hope my dream will come true. (FG, internally displaced women, Zugdidi)

There will be peace, I think. Common sense should take over. We are relatives, we used to love each other, respect each other, sharing joy and sorrow. We Georgians and Abkhaz are not aliens. (IDI, unemployed man, Georgia)

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## Annex 1: General methodology

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

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

The consultation was based on three principal research methods:

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

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

### Opinion survey

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **In-depth research**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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## 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]

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40 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.)*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Is that wrong or just part of war?

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

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

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

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

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

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

Is that wrong or just part of war?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- Landmines  
 Laser weapons  
 Napalm  
 Nuclear weapons  
 Chemical weapons  
 Cluster bombs

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

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

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

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

25. In war, combatants sometimes attack or hurt civilians, even though many people say it is not okay and maybe against the law. So please tell me why you think combatants attack civilians anyway.

**[PROBE AND WRITE ANSWERS AS FULLY AS POSSIBLE]**

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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## **The ICRC's mission**

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

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