PEOPLE
ON WAR

The **People on War** Report

ICRC worldwide consultation on the rules of war

Report by Greenberg Research, Inc.

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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.

ICRC, Geneva, October 1999

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Executive summary

Fifty years ago, in the wake of a global war that seemed to know no limits, 63 countries of the world established the Geneva Conventions of 12 August, 1949 to further strengthen the protections afforded to combatants and civilians in times of armed conflict. The systematic extermination of populations, the deaths of millions of civilians and soldiers on the eastern front, the brutal occupation of countries in Asia and the destruction of whole cities from the air left a world determined to rein in the warriors and protect civilians.

Today, 50 years after the adoption of the Geneva Conventions and more than 20 years after the adoption of two Protocols additional to the Conventions, the continued suffering caused by armed conflict has made all countries pause and wonder about their work. At the turn of the century, war dominates life in more than 20 countries across the world. At the end of the 20th century, civilians have moved to centre stage in the theatre of war, which in the past was fought mainly on battlefields. The fundamental shift in the character of war is illustrated by a stark statistic: in World War I, nine soldiers were killed for every civilian life lost. In today's wars, it is estimated that 10 civilians die for every soldier or fighter killed in battle.[1]

Wars of the conventional type, involving clashes of regular armed forces across borders, still take a terrible toll across the globe. Witness the array of military forces that have joined the clashes between Iraq and Kuwait, Iran and Iraq, India and Pakistan, North Korea and South Korea, Ethiopia and Eritrea, or Israel and Lebanon. But war and armed conflict today are much more likely to rage in the wake of the withdrawal, collapse or uncertainty of state power and authority. These wars are less a clash of armies and more a struggle to assert control over areas or populations. In armed conflicts in countries as varied as Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina or Colombia, a culture of war has emerged which places civilians at the centre of the conflict. The great majority of present-day wars are waged across populated areas, sometimes in cities and villages. Combatants seek to displace, "cleanse" or exterminate whole ethnic or national groups; they seek the demoralization or control of people or territories. In many of these conflicts, simply put, war is a war on civilians.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has been mandated by the 188 Parties to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 to act on behalf of victims of armed conflict and to bring them protection and assistance. It does so by visiting captured combatants, reuniting families that have been torn apart by conflict, providing humanitarian relief to civilians, and disseminating information on the rules of war to soldiers and fighters.

To mark the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions, the ICRC organized this worldwide consultation with people who have experienced war in the past several decades in order to find ways to protect them better in times of armed conflict. This programme of research allows their voices to be amplified and heard in the councils of nations.

The consultation was conducted with civilian populations and with combatants in 12 countries that have endured the modern forms of war. In the war settings, the consultation included national opinion surveys, as well as in-depth focus group discussions and face-to-face interviews. In all, the ICRC project interviewed 12,860 people in war-torn countries (excluding the interviews carried out within the context of the parallel research programme – see General Methodology, p. 87) and conducted 105 focus groups and 324 in-depth interviews.

While this was hardly an environment conducive to conventional social science research, the need for people's voices to be heard pushed this project into the most difficult reaches of the earth. It could not have been completed without the goodwill of the ICRC with the warring parties in these conflicts

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[1] Roy Gutman and David Rieff, eds., *Crimes of War. What the Public Should Know.* New York: W.W. Norton, 1999.

and the willingness of the staff and volunteers of the Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies in most settings to learn to serve as professional researchers. This ICRC consultation was carried out in the following war-torn settings around the world.[2]

Arab-Israeli conflict, including the Palestinian conflict: Israelis and Arabs have been at war for more than 50 years, over disputed territory which both Palestinians and Israelis claim as their own. The conflict has drawn almost the entire Middle East into battle, generating four full-scale wars which have cost the lives of tens of thousands. Peace talks continue amidst religious and ideological differences.[3]

Afghanistan: The 20-year war in Afghanistan can be divided into four distinct stages: the 1979 invasion by the Soviet Union and the decade of war that followed; internal armed conflict between the *mujahideen* and the communist government from 1989 to April 1992; two years of civil war between Afghan factions; and ongoing fighting between the Taliban and the Northern Coalition since 1994. All told, these conflicts have killed an estimated 1.7 million people, permanently disabled another 2 million and driven more than 5 million Afghans from their homes.

Bosnia-Herzegovina: The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina was a struggle among the three main communities of the country – Bosniac, Serb and Croat – for territorial control, following the break-up of the Yugoslav federation. From 1991 to 1995, the war claimed some 200,000 lives and uprooted half the population of 4 million. Fear of instability in the Balkans prompted the Western powers to intervene, resulting in a tenuous peace.

Cambodia: Thirty years of violence and periods of armed conflict have cost an estimated 1.25 million Cambodian lives. Following a civil war from 1970 to 1975, the Khmer Rouge seized power and carried out a massive displacement, during which city-dwellers were systematically forced into the countryside where many starved or were killed. Invasion by Vietnam in 1979 pushed the Khmer Rouge out into rural strongholds, where they waged a bitter war of resistance. The Vietnamese withdrew in 1989 and UN-assisted elections were held in 1993.

Colombia: Colombians have lived through more than 50 years of uninterrupted conflict. Today's conflict is mainly rooted in the years 1946-1957 when competition for power between the Conservative and Liberal factions ignited a civil war, claiming more than 200,000 lives. In the last two decades a succession of governments has entered into peace negotiations with its opponents – and sometimes achieved cease-fires – but periods of calm have been the exception, rather than the rule.

El Salvador: Throughout the 1980s, El Salvador's civil war raged, prolonged by the country's position as one of many used as a proxy for superpower influence during the Cold War. The conflict between the country's military and the

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[2] When planning the People on War project, the ICRC selected countries and contexts around the world using the following criteria: geography (global reach); type of conflict (international conflicts and civil wars, territorial, ethnic and ideological types of armed conflicts); and time period (Cold War and post-Cold War). This list of countries was then evaluated against political and security considerations to determine the feasibility of conducting the consultation in that country. The ICRC wished to carry out a similar survey among populations which have not been directly affected by war and whose knowledge of war is derived mainly through media reports. In addition, these governments have a say in peace-support operations across the globe. On this basis, the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council were selected for inclusion in this consultation. Unfortunately, it was not possible to organize the consultation in the People's Republic of China. Switzerland was also included because it is the depository State of the Geneva Conventions of 1949, because Geneva is the location of the ICRC headquarters, and because neither its people nor its army have been involved in armed conflict for more than a century.

[3] Full references for all facts and figures displayed in these country descriptions can be found in the Country Context section in each Country Report.

Communist-inspired anti-government forces left more than 75,000 dead and uprooted hundreds of thousands. A peace treaty was signed in 1992, but the country remains impoverished and deeply divided.

Georgia and Abkhazia:[4] Fighting broke out in the former Soviet republic of Georgia in 1992, as its north-west region of Abkhazia fought for independence. The war, in which both sides terrorized civilian populations to ethnically "purify" certain areas, left at least 15,000 dead. Although open conflict ended in 1994, the situation remains formally unresolved. Hundreds of thousands are still displaced, enduring crime and economic deprivation.

Lebanon: The war in Lebanon, which has lasted more than two decades, has centred on a combination of internal and international conflicts. These conflicts have left some 150,000 people dead, uprooted more than 800,000 people and destroyed a once-thriving country. Although a cease-fire between the contending parties was signed in 1991, Israeli troops remain in southern Lebanon.

Nigeria: From 1967 to 1970, a civil war was fought in the south-east of present-day Nigeria, in the breakaway region of Biafra. The Nigerian government wrested the region back under federal control during a struggle in which an estimated 3 million people died. In recent decades, political and economic stability has depended heavily on the price of oil. Hope of a less turbulent future came in May 1999 when its first freely elected President in over 15 years was inaugurated.

Philippines: For more than 20 years, the Philippines has been the site of localized armed conflicts. In the southern island of Mindanao, Muslim groups have battled to establish an independent Islamic government in a conflict estimated to have left a minimum of 50,000 dead. In other parts of the country, a 20-year conflict between the communist guerrillas of the New People's Army (NPA) and government security forces has claimed at least 40,000 lives. Following the restoration of democracy in 1986, local violence declined, and land reforms brought greater prosperity to Filipinos. Peace talks between the government and both sets of insurgents are ongoing at this time.

Somalia. Somalia's past decade of war has been rooted in traditional rivalries among Somali clans that have torn the country apart. These conflicts are estimated to have killed more than 50,000 of Somalia's 10 million people and have left the country lacking government institutions or infrastructure. Conditions were worsened by a devastating famine in 1992, which claimed 500,000 lives. Although a measure of stability has been established in the country's north, armed conflicts among clan militias continue to dominate more than half of the country's territory.

South Africa: Resistance to state-sponsored racism, known as apartheid, took mainly legal forms until 1960, but violence escalated as the ruling regime used increasingly brutal tactics to suppress its opponents. As violence escalated in the townships — pitting black communities against the security forces and, in some cases, migrant black workers against urban blacks — the state was increasingly unable to restore control. This violence, combined with international pressure, brought all sides to the negotiating table, which led to democratic elections in 1994, when a multiracial government was formed.

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[4] In this report, Abkhazia refers to the territory that is under the control of the Sukhumi authorities. The consultation was initially designed to afford an examination of the two populations; thus the results are shown separately in this report.

In addition, the consultation included national opinion surveys in four of the five permanent member countries of the UN Security Council – France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States – to see how the publics in these superpower countries view war and, despite its changing character, the prospects of preserving the concept of limits in war.[5] Finally, it included a survey of the public in Switzerland, which has played an historic role in the development of international humanitarian law and is the depository State of the Geneva Conventions.

The consultation, as described in this report, has allowed thousands of citizens in war-torn settings to talk about their experiences in these latter 20th-century armed conflicts. But more than that, it allowed them to talk about the breakdown of the barriers that are meant to protect civilians, about the search for protection, the proper bounds to war, the role of the international community and the concept of war crimes. It allowed people from these war-torn settings to offer their views on how to legitimate rules whose ambitions are to limit the scope of war in the century before us.

The consultation gives a voice to the people who have experienced the horrors of life in the midst of a battlefield or in the capricious crossfire of contending armies, guerrilla fighters or militias. From the ground up, people describe the destruction of their families and the loss of their homes and land. The consultation also gives a voice to combatants who, on this "civilian battlefield", have used collective punishment, civilians as human shields or participated in the "ethnic cleansing" of villages or areas. The surveys in many of these settings describe a civilian population that has suffered at least as much as the combatants in today's armed conflicts.

One of the results of this pervasive violence and disruption in populated areas is a grudging acknowledgement by many that war inevitably endangers civilians. That acknowledgement constitutes a culture of war, present in both the Security Council countries and the war-torn settings surveyed, that sees military actions putting civilians at risk as "part of war". In principle, large majorities in every country say attacks on civilians are not acceptable; large majorities in nearly all countries reject a wide range of actions that harm civilians by design or accident. Nonetheless, in nearly all of them, there are sizeable minorities that accept attacking combatants in populated areas, even though many women and children would die, or sanction actions to weaken the enemy that will deprive civilian populations of food, water and medicine. Hostage-taking, sieges, the use of anti-personnel landmines and indiscriminate bombing all have a place in an emerging late 20th-century war culture that has made routine grave threats to non-combatants.

What is most striking about the response of ordinary citizens in these war settings is their refusal to accept as normal such wartime practices. Across the settings surveyed, there is a near-universal belief that the growing threat to the civilian population is wrong, that some things just should not be allowed in war. Indeed, the more these conflicts have degenerated into wars on civilians, the more people have reacted by reaffirming the norms, traditions, conventions and rules that seek to create a barrier between combatants and civilians. The ignoring of norms and conventions by combatants and the blurring of the line between combatants and civilians in their own experience has not dulled people's belief in limits in war. The opposite is true. The experience has heightened consciousness of what is right and wrong in war. People in battle zones across the globe are looking for forces in civil society or their own State institutions or, if not them, international structures to assert themselves and impose limits that will protect civilians.

In effect, those who have endured the worst of modern war are saying: "Do not give in to these patterns of war". They believe in the principle of limits in war that the countries of the world sought to formalize some 50 years ago in Geneva.

The main findings of this consultation in the war-torn settings and the four Security Council countries are summarized in the points below:

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[5] The national surveys in these countries were based on interviews with between 750 and 1,009 respondents each.

The experience of combatants

In wars today, the front lines may be less well defined, but for combatants, war is still a bloody, terrifying, disruptive and often humiliating experience.

- Across all the war-torn settings surveyed, more than one in every four soldiers and fighters (29 per cent) report having been injured in the fighting. The number is even higher for the combatants in Lebanon (41 per cent), Somalia (45 per cent) and Afghanistan (46 per cent) and among Bosniacs in Bosnia-Herzegovina (43 per cent).

- Overall, about one in every six combatants report that they were imprisoned (18 per cent) and almost one in five report being tortured. The rate of imprisonment was highest among Palestinians (40 per cent), followed by Afghans (35 per cent), Lebanese (24 per cent) and Somalis (26 per cent). The proportions reporting being tortured were highest for Afghans (59 per cent), Palestinians (54 per cent) and Lebanese (35 per cent).

For many combatants, the most painful thing about war is not what has happened in the immediate fighting but what has happened to their families and home villages.

- Across the war-torn settings surveyed, 43 per cent say an immediate member of their family was killed; more than half of all combatants (57 per cent) say they lost contact with a close relative and 19 per cent knew someone well who was raped in the conflict. Forty-seven per cent saw their homes damaged and 35 per cent say their homes were looted.

- In some war-wracked countries, conflict-related deaths in the family dominate combatants' war experience: nearly half in El Salvador (52 per cent) and Lebanon (47 per cent), 59 per cent in Nigeria, 66 per cent in Afghanistan and 77 per cent in Somalia lost a family member. In Cambodia, a nearly all-consuming 84 per cent of combatants suffered the death of a family member.

The civilian toll

The consequence of these collective experiences is an extraordinary emotional and physical toll among the civilian populations in the war zones.

- Across all the war-torn settings surveyed, people say that the conflict for them was, above all, "horrible" (49 per cent). This dominant intense description was used most often in Abkhazia (61 per cent), Bosnia-Herzegovina (72 per cent) and Somalia (61 per cent). After "horrible", people described the conflict as "hateful" (30 per cent), "disruptive" (26 per cent) and "humiliating" (24 per cent).

The most widespread experience of civilians in the war settings surveyed is the radical disruption of family life.

- More than 40 per cent of respondents say they lost contact with a close relative. In half the settings, more than half the people lost touch with family, the highest number in Cambodia, Somalia and Abkhazia and among Palestinians.

- In these wars and armed conflicts, homes were seriously damaged (33 per cent) or looted (26 per cent). Almost half the homes were seriously damaged in Bosnia-Herzegovina (45 per cent) and Abkhazia (49 per cent), and even more in Somalia (58 per cent), Cambodia (59 per cent) and Afghanistan (70 per cent).

- More than one-third of respondents were forced to leave home (34 per cent). Amongst the Muslims in Lebanon (50 per cent) and the Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina (54 per cent) the dislocation was massive, affecting about half the population. In Somalia, almost two-thirds were dislocated (63 per cent), and in Afghanistan, almost everyone (83 per cent).

- Death struck one in four families. Overall, 31 per cent report that somebody in their immediate family died in the war. The death toll reached almost a third of the families in Lebanon (30 per cent), El Salvador (33 per cent), Nigeria (35 per cent) and among the Bosniacs and Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina (31 per cent). In Afghanistan, over 50 per cent lost a close family member (53 per cent), in Somalia, almost two-thirds (65 per cent) and in Cambodia, an overwhelming 79 per cent.

Total engagement

In many of the war-torn settings surveyed, whole societies are at war. People at all levels of society are totally engaged in and sometimes fully mobilized for battle and, in any event, profoundly affected by it. That total engagement is apparent in the proportion of the population who supported a side in the conflict and who lived in an area of conflict.

- Among Israelis and Palestinians, in Bosnia-Herzegovina and in Georgia and Abkhazia, more than two-thirds of respondents supported a side in the conflict. In Abkhazia, more than 80 per cent report living in the area where the war took place; in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 61 per cent lived in the war zone. In some of the settings, support for a side was not universal – Somalia (53 per cent), Afghanistan (37 per cent) and Lebanon (39 per cent) – but engagement in the conflict was substantial and the great majority lived in the war zone: 79 per cent in Afghanistan, 63 per cent in Somalia and 60 per cent in Lebanon. In Cambodia, only 21 per cent supported a side, but almost two-thirds (64 per cent) lived in the area of conflict.

The reluctant conflicts

Many of today's wars and armed conflicts do not involve the whole society. Instead, those in the conflict area struggle to stay out of the line of fire and avoid joining a side. But civilians, no matter how detached from the war, have found themselves recruited and pushed and compelled to join with combatants, often from all sides.

- Respondents in focus groups consistently spoke of pressures to provide food and other material support to combatants. Many had direct experiences of being forced to fight.

- El Salvador is perhaps the most dramatic example of a reluctant conflict – where the rural population tried to avoid joining a side, yet a third of the population lost a family member in the war and one-fifth were forced to leave home.

Women and combat

The Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols foresaw the need for protecting women and children as incidental to the central conflict, but today women have become part of the action, often as combatants themselves. It becomes apparent in the surveys, however, how specific protections for women and children have dissolved.

- When asked whether it is "wrong" or "part of war" to attack combatants in populated areas even though many civilians would die, 24 per cent say it is part of war. But when the

question is rephrased to say, "many women and children would die", the response is virtually identical, 23 per cent.

· Women experience almost as much dislocation, family dissolution and property destruction as men. They are less likely to have been injured or imprisoned, but are almost as likely to have lost a close family member. Overall, 40 per cent of women lost contact with members of their families and 32 per cent were forced to leave home; 9 per cent knew somebody that was raped and 9 per cent were tortured.

· Across the varied settings, one in ten of all respondents report that they knew somebody well who was raped; nearly as many say the same for sexual assault. In some of these conflicts, rape became a pervasive part of the conflict. In El Salvador, 13 per cent of those surveyed say somebody they knew well was raped during the armed conflict; in Afghanistan that figure is 16 per cent, and in Somalia, 39 per cent.

Children

The other symbol of today's wars is children – who are the most vulnerable of the civilian population now at the centre of conflict. In many cases, they have been recruited or swept up into the battle, despite widespread condemnation of the idea of child combatants.

· In focus groups and in-depth interviews, many participants spoke of children being forced to go off with combatants – or being killed if they tried to resist.

· When asked at what age someone is mature enough to become a combatant, just 1 per cent of respondents are open to children under 15 taking up weapons. In fact, just 7 per cent accept children under 18 years of age serving as combatants. The overwhelming majority in every country surveyed believe people should be 18 years or older to serve. Only in Somalia is there a significant minority supportive of young combatants (31 per cent who consider combatants under 18 years of age acceptable), but even here, few accept child combatants under 15 (8 per cent).

The global normative order

Though the people of the war zones across the globe have suffered greatly in today's wars, they strongly believe that war should have limits. Whether in answer to an open-ended survey question or in the focus groups, respondents immediately expressed the view that attacking civilians is out of bounds. It is a near-universal idea.

· Across the surveys, more than three-quarters (76 per cent) volunteer actions that combatants should not be allowed to do in war. One in five (20 per cent) say they do not know whether there is anything combatants are not allowed to do; just 4 per cent say that everything is allowed.

· Sixty-six per cent say certain things should not be allowed because they are "wrong". Only 29 per cent seek to limit what happens in war because of the practical damage and problems caused by violence. The normative response is most common in settings where the conflicts have proved nearly total: it is the response of more than 60 per cent among Palestinians and in Somalia and Nigeria; more than 70 per cent among Israelis and in Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Georgia and Lebanon; and more than 80 per cent in Cambodia and Abkhazia.

Qualifying the limits

For the great majority of respondents in the countries surveyed, the principle of not attacking civilians is absolute. A striking 64 per cent say that combatants, when attacking to weaken the enemy, must attack only combatants and *leave civilians alone.* The absolute principle prevails by at least a two-to-one ratio over more conditional responses in virtually all these settings, except the Philippines and among Israelis and Palestinians.

- Very few people in the war-torn settings – just 3 per cent – accept the notion of total conflict – where combatants should feel free to attack both combatants and civilians to weaken the enemy. The number rises to about 7 per cent for Israelis, Somalis and Nigerians and to 15 per cent for Palestinians.

- Almost a third of respondents say that combatants should attack combatants and avoid civilians *as much as possible.* In most of the intense conflict areas, one-quarter to one-third of the people adopt this conditional stance. It is the predominant position for Israelis and Palestinians. Across the conflict settings surveyed, 34 per cent of combatants, who carried weapons, say civilians should be avoided as much as possible, but not absolutely. Fully 28 per cent of non-combatants agree.

The basis for the norms

For the great majority of people in these countries, war must have limits. It is an unconditional principle, rooted in norms with diverse origins. International law and conventions are mentioned often, but for the most part, people root their norms in a notion of human dignity or in religion, traditions or a personal code.

- A majority of the respondents across all the settings say that human dignity lies at the centre of their beliefs that certain actions are wrong. Focus group participants and in-depth interviewees frequently spoke of the need to retain "humanness" in settings where state structures and law are faltering and barbaric behaviour are becoming commonplace.

- A very large bloc of people – 37 per cent – say that certain actions are wrong because they contradict their religious beliefs. This is particularly true in areas where Islam is a strong presence: Afghanistan (78 per cent), among Muslims in Lebanon (71 per cent) and among Palestinians (80 per cent).

- Many people in these settings draw on a "personal code", mentioned by 31 per cent of all respondents. This is particularly important for Israelis (73 per cent), for white South Africans (50 per cent) and Somalis (53 per cent).

- In a number of settings where there is an established or legitimate State, people turn to law as the basis for declaring certain actions to be wrong. This is evident for the Philippines, where 58 per cent say certain actions are wrong because they are against the law. It is also true in Cambodia (56 per cent) and for black South Africans, 51 per cent of whom say that certain acts are wrong because they are against the law.

Geneva Conventions

The Geneva Conventions embody universal principles on the conduct of war that have broad adherence in the world. But in many conflict situations, awareness of the Conventions is very uneven and specific knowledge of their function is very uncertain.

· Thirty-nine per cent of the people in the conflict settings surveyed say they have heard of the Geneva Conventions. But only about 60 per cent of those who say they have heard of them are able to describe them accurately. This means that about one in four across all settings have accurate knowledge of the Conventions.

· In conflicts that have been internationalized to a large extent, there is greater knowledge: 80 per cent in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 89 per cent among Israelis and 65 per cent among Palestinians.

· In many places, such as El Salvador and Colombia, only about one-third of respondents have heard of the Geneva Conventions. In other places, around one in five are aware of them: Cambodia, Afghanistan and Nigeria. Awareness is below 20 per cent in Georgia, South Africa and the Philippines.

· Consciousness of the Geneva Conventions matters. People that are unaware of the Conventions are more likely *not* to help or save a wounded or surrendering enemy combatant that had killed someone close to them: 38 per cent would not save or help one compared with 31 per cent among those aware of the Conventions. Those less aware of the Geneva Conventions are more likely to deny minimal rights to captured combatants.

· After hearing a description of the Geneva Conventions, a sizeable majority in the war-torn settings surveyed conclude that the Conventions can make a difference for civilians: 56 per cent of all respondents conclude that they "prevent wars from getting worse", compared with 28 per cent who think they "make no real difference".

The modern culture of war

Despite a half-century of violent upheaval that has left the protection of civilians in tatters and despite the fact that only a minority have heard of the Geneva Conventions, the great bulk of the population in the war settings surveyed accept the general principle of limits in war.

· Two out of three reject the practice of combatants putting pressure on the enemy by denying civilian populations food, water and medicine or attacking each other in populated villages or towns, where many civilians would die. Three out of four reject attacks on civilians who voluntarily provide food and shelter to enemy combatants.

Nonetheless, a significant minority in these embattled areas – about one in four people – have come to accept practices that put civilians in mortal danger.

· Where material support for the combatants is "voluntary", 22 per cent across the settings surveyed believe civilians who provide such support have forfeited their status and have joined the conflict. It is the civilians' choice to aid their defenders or combatants that opens them up to attack. If they are "forced" to provide such support, only 12 per cent would strip them of their civilian status.

When civilians become more actively involved in supporting their combatants, the barriers that protect them begin to break down.

· If civilians are voluntarily handling the transport of ammunition for the troops, 36 per cent of respondents say that this can open them up to attack along with the combatants. If civilians are forced to transport the ammunition, 20 per cent would still attack them. But 57 per cent

of the people across these settings would not countenance attacks on civilians, even if they voluntarily transported ammunition for the combatants.

· The one area in which people everywhere are clear on the limits in war is the destruction of religious, cultural and historical sites to weaken the enemy. More than 80 per cent of the people who have lived through conflict reject combatants targeting such sites. In focus groups and in-depth interviews, participants acknowledged that these buildings were hit, but no one discussed it as a deliberate strategy for demoralization or "ethnic cleansing".

Landmines and other weapons

Those who have lived through bloody conflicts are strongly opposed to the use of landmines. Overall, 73 per cent say it is not acceptable to use landmines when civilians may accidentally step on them.

· In areas of more limited conflict, opposition is almost absolute – 91 per cent in Colombia, 94 per cent in El Salvador and 86 per cent in the Philippines and South Africa. In three conflict settings: Georgia and Abkhazia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and among Israelis and Palestinians, landmines are considered to be mainly defensive in nature.

· When it comes to weapons of mass destruction, people oppose nuclear weapons (39 per cent) and chemical and biological weapons (33 per cent) in particular. Otherwise they tend to focus on the weapons that were used predominately in their specific context.

· Only 4 per cent of those surveyed would simply ban all weapons. Total opposition is much higher in countries where the damage caused by these weapons has been most devastating: Cambodia and Afghanistan (20 and 19 per cent, respectively).

Explaining the breakdown of norms and conventions

Large majorities believe war has limits and that breaching those limits is wrong. Despite these beliefs, the limits have been routinely ignored.

· When asked why they think combatants harm civilians despite the prohibitions, people focus on the sides' determination to win at any cost (30 per cent) and the strong commitment to their cause (2 per cent), the hate the sides feel for each other (26 per cent) and disregard for laws and rules (27 per cent). These views are reinforced by a sense that others are doing the same thing, thus demanding reciprocity (14 per cent).

· Some believe that most people are following the orders of leaders who have larger designs (24 per cent). This interpretation is dominant in El Salvador, where 59 per cent think combatants have been told to breach the limits. It is also a strong interpretation among white South Africans.

· Some think that people in a conflict environment have just gone out of control: soldiers and fighters have lost all sense (18 per cent) and are under the influence of drugs or alcohol (15 per cent). In Georgia and Abkhazia, people believe these are significant factors in what happened to civilians in that conflict, though in the latter case, they also focus on hate.

The results of the surveys, together with the in-depth discussions, suggest a number of interpretations to explain the gulf between principles and practice that has left so many civilians at risk.

The culture of war. There are significant minorities in the war-torn societies surveyed – about one in four people – who accept breaches in the limits as "part of war". Indeed, many people see war or armed conflict in an area heavily populated with civilians as conventional, that attacking, dislodging and demoralizing civilians are the way wars are conducted today.

Whole societies in conflict. In the conflicts in which the whole society seems to be involved it becomes very difficult to distinguish who is a combatant and who is a civilian. Sometimes, nearly everyone is involved in the military effort. But frequently, involvement takes the form of moral support or the provision of food and shelter. Everyone is thrown together in the defence of the community or the expulsion of another. In either case, civilians and soldiers are becoming conceptually indistinguishable when all levels of society are in conflict.

Sides and hate. The more these conflicts engage and mobilize the population, and the more committed the public is to a side and its goals, the greater the hatred of the enemy and the greater the willingness to breach whatever limits there exist in war. Those who identify with a side are significantly more likely than those more remote from the conflict to accept attacks on civilians – 29 per cent of those taking a side think it is acceptable to attack civilians who voluntarily provide material support to combatants (compared with 17 per cent of those who have not taken sides).

Reciprocity and revenge. For many in the war-torn countries surveyed, the barriers protecting civilians have come down because the other side in the conflict has ignored them. There is apparently a need for reciprocity in attacks on civilians – perhaps even revenge – that threatens whatever protections once stood in the way of a total war.

Circularity. Being hurt in the violent upheaval of conflict increases the hate and willingness to break down the limits in war. Being injured or displaced does not necessarily educate one to the costs of war, create empathy or open one to the need for protection of civilians. Instead, an embittering war experience intensifies the threat to the barriers protecting civilians.

Unequal power. In the conflicts, some groups tend to see themselves as weak relative to better armed and organized defenders or as armies of their communities against a strong aggressor. In either case, the weak defenders feel they can suspend the limits in war in order to do what is necessary to save or protect their communities.

Orders and plans. Many people think the limits are breached because ordinary people have been ordered to harass, dislodge or even attack civilian populations, sometimes uncomfortably at odds with their own beliefs and prevailing norms. Political and military leaders, it is believed, have chosen to pursue the battle in ways that endanger civilians, but people are prepared to believe that the leaders have a plan or a good reason for their course of action. At the very least, they are ready to follow their orders, because as ordinary people they have little choice.

Losing all sense. The collapse of traditional controls and law has created an environment in which a whole range of pathologies goes unchecked. A large

number of people think this is an important part of why the limits fall away: 33 per cent say the limits have given way because combatants lose all sense and because they are under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

The biggest role in protection

Civilians find themselves at the centre of today's armed conflicts, and this has clearly elevated the need for their protection. Sizeable minorities have come to accept that threats to civilians are now "part of war", but people are desperate for protection.

· According to the respondents in the countries surveyed, the organizations that played the biggest role in protecting civilians from harm and in providing relief during the conflicts were the ICRC or Red Cross or Red Crescent (42 per cent), followed by the UN (32 per cent), international humanitarian organizations or NGOs (25 per cent) and religious leaders (18 per cent).

· The UN and international humanitarian organizations in general play very important roles in helping civilians in conflicts that feature large numbers of displaced persons and refugees. The UN is seen to have played the largest role in Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cambodia and with the Palestinians.

· Religious leaders are cited as having played among the biggest roles in Somalia, by the Palestinians and in South Africa. Few of the people in the conflict right now say the media and journalists provided protection during the conflict (7 per cent), with the exception of the Philippines, the Georgians and the Israelis and Palestinians (18, 11, 11 and 16 per cent, respectively). Government leaders are not seen to have played a major role – mentioned only by 18 per cent. The exceptions are found in the Philippines, Georgia and Abkhazia, Cambodia and South Africa. About 13 per cent of those surveyed say they got protection from the combatants.

Prisoners in armed conflict

In conflicts where civilians have faced grave dangers, prisoners have experienced widespread mistreatment as well. The absent or contested state authority, frequently disorganized military forces interspersed with criminal elements, and the intense passions aroused by war put prisoners at risk.

· About 8 per cent of the total population responding in the war-torn settings surveyed were imprisoned during the war or armed conflict. In some places, the number who found themselves captive is even more dramatic: 19 per cent in Abkhazia, 20 per cent in Somalia, 22 per cent in Afghanistan and 25 per cent of Palestinians.

· Nineteen per cent of the population found themselves in areas under enemy control and, therefore, vulnerable to abuse and potentially in need of protection. Large portions of the population in many of the settings report that they came under enemy control – one in five in El Salvador (22 per cent) and Lebanon (22 per cent), one in three in Somalia (31 per cent) and Abkhazia (32 per cent), almost four in ten in Afghanistan (38 per cent), nearly one half in Cambodia (44 per cent) and two out of three among Palestinians (64 per cent).

· Virtually everyone imprisoned in these various conflicts around the world – four out of five people — report that they were "mistreated". While the type of mistreatment is unclear from the study, fully half (48 per cent) say they were physically injured while imprisoned. Just 27

per cent of the prisoners report that they had contact with a representative of an independent organization. To the extent that prisoners were visited while in captivity, the role was fulfilled almost entirely by the ICRC – mentioned by 80 per cent of those who were contacted.

Large majorities in the settings surveyed support the obligations for proper treatment of captured combatants, but sizeable minorities are willing to allow mistreatment.

· Sixty-nine per cent would allow prisoners to contact relatives. A not very impressive majority of 62 per cent say that prisoners cannot be tortured, even to get important information.

· Across the settings, 74 per cent say there is an obligation to allow prisoners visits from independent representatives. Asked who should be allowed to visit captured enemy combatants, nearly three-quarters of respondents (72 per cent) cite ICRC representatives. This is followed by representatives of human rights organizations (51 per cent), UN representatives (32 per cent), religious leaders (25 per cent) and journalists (21 per cent).

· Fully 33 per cent say they would not "save" a surrendering enemy combatant who had killed somebody close to them; more, 38 per cent say they would not "help" a wounded enemy combatant who had killed someone close to them. The refusal to save or help such enemy combatants was highest in some of the most intense conflicts, such as Georgia and Abkhazia and Nigeria, where a majority would let them die. A majority in South Africa also say they would not save or help them.

War crimes

An overwhelming proportion of the population in the countries surveyed by the ICRC believe there are war crimes so serious that wrongdoers should be tried and punished. What form citizens expect justice to take – what the punishment should be based on and who should sit in judgment – varies widely from one setting to another.

· Fifty-nine per cent of those surveyed agree with the statement that there are rules in war that are so important that people who break them should be punished. Only 18 per cent disagree. People in Colombia, Israel, Georgia and Abkhazia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Somalia – all countries with ongoing wars or harsh memories of recently ended ones – are more likely to support punishment for war crimes than people in other countries.

· When respondents are asked to identify the sources for these rules, a near majority (47 per cent) say they are grounded in international law, 23 per cent point to their country's laws, 13 per cent cite people's values, and 9 per cent cite religious principles. Predominantly Muslim peoples – Afghans, Palestinians and Somalis – are about twice as likely as others to mention religious principles as the source for these rules.

· Overall, three in four of those surveyed (76 per cent) say that those who have violated certain rules of war should be put on trial. Sixteen per cent are looking for closure rather than trial and punishment; they believe that the perpetrators of such crimes should be granted amnesty or otherwise forgiven for their crimes.

· Respondents are divided on who should be given responsibility for punishing war criminals. A majority (55 per cent) believe that their own government, courts, military or politicians should handle such affairs. More than one-third (36 per cent) say that an international criminal court should handle these cases.

International community

As the barriers meant to protect civilians from the consequences of war have crumbled around the world, shoring up those walls has become a central focus of the international community. Among respondents, opinions on the impact of the international community – indeed, the very definition of the term "international community" – reflect their direct experiences with its representatives.

· Overall, the majority of respondents (51 per cent) in settings with an international peacekeeping presence believe that these forces have had a positive impact; only 14 per cent say they've made the situation worse. Yet more than one in four (27 per cent) say their presence has made no difference.

· Two out of three respondents (66 per cent) say there is a need for more intervention by the international community on behalf of civilians whose villages are attacked or cut off from food, water or medical supplies. Seventeen per cent say there should be less intervention, while 10 per cent say there should be no intervention. In countries where the national government is not firmly entrenched or the population lacks trust in the central authorities, support for more intervention is much higher than the average.

Red cross or red crescent emblem

The red cross or red crescent emblem is familiar worldwide to people in war-torn countries.

· Eighty-four per cent of respondents correctly identify the red cross or red crescent on a white background. The vast majority of people associate the emblem with protection of the vulnerable, the wounded and the sick. About one in four (24 per cent) say the emblem protects all those who need help, including civilians and the "unprotected". Twenty-two per cent of respondents say the emblem protects the wounded and sick, 11 per cent say medical personnel, with an additional 7 per cent specifically mentioning Red Cross or Red Crescent personnel, and 4 per cent hospitals, clinics and vehicles. Seven per cent cite prisoners of war and 5 per cent single out refugees.

· When respondents are asked to name to whom they would turn for help if civilians are attacked or cut off from food, water and medical supplies, 43 per cent say the ICRC/Red Cross or Red Crescent – almost three times the next most frequently chosen group. Fifteen per cent say they would turn to national or local governments, while 10 per cent say United Nations (UN) agencies, 9 per cent say international humanitarian organizations and 8 per cent mention religious leaders and institutions.

**France, Russian Federation, United Kingdom and United States —
permanent members of the UN Security Council**

As part of the People on War project, the ICRC conducted surveys in four of the five permanent member countries of the UN Security Council: France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States. These surveys were designed to complement the findings of the ICRC's consultation with people living in war-torn countries around the world, and to indicate whether attitudes on war are shared by people with and without direct experiences of conflict. The major conclusions of this comparison between the attitudes in the four Security Council countries and those in the 12 war-torn countries surveyed include:

- The vast majority of respondents in the four Security Council countries and the war-torn countries believe in absolute protection for civilians during wartime. Sixty-eight per cent of those surveyed in the Security Council countries say that combatants should "attack only enemy combatants and leave civilians alone". Sixty-four per cent of those in the war-torn countries agree. Significant minorities in all countries, however, say that combatants should avoid civilians "as much as possible".

- Across a wide range of measures, respondents in the United States demonstrate much greater tolerance of attacks on civilians than do their other Security Council counterparts. A bare majority (52 per cent) say that combatants should leave civilians alone, while 42 per cent say civilians should be avoided as much as possible. The people of the Russian Federation, on the other hand, hold the hardest line against attacks on civilians: 77 per cent favour leaving civilians alone, whilst only 17 per cent choose the conditional option of avoiding civilians as much as possible.

- A belief in human rights is cited most frequently by people in both groups of countries as the basis for their convictions that attacking civilians is wrong. Fifty-nine per cent of those in Security Council countries and 49 per cent of those in the war-torn countries surveyed offer this response. More than four in ten respondents in the four Security Council countries (43 per cent) say attacking civilians is wrong because it violates a "personal code", compared with 31 per cent of those in the war-torn countries. Law and religion, however, are much more important elements in the thinking of those surveyed in war-affected countries.

- There is evidence to suggest that people in countries that have endured extended, chaotic wars where civilians have routinely been casualties – Colombia, El Salvador, Afghanistan, Cambodia and Somalia – are less likely to approve of actions that could harm civilians. They particularly reject the idea that certain actions, such as attacking villages knowing civilians will be killed, are "part of war". Those involved in highly partisan wars in which whole societies are subsumed in the conflict – Georgia and Abkhazia, Israeli/Palestinian conflict, Lebanon and Bosnia-Herzegovina – are more likely to sanction these kinds of actions.

- Nuclear weapons, chemical weapons and landmines rank highest among the weapons that people in both groups of countries want to see prohibited. There is overwhelming rejection of landmines. Nearly three in four respondents (70 per cent in the Security Council countries surveyed and 73 per cent in war-torn settings) say that landmines should never be used if civilians will be endangered; 26 per cent and 23 per cent, respectively, disagree. But more than one-third of Americans and people in the Russian Federation approve of using landmines.

- Understanding of obligations towards prisoners is uneven in both groups of countries; about one-third of respondents in the United States (32 per cent) and the war-torn countries surveyed (31 per cent) believe prisoners can be subjected to torture. There is only minimal support, however, for killing prisoners if the enemy is doing the same. Among the four Security Council countries surveyed, only 11 per cent of respondents say they would approve of killing prisoners in such circumstances, while 85 per cent say they would not approve. For the war-torn countries, the comparable figures are 15 per cent and 80 per cent.

- There is good evidence that exposure to war in one's country causes people to identify personally with those who cannot defend themselves. Respondents in war-torn countries – combatants and non-combatants alike – are twice as likely as those in Security Council countries to say captured combatants deserve to die. Yet when faced with life or death

scenarios and difficult personal decisions, they are more likely than their counterparts in the four Security Council countries surveyed to say they would save or help a defenceless enemy combatant who had killed someone close to them.

· Nowhere in the ICRC consultation are the differences between the four Security Council countries and the war-torn countries surveyed more pronounced than in awareness of the Geneva Conventions. Two-thirds of respondents (66 per cent) in the group of Security Council countries have heard of the Geneva Conventions, while about one-third (31 per cent) have not. In the war-torn countries, only 39 per cent say they have heard of the Geneva Conventions, compared with a majority (51 per cent) that have not.

· Whilst respondents in the four Security Council countries are much more likely to have heard of the Conventions, those surveyed in the war-torn countries have much stronger convictions that the Conventions can prevent wars from getting worse. After being read a description of the Geneva Conventions, those surveyed in the four Security Council countries are almost equally divided between respondents who say they can help prevent wars from getting worse (43 per cent) and those who say they "make no real difference" (47 per cent). People in the war-torn countries are much more optimistic; 56 per cent say the Conventions can have a positive effect, twice the number of those who say they make no real difference.

· The public in the four Security Council countries surveyed is more likely than the public in war-torn countries to believe that wrongdoers should be punished for breaking laws during wartime, that these people should be put on trial and that international institutions should be responsible for punishing them. Fully eight out of ten respondents in these Security Council countries — compared with 60 per cent in war-torn countries — agree that there are "rules or laws that are so important that, if broken during war, the person who broke them should be punished".

· When asked about the role of international organizations in helping to protect civilians who are threatened in wartime, respondents in the four Security Council countries and the war-torn countries agree that the ICRC and the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies play the biggest role. Those who are more removed from the scene – respondents in the four Security Council countries – display much more uniformity in their opinions. About two-thirds in each of these countries mention the ICRC/Red Cross/Red Crescent, while levels in the war-torn countries range from 24 per cent to 72 per cent.

Switzerland

The ICRC also conducted a survey aimed at determining attitudes towards war and the laws of war among the people of Switzerland. This survey – meant to explore Swiss attitudes in light of their nation's role as the depository State of the Geneva Conventions and its historic neutrality – provides a valuable complement to the findings in the four Security Council countries and the 12 war-torn countries surveyed around the world. Findings include the following:

· The Swiss are on the isolationist end of the spectrum when attitudes towards international intervention are explored in comparison with the four Security Council countries surveyed. While 78 per cent of Swiss respondents support humanitarian assistance to aid the victims of wars (provided no troops are dispatched), the Swiss rival only the people of the Russian Federation in their rejection of sending troops abroad to try and stop wars.

· Swiss respondents differ little from their counterparts in the four Security Council countries and the war-torn countries surveyed in their belief in absolute protection for civilians during wartime. Their attitudes most closely mirror those expressed in France and the Russian Federation; seventy-seven per cent of the Swiss say combatants should "attack only enemy combatants and leave civilians alone", while 16 per cent accept the conditional response that civilians should be avoided "as much as possible".

· Swiss attitudes towards weapons of mass destruction closely resemble those of respondents in the four Security Council countries surveyed. About six in ten of those surveyed in Switzerland say that nuclear and chemical weapons should never be used. Swiss respondents are far more likely to mention landmines than are people in either group of countries. Thirty-three per cent of Swiss single out landmines, compared with 24 per cent of those in war-torn countries and 13 per cent of those in the group of Security Council countries.

· The Swiss for the most part demonstrate a strong understanding of international obligations towards prisoners of war. Eighty-eight per cent of Swiss respondents, for example, know that prisoners of war have the right to be visited by a representative from an independent organization and 79 per cent say that prisoners cannot be subjected to torture.

· An overwhelming majority of Swiss respondents are familiar with the Geneva Conventions. Eighty per cent of those surveyed in Switzerland say they have heard of the Conventions, a number surpassed only by the 86 per cent of British who claim familiarity with the Conventions.

· Almost nine in ten Swiss respondents (88 per cent) believe that there are rules or laws in wartime that are so important that people who break them should be punished. This is about 10 percentage points higher than in the four Security Council countries surveyed and some 30 percentage points more than in the war-torn countries. In perhaps the most distinctive measure of their country's international role and its belief in international institutions, 70 per cent of the Swiss public say that war crimes cases should be tried by an international criminal court. This compares with an average of 42 per cent in the four Security Council countries and 36 per cent in the war-torn countries.

· More so than those surveyed in the four Security Council countries, the Swiss put their faith in the ICRC and Red Cross and international humanitarian organizations. Asked which organizations can help civilians who are under attack and cut off from food, water and medicine, almost three-quarters of Swiss respondents (73 per cent) name the ICRC or Red Cross. A majority of Swiss (53 per cent) also point to international humanitarian organizations. Although the Swiss express more faith in the power of international organizations to help civilians caught up in conflict than others surveyed, they display a curious ambivalence about future international intervention by such organizations to protect civilians.

The war on civilians

It should not be a great surprise that in wars and armed conflicts around the world, soldiers and fighters have paid a very high personal price – as perhaps soldiers have in all wars, both in this century and in the previous ones. No comparable survey exists to assess the military losses over the ages, but in this century, we know that in World War I, one in five soldiers were killed, 12 million in all, and that one in every three were injured, a total of 21 million.[6] In World War II, the combatant toll rose with the scale of the war and the weaponry, elevated by the bloody fighting on the eastern front, in China and across Southeast Asia.[7]

In wars today, the front lines may be less well defined, but for combatants, war is still a bloody, terrifying, disruptive and often humiliating experience. Across all the war-torn settings surveyed, an extraordinary one in every four soldiers and fighters (29 per cent) report having been injured in the fighting.[8] The number is even higher for combatants in Lebanon (41 per cent), Somalia (45 per cent) and Afghanistan (46 per cent) and among Bosniacs in Bosnia-Herzegovina (43 per cent). Few soldiers and fighters report being wounded in the conflicts in South Africa and Israel and, despite the high level of violence overall, in Georgia and Abkhazia.[9]

In a number of the conflicts, sizeable portions of the fighting forces were imprisoned by the enemy and just as many were tortured. Overall, about one in every six combatants report that they were imprisoned (18 per cent) and almost one in five that they were tortured. The rate of imprisonment was highest among Palestinians (40 per cent), followed by Afghans (35 per cent), Lebanese (24 per cent) and Somalis (26 per cent). The proportions reporting being tortured were highest for Afghans (59 per cent), Palestinians (54 per cent) and Lebanese (35 per cent).

But soldiers and fighters in today's wars are members of families who are also part of the war. Populated areas are very often the battlegrounds for present-day conflicts, drawing many civilians into the battle. Frequently, civilian populations are themselves the object of the war and end up blockaded in towns or villages; all too often they are displaced, sometimes they come under direct attack.

For many combatants, the most painful thing about war is not what happens in the immediate fighting but what happens to their families and home villages. This phenomenon, perhaps as much as any other finding in this study, underscores the changing character of war today. Across the war settings surveyed, 43 per cent of combatants say an immediate member of their family was killed; more than half of all combatants (57 per cent) say they lost contact with a close relative and 19 per cent knew someone well that was raped in the conflict. Forty-seven per cent say they suffered serious damage to their property and 35 per cent say their homes were looted. In some war-wracked countries, conflict-related deaths in the family dominate combatants' war experience: nearly half in El Salvador (52 per cent) and Lebanon (47 per cent), 59 per cent in Nigeria, 66 per cent in Afghanistan and 77 per cent in Somalia lost a family member.[10] In Cambodia, a nearly all-consuming 84 per cent of combatants suffered the death of a family member. For combatants in such wars – and as shall soon be seen, for civilians, too – it is the whole society at war.

[6] Military and Veterans Affairs, *The World Almanac*, 1998, p. 391.

[7] Approximately 35 million combatants died in World War II. See "Statistics of World War II", The History Place, www.historyplace.com, Boston, MA.

[8] Each of the 12 country studies was conducted as a separate survey. Each employed a design that allowed a representative sampling of opinion and that allowed the project to report results on many questions for each country. Each reported percentage is an estimate, with a reported error and level of confidence. (See the methodology section at the end of this report and in the different Country Reports.) However, percentages reported for *all countries and settings*, such as in this discussion for civilians, simply summarize the results for all the respondents in all the countries surveyed. The project did not conduct a global sample, which would estimate the results for all wars in the world.

[9] In this report, Abkhazia refers to the territory that is under the control of the Sukhumi authorities. The consultation was initially designed to afford an examination of the two populations; thus the results are shown separately in this report.

[10] The percentages reported here are no doubt inflated because polygamy is widely practised in Somalia and Afghanistan, and the population has a broad interpretation of the phrase "immediate family".

The civilian toll

The consequence of these collective experiences is an extraordinary emotional and physical toll among the civilian populations of the war-torn countries surveyed. Across all these settings, people say that the conflict for them was, above all, "horrible" (49 per cent).[11] This dominant intense description was used most often in Abkhazia (61 per cent), Bosnia-Herzegovina (72 per cent) and Somalia (61 per cent). After "horrible", people use the words "hateful" (30 per cent), "disruptive" (26 per cent) and "humiliating" (24 per cent) to describe the conflict. "Hateful" was the adjective most often selected in El Salvador (52 per cent) and in Lebanon (47 per cent).

FIGURE 1

Personal description of the war

(per cent of total and in each setting responding)[12]

	Total	Colombia	El Salvador	Philippines	Georgians[13]	Abkhaz[14]	Afghanistan	Cambodia	B-H*	Lebanon	Israelis	Palestinians	Somalia	South Africa	Nigeria
Horrible	49%		41%	51%	55%	61%	31%	51%	72%	43%	24%	29%	61%	42%	55%
Hateful	30%		52%	14%	24%	12%	13%	42%	44%	47%	8%	44%	15%	35%	21%
Disruptive	26%		14%	31%	11%	52%	50%	2%	10%	22%	25%	7%	39%	25%	56%
Humiliating	24%		15%	14%	36%	29%	7%	15%	21%	46%	16%	51%	35%	26%	18%
Confusing	17%		24%	37%	7%	5%	20%	40%	4%	4%	17%	8%	11%	20%	15%
Uncertainty	12%		18%	15%	19%	6%	31%	7%	8%	6%	31%	2%	8%	12%	5%
Powerless	9%		11%	6%	8%	3%	7%	30%	10%	2%	21%	7%	4%	12%	2%
Challenging	7%		8%	5%	9%	7%	8%	1%	1%	13%	2%	32%	4%	6%	12%
Exciting	5%		1%	6%	20%	11%	11%	9%	1%	6%	1%	6%	3%	1%	2%
Remote	5%		2%	9%	3%	1%	2%	0%	18%	5%	15%	1%	1%	2%	1%
Hopeful	3%		7%	5%	7%	4%	1%	1%	1%	3%	13%	3%	1%	4%	2%
Don't know	3%		5%	2%	-	4%	3%	0%	1%	0%	8%	2%	6%	6%	2%

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

* Bosnia-Herzegovina

These feelings reflect the loss, pain and disruption experienced by these populations in the war. The most widespread experience of civilians in these conflicts is the radical disruption of family life. More than 40 per cent of the population in these settings say they lost contact with a close relative. (See Figure 2.) In half the war settings surveyed, more than half the people lost touch with family members, the highest level being in Cambodia, Somalia and Abkhazia and among Palestinians.

In these wars and armed conflicts, homes were seriously damaged (33 per cent) or looted (26 per cent). Almost half the homes were seriously damaged in Bosnia-Herzegovina (45 per cent) and Abkhazia (49 per cent), and even more in Somalia (58 per cent), Cambodia (59 per cent) and Afghanistan (70 per cent).

More than one-third of the population in all the war settings surveyed were forced to leave home (34 per cent). Amongst the Muslims in Lebanon (50 per cent) and the Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina

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[11] It is important to keep in mind that the surveys in each setting were conducted country-wide, including the war zones and areas outside them. In some settings, the war zones encompassed most of the country, but in others, most people were outside. So, the finding that over half the population describe the war as horrible, should be understood to include even those people who were less directly involved.

[12] The total column for this and other tables in this report represents the sum of the results for all the respondents in the settings surveyed. In virtually all the countries, the sample sizes used was 1,000 respondents, which would mean that each country is equally represented in the overall number. But because of ethnic diversity, the sample size was larger in Bosnia-Herzegovina (1,500) and South Africa (1,500); these two settings are therefore marginally over-represented in the total number. The numbers for Colombia are not reported in this table because the wording of the questionnaire was not fully standardized until the results of the questionnaire pilot tested in Colombia were received and analysed.

[13] In this report, Georgians refer to people living in Georgia outside of Abkhazia, regardless of their ethnic origins.

[14] In this report, Abkhaz refers to residents of Abkhazia, regardless of their ethnic origins.

FIGURE 2
The war experience
(per cent of total responding)[15]
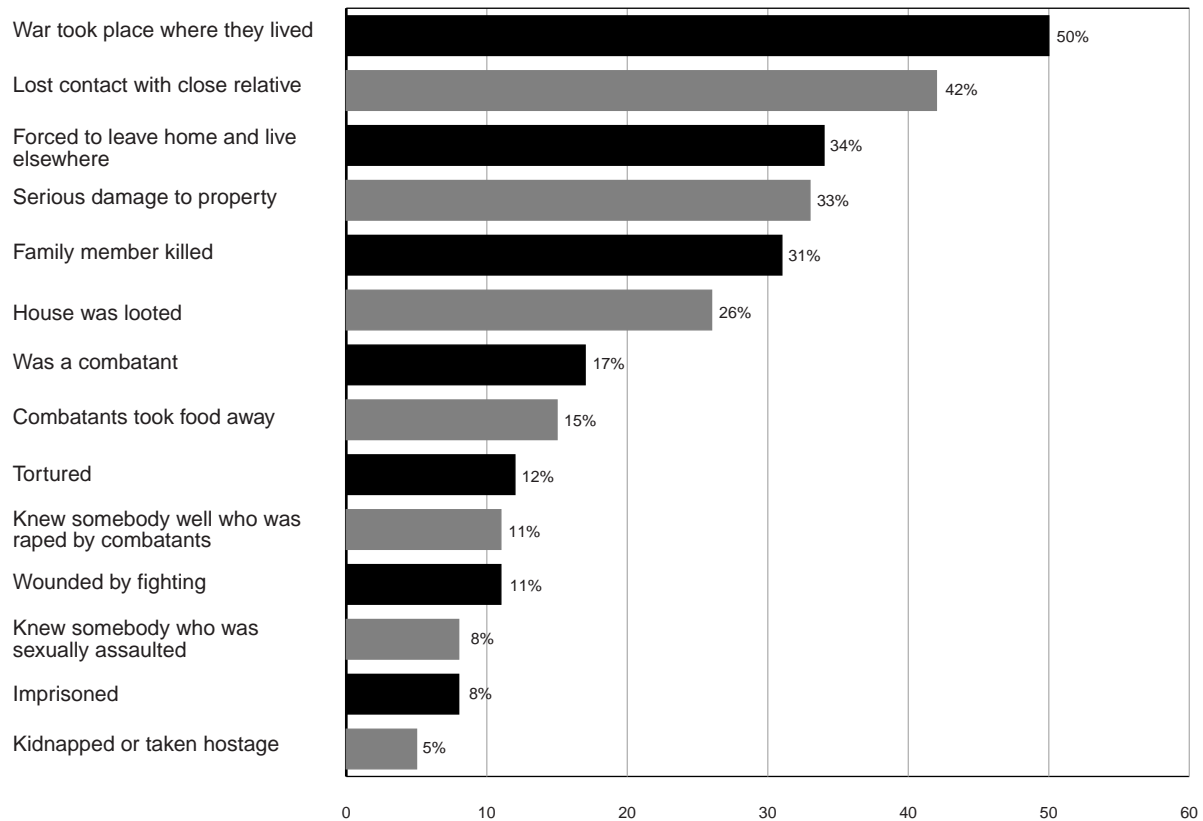
Experience	Per cent
War took place where they lived	50%
Lost contact with close relative	42%
Forced to leave home and live elsewhere	34%
Serious damage to property	33%
Family member killed	31%
House was looted	26%
Was a combatant	17%
Combatants took food away	15%
Tortured	12%
Knew somebody well who was raped by combatants	11%
Wounded by fighting	11%
Knew somebody who was sexually assaulted	8%
Imprisoned	8%
Kidnapped or taken hostage	5%

(54 per cent) the dislocation was massive, affecting about half the population. In Somalia, almost two-thirds were displaced (63 per cent) and in Afghanistan, almost everyone (83 per cent).

Death struck one in four families in the countries surveyed. Overall, 31 per cent report that somebody in their immediate family died in the war. The death toll reached about a third of the families in Lebanon (30 per cent), El Salvador (33 per cent), Nigeria (35 per cent) and among the Bosniacs and Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina (31 per cent). In Afghanistan, over 50 per cent lost a close family member (53 per cent), in Somalia, almost two-thirds (65 per cent) and in Cambodia, an overwhelming 79 per cent.

Total engagement

In many of these settings, whole societies are at war. People at all levels of society are totally engaged in and sometimes fully mobilized for battle and, in any event, profoundly affected by it. The distinction between combatant and non-combatant is but one of many differences that get blurred as entire societies fall into war.

The total engagement of societies in war is apparent in the proportion of the population who supported a side in the conflict and who lived in an area of conflict. Among Israelis and Palestinians, in Bosnia-Herzegovina and in Georgia and Abkhazia, more than two-thirds of respondents supported a side in the conflict. In Abkhazia, more than 80 per cent report living in the area where the war took place; in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 61 per cent lived in the war zone. In some of the settings, support for a side was not universal – Somalia (53 per cent), Afghanistan (37 per cent) and Lebanon (39 per cent) – but engagement in the conflict was substantial and the great majority lived in the war zone: 79 per cent in Afghanistan, 63 per

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[15] Respondents were asked to identify which of 13 experiences "happened to you personally" as a consequence of the war or armed conflict and were asked to select as many as applied. These experiences covered a range of physical and psychological effects, from imprisonment to property damage to feeling humiliated. This graph also indicated the percentage of survey respondents who indicate that the war took place where they were living.

FIGURE 3
Whole societies
(per cent of total and in each setting responding that they "supported a side" and "lived in a war zone")[16]
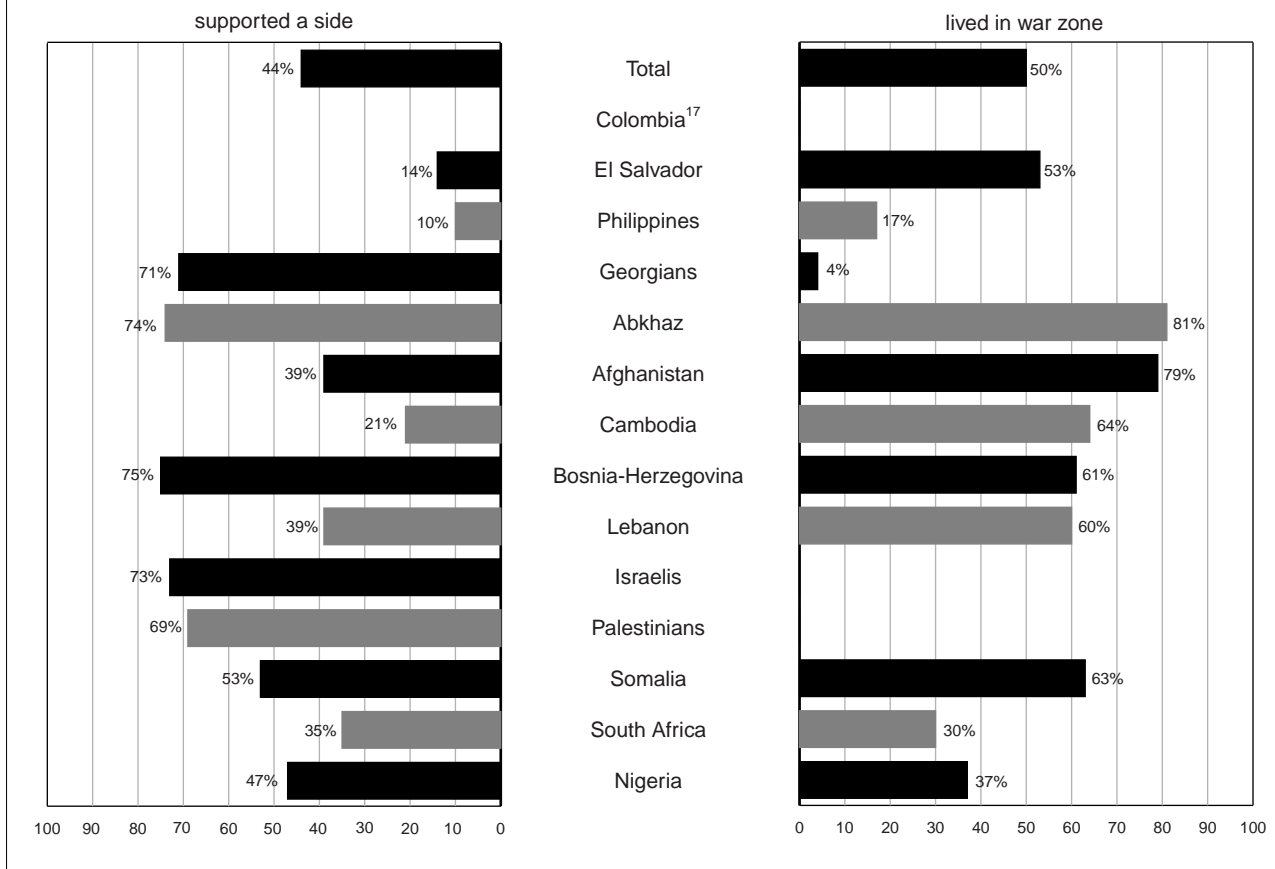
Setting	supported a side	lived in war zone
Total	44%	50%
Colombia[17]		
El Salvador	14%	53%
Philippines	10%	17%
Georgians	71%	4%
Abkhaz	74%	81%
Afghanistan	39%	79%
Cambodia	21%	64%
Bosnia-Herzegovina	75%	61%
Lebanon	39%	60%
Israelis	73%	
Palestinians	69%	
Somalia	53%	63%
South Africa	35%	30%
Nigeria	47%	37%

cent in Somalia and 60 per cent in Lebanon. In Cambodia, only 21 per cent supported a side, but almost two-thirds (64 per cent) lived in the area of conflict. (See Figure 3.)

In a conflict such as the one involving the Israelis and Palestinians, participants in the focus groups and in-depth interviews talk about fundamental goals and total involvement. A former Israeli soldier described every war up until 1973 as "an eternal fight for existence" and, as a consequence, "our people as a whole fought… The whole Israeli people, without exception, were at war." More than half the Israeli population (54 per cent) has served in the Israeli Defense Force. Palestinians talked about a people who were "scattered by the force of weapons", who now struggle to "release our land and have our own country". "All Palestinians contributed in this struggle" – "people at all levels — schools students, university students, combatants on the front lines and women at home." Almost half the Palestinians (49 per cent) report that they were combatants, and large portions report being hurt in the conflict: 73 per cent say they lost contact with a close relative, 41 per cent say their property was seriously damaged and 39 per cent report being tortured.

In some other settings, people have been somewhat less engaged or mobilized for conflict, but the violence – particularly, people being killed on a large scale – has reached unprecedented levels, compared with the other settings. In some of these total conflicts, such as in Abkhazia, civilians have found themselves directly in the line of fire, facing a brutal assault that brooked no distinction between combatants and civilians:[18]

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[16] The question about "lived in war zone" was not asked among Israelis and Palestinians.

[17] The numbers for Colombia are not reported because the wording of the questionnaire was not fully standardized until the results of the questionnaire pilot tested in Colombia were received and analysed.

[18] The quotations used in this main report of the ICRC consultation will not be specifically referenced. But all quotations come from the country studies, which provided full reference for the type of focus group and in-depth interview in which the statements were made.

They raped women in front of their husbands. Once they raped [an] 11-year-old
girl and threw her from the second floor. They tortured and killed children, women
and old people. Burned archives. Destroyed monuments.

[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.

In Gagra, people were burnt alive. They poured kerosene on them and set [them]
on fire.

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.

In Somalia, the focus group discussions and interviews are replete with reports of brutality: a
father who lost ten sons, a man who saw "30 dead children on their mothers' breasts", a woman who saw
a man dismembered with scissors while others looked on, and a respected tribal leader who was forced to
watch his fellow prisoners beheaded.

In Afghanistan, where 53 per cent of respondents report a family member killed, focus group
participants recite a virtual catalogue of barbarity: one told of combatants who amputated the breasts of
people; another told of being forced to abandon her son's bullet-ridden body, not knowing if it had been
"eaten by dogs or by cats"; a medical worker spoke of a rocket attack that instantly killed eight members
of a family, leaving only an infant who "was saved by a miracle"; a male farmer spoke of having to bury the
body of a woman who had been "cut into five pieces".

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, people on all sides think the purpose behind the conflict was the
displacement of populations, perhaps even the destruction of history, memory and an entire culture — and
not primarily the defeat of armies in battle. On the Bosniac side, people describe a war in which the "idea
was to destroy everything and have [it] not even be remembered that somebody else used to live here".
Former Serb soldiers describe a war in which all sides were expelling populations:

[There] were many instances of expulsion in this war with the aim to provide
territory for fellow nationals driven out by the other side.

It was part of military operations and strategy. You may have Sarajevo or Gorazde
in mind. Our commanders thought that was the way to take as many territories
that needed to be taken as possible. I cannot judge the military rightness of that,
because I was a common soldier, a private. However, such things were done.
Other armies also did that whenever they could. They would have surely blocked
Bijeljina or, for instance, Banja Luka, if only they had been able to. That is all
aimed at winning a war.

In Lebanon, the level of killing, dislocation and looting has been high, and those displaced or
disabled describe a total disruption of life, with a humiliating end:

Of course, we all felt humiliated. For example, we left our houses; we left our
interests, our jobs; we lost part of our families. We moved from one village to the
other. We slept in the open air. There is nothing more humiliating.

In Cambodia, systematic killing and cruelty, wrought upon the entire population, brought civilians to the limits of their endurance. As a woman in Phnom Penh explained: "I experienced fighting just in front of myself. I almost died, creeping and crawling to escape the fighting. It was very difficult. It was incomparable suffering. It was horrible. I had no soul in my body."

The reluctant conflicts

Many of today's wars and armed conflicts do not involve the whole society. In fact, in most of these settings, those in the conflict area have struggled to stay out of the line of fire and avoid joining a side. In the countries as a whole, most of the population see themselves as distant from the conflict and not entirely sure of the combatants' purpose or why the violence continues. In Colombia and the Philippines, for example, few people in the countries as a whole have had their property damaged or family members killed. A small portion of the populations in Colombia, El Salvador, the Philippines, South Africa and Nigeria have served as combatants and carried weapons.

But even in these settings, civilians in the areas of conflict have paid a very high price. In rural areas, the violence has prompted farmers to move their families away from the area of fighting, leaving them separated from their lands and livelihoods. Farmers and peasants have hidden in their homes and out of the fields in order to keep their children from wandering into the fighting or simply into the path of a combatant. In Mindanao in the Philippines, farmers report that they "can't visit their farms anymore out of fear, and the result is hunger". A displaced woman observed: "We don't have peace. My child who is 13 years old still can't go out for a walk. We are having a hard time in looking for a means of living since we can't go out because we're afraid." In Colombia, the mother of a detainee despaired, "It ruined our lives completely. Because of it, we lost sleep, our desire to work."

While many civilians have sought to remain detached from the developing conflict, they have nonetheless found themselves living in a zone of killing, sometimes threatened by a kind of capricious and episodic violence. A medical worker in Colombia lamented the normalcy of it: "Every time you are less shocked by something – well it was only 20 that were killed, last week it was 80 — you get a little more used to the climate of violence."

Civilians, no matter how detached from the war, have found themselves recruited, pushed and compelled to join the combatants, often from all sides. A peasant woman in El Salvador described the pressure, confirmed by a former soldier in the armed forces:

> [It] was terrible, because if you didn't sell tortillas to the guerrillas, they got mad, and if you didn't sell to the soldiers, they got mad, so you had to collaborate with both sides.

> Then, the FMLN [anti-governmental guerrilla forces] arrives by night, "You're going to help us get some corn and some meat, go". The military would stop him as he brought food for the other side and vice versa.

In these conflicts, there is a continuous effort to win over and recruit civilians to formally join the battle. A farmer in Mindanao in the Philippines recounted this exchange:

> They were convincing me to join their group but I did not because I knew that where they are heading is not good. They told me, "If you'll join us you'll benefit a lot." I replied, "How will it benefit me when you are always on the run, rain, shine, night or day?" And they insisted, "You will benefit, because if we win, we'll be powerful, we'll have equal justice, unlike now where only the rich and powerful get justice." So, what the NPAs really want is equal justice so that everybody can

live in peace. I told them, "I don't think I can join your group because I have five children." "But if you join us, your family will be supported." And I said, "Even then, because I know that once I join you, my life would hang between life and death. Wherever I go, the law will run after me. I have a responsibility to my family, to feed them three times a day and send my children to school." "Why don't you want to join us, don't you want to see this place in peace?" I finally said, "Yes, I want that but I will just leave things to you. Don't involve me anymore because I have a family to look after."

In Colombia, one of the displaced women in Medellín asked: "Why don't they establish among themselves why they are fighting? Let them fight only the ones who must fight, and leave the people that have nothing to do with it alone."

But even where the civilians have said, "no, leave us alone", combatants have sometimes employed them as "human shields" to give one of the sides greater protection. In El Salvador, people describe combatants using and moving the civilians, if they thought it would deter attacks.

In many communities, the violence and killings have pervaded everyday life. In the political fighting among blacks that plagued parts of South Africa in apartheid's latter years, people hid in terror. A woman widowed by the fighting said they "used to sleep dressed and kneeling so you were ready to run should they come". According to medical personnel, if you went out to a supermarket, "you weren't sure if you were going to come out alive or not". Cars were ambushed and businesses looted.

The accumulation of war-time practices that impinge on civilians adds up for many to a pervasive sense of death and loss, as reflected in these comments from the conflict zone in El Salvador: "For some it was bombs and mortars, for others, we lost our entire families, friends, people close to us. This is irreparable… something lost forever." "What I really feel about this war and what hurt me the most was the complete disintegration of my family… I lost so much."

El Salvador is perhaps the most dramatic example of a reluctant conflict – where the rural population tried to avoid joining a side, yet a third of the population lost a family member in the war and one-fifth were forced to leave home. It does not take a war on civilians to cause great upheaval in the lives of ordinary people. As one woman who lived in the conflict zone remarked: "Everyone has been left with a footprint of this war."

Women and combat

With civilian populations heavily endangered and very much at the centre of today's wars and armed conflicts, women and children have become poignant symbols of this age of conflict. The Geneva Conventions already foresaw the need to protect women and children, as well as wounded, sick or shipwrecked members of armed forces and prisoners of war. But their provisions were premised on women and children as incidental to the conflict, not as central actors in the war.

As these wars have been waged in populated areas and in towns and villages, as combatants have struggled to enlist peasant populations, and as all levels of society have been drawn into war, women have become part of the action. The prohibitions against harming women remain very strong, as shall be seen below, but there are nonetheless many who see women — and particularly those who support a side — as combatants themselves. For some, the proximity of women to the conflict has a romantic and nationalistic quality – i.e., women, no less than men, defending their community. An Afghan woman spoke of the willingness among women to fight: "We had Kalashnikovs [Soviet rifles] with us. We protected our young daughters." But for others, women in such roles are not romantic at all, just a confirmation that

women are part of the battle. As a focus group participant in Cambodia put it, "Men and women suffered the same. They are both suffering from the bullets."

In the surveys, it becomes apparent how specific protections for women and children have dissolved. The survey asked whether it is "wrong" or "part of war" to attack enemy combatants in populated villages or towns even though many civilians would die. Across all the settings, 24 per cent say it is part of war. But when the question is rephrased to say, "many women and children would die", the response is virtually identical, 23 per cent. In effect, the presence of women and children has no impact on the willingness to attack civilian areas. (See Figure 4.)

FIGURE 4
Populated villages or towns
(per cent of total and in each setting responding)

	attacking populated villages or towns knowing many civilians would be killed		attacking populated villages or towns knowing many women and children would be killed
Total	67% / 24%		67% / 23%
Colombia[19]	73% / 17%		
El Salvador	64% / 25%		69% / 19%
Philippines	67% / 31%		73% / 25%
Georgians	54% / 39%		54% / 30%
Abkhaz	46% / 46%		50% / 38%
Afghanistan	86% / 8%		86% / 7%
Cambodia	84% / 10%		84% / 11%
Bosnia-Herzegovina	60% / 31%		69% / 25%
Lebanon	57% / 31%		57% / 32%
Israelis	38% / 42%		40% / 42%
Palestinians	62% / 31%		51% / 39%
Somalia	69% / 17%		69% / 13%
South Africa	75% / 16%		73% / 17%
Nigeria	60% / 32%		57% / 31%

Wrong ■ Part of war ▨

In the reality of these conflicts, women experience almost as much dislocation, family dissolution and property destruction as men. Overall, 32 per cent of women and 37 per cent of men report having experienced at least four negative consequences during the conflicts (see footnote 15, p. 3). Women are less likely to have been injured or imprisoned, but are almost as likely to have lost a close family member. Overall, 40 per cent lost contact with members of their families and 32 per cent were forced to leave home; 9 per cent knew somebody well that was raped and 9 per cent were tortured.

Many in the conflict areas note the concentration of difficulties that have befallen the women – a combination of a desperate struggle to hold their families together and the dislocation forced by the war. A former male guerrilla in El Salvador observed, "The hardest part was for the mothers to wander about in the mountains for months with their children, without eating, without drinking, and the children suffered

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[19] The other figure for Colombia is not reported because the wording of the questionnaire was not fully standardized until the results of the questionnaire pilot tested in Colombia were received and analysed.

from the great epidemic of hunger." A widow in a Serb area of Bosnia-Herzegovina had a similar observation: "Almost all of us here are wives of fighters. Some of [our husbands] even died in the war, and we have suffered for them too. We have also suffered because our children have no fathers… We suffer both for our husbands and our children." An Afghan refugee described the dislocation this way: "The war started at four in the morning. Rockets were fired all around. We all came out of our homes. It was winter. Some of us were without shoes and some without veils. We picked [up] our children and left our houses. We were afraid we might be hit by a rocket. We walked for three days and reached Jalalabad [city in eastern Afghanistan]. Our country became barren."

The targeting or inclusion of women in war elevates the importance of rape and sexual assault as part of these conflicts. Across these varied settings, one in ten report that somebody they knew well was raped; nearly as many say the same for sexual assault. (See Figure 2.) Apparently, a woman in the conflict area in El Salvador is right when she said, "This is what the war left us with… the violence against women by macho men who now beat us and our children daily… We are all mistreated and abused due to the effects of this war." In the political fighting among blacks in the townships in South Africa, rape became a part of the inter-group conflict, as one of the activists observed:

> These things were not meant to have happened. There were girls who were raped
> and kids who do not have fathers at the moment. This is the crime that will never
> be resolved.

In some of these conflicts, rape became a pervasive part of the conflict. In El Salvador, 13 per cent of those surveyed say somebody they knew well was raped. In Afghanistan, that figure is 16 per cent. In Nigeria, 24 per cent of the people say that somebody they knew well was raped during the armed conflict, and in Somalia, 39 per cent. In the in-depth research, people volunteered stories of the rape of a young girl; a mother and daughter raped alongside each other; a woman raped until she miscarried; and an old woman raped. Rape combines with everything else about war to leave women as special victims:

> Women are very soft. They cannot tolerate problems like the men. They suffer
> more psychologically as they see their children or themselves raped. They lose
> their own men folk. Hence it is very difficult.

> Men were created for war but women weren't. You find that, in the end, women
> are the ones who suffer most. They are widowed, they lose their husbands and
> children, they are shot while pregnant, so they are much more affected.

Children

The other symbol of today's wars is children – who are the most vulnerable of the civilian population now at the centre of conflict. Just as women find themselves in the line of fire, so do children, as is evident in so many of the accounts already presented in this report. But children are more than incidental targets in these wars. In many cases, they have been recruited or swept up into the battle. The "child soldier" is perhaps the most extreme element in today's war on civilians.

In the country studies, mothers frequently resist their children going off to join the combatants. A woman who had lived in a conflict zone in El Salvador recalls the struggle with the soldiers and guerrillas:

> I remember that the soldiers fell all over the youth, and the youth joined up to kill
> each other. I would have preferred for them to be run over and killed by a car
> than to kill each other. The guerrillas, if the mothers didn't let their sons sign up,
> they'd kill them at 10 to 12 years old. They didn't consider the young age of the
> recruits.

In Somalia, children were seen to produce immense destruction, because, as a Somali journalist observed, "They have no respect for religion, culture or tradition". An elder concludes, "The only language they have learnt is blood. They are armed. They have no wisdom." In Afghanistan, one religious teacher speaks of the "Kalashnikov culture" that has enveloped their youth: "One class was asked to make a drawing of their choice, and this was a class of 55 boys, and 45 of them made either a gun, a tank or some other weapon in their drawing. Only the remaining ten made a flower or something else. So you can imagine how much impact fighting has on their minds."

In other settings, people spoke with some respect for the children in the South African townships and the Palestinian children in the territories who used rocks, even Molotov cocktails, to harass the armed forces on the other side. In two of the settings – Lebanon and Somalia – the study asked whether there were child combatants in the war, who were too young and immature to be fighting: over three-quarters of respondents said that there were. As a militiaman in Somalia summarized: "When a person has had an experience of the pain of being shot, he will not hurriedly attempt to kill. But when you are new, you don't have any experience of the pain, the agony of being shot. You will go around killing and shooting aimlessly."

Across all five settings, it is very clear that the ordinary people do not believe children should be fighting these wars. When asked at what age someone is mature enough to become a combatant, just 1 per cent of all respondents were open to children under 15 taking up weapons. In fact, just 7 per cent accept children under 18 years of age serving as combatants. The overwhelming majority in every country surveyed believe people should be 18 years or older to serve. Only in Somalia is there a significant minority supportive of young combatants (31 per cent who accept children under 18 years as combatants), but even here, few accept child combatants under 15 (8 per cent). (See Figure 5.)

FIGURE 5
Child combatants
(per cent of total and in each setting responding)

	Total	Colombia	El Salvador	Philippines	Georgians	Abkhaz	Afghanistan	Cambodia	B-H	Lebanon	Israelis	Palestinians	Somalia	South Africa	Nigeria
Under 15 years	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	2%	8%	0%	1%
15 to 17 years	6%	4%	4%	3%	2%	7%	8%	3%	2%	10%	1%	13%	23%	3%	4%
18 to 21 years	53%	43%	53%	54%	60%	72%	37%	77%	47%	37%	77%	51%	40%	66%	48%
Over 21 years	35%	39%	30%	40%	36%	19%	52%	19%	49%	49%	18%	30%	19%	26%	44%

Question: At what age is a person mature enough to be a fighter or soldier?

The global normative order

Though the people in the war zones across the globe have suffered greatly in today's wars, they strongly believe that war should have limits. The principle has not been buried under the weight of the atrocities or the growing normalcy of civilian deaths. Nor is it seen as a remote theory that is only of interest at international conclaves. In places around the world where war has taken such an ugly toll, people re-assert the principle, indeed, speak of it in normative terms – as a question of "right and wrong". The greater the intensity of the conflict, the greater the assertion of the normative prohibition against harming civilians in war.

This suggests that any effort to reaffirm the legitimacy of international humanitarian law must begin with the people who have lived through these wars and armed conflicts.

At the outset of each consultation, people were asked in an open-ended question whether there were any things that are not allowed in war. Whether in the surveys or in the focus groups, respondents immediately expressed the view that attacking civilians is out of bounds. That is a near-universal idea. Across the different settings, more than three-quarters of respondents (76 per cent) volunteer actions that combatants should not be allowed to do in war. In these variously literate and non-literate societies, one in five (20 per cent) say they do not know whether anything is not allowed; just 4 per cent say everything is allowed.[20]

In Somalia, for example, 46 per cent volunteer that "attacking or hurting civilians" is not allowed, while another 8 per cent say more specifically, "killing or torturing wounded combatants", and another 8 per cent, "killing children or the elderly"; 2 per cent add massacres and another 1 per cent killing or raping women; and lastly, 11 per cent focus on robbing and stealing. Just 20 per cent could not respond to the question and only 1 per cent say everything is allowed in war.

Across the globe, combatants and non-combatants alike are expressive on the principle:

Muslim teacher (Philippines): Probably, one rule that is violated is when the gunfight occurs in the midst of civilians. Firing of guns should not be allowed here because you have to safeguard the rights of civilians.

Former military man (Abkhazia): 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.

Former female combatant (El Salvador): So, for me this shouldn't have happened because the civilian population did not get involved with one side or the other. They just lived there and were living their lives and their only crime was that the guerrillas were near by.

Hostage-taker (Georgia): They have no right to kill innocent people. A difference should be made between civilians and [combatants]. They should imagine that someone could treat their mothers in the same way. Why don't they use their imagination?

Displaced woman (Colombia): They shouldn't bother us. They should isolate us – the civilian population from the armed conflict. They should get away from us.

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[20] These numbers are not reported precisely for all the settings because the coding scheme was not fully standardized until after the research was completed in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Philippines and Colombia – the first areas of research.

Militiaman (Somalia): Because they are non-combatants of war and they are not the fighters against you. They haven't killed your people. They are poor civilians. And they should be left alone.

Widow (South Africa): A civilian knows nothing, just like a child who knows nothing. They are innocent hence do not deserve to be attacked.

Displaced person (Bosnia-Herzegovina): They should not torture civilians or terrorize anybody… civilians are not guilty of anything.

Housewives (Afghanistan): If the fighters want to fight they should go to the valleys [and] mountains and fight with each other there so that we are not harmed and affected.

Monk teacher (Cambodia): It is not right. Because there are so many people living in the village or town. They're innocent, they don't have any weapons. So we should not attack them.

Former journalist (Nigeria): They should not attack civilians, because civilians are defenceless. That indefensibility makes them to be neutral during the war. They should be left alone.

Disabled man (Lebanon): Civilians should never be attacked. If I was a combatant, then I should only kill combatants without causing any hurt to the civilians.

Jahalin tribesman (Palestinian): Attacking civilians is wrong because you cannot differentiate between a civilian who is giving out information and a civilian who is just trying to support and feed his children. You cannot tell the difference at the time of attack.

Teacher (Israel): For instance, attacking a bus of civilians, cutting off the head of a captive or violating the body of a dead enemy should be forbidden – that's cannibalism.

Across the globe, people in these war zones say certain things are not allowed because, quite simply, they are "wrong". Respondents could choose to focus instead on the more practical damage and problems caused by the violence, and 29 per cent of respondents do. But overwhelmingly, people focus on the normative side of the issue: 66 per cent say there are certain actions that should be prohibited because they are wrong. (See Figure 6.)

The more people have been traumatized by the violence, the more they focus on questions of right and wrong. In more contained conflicts, where a sizeable portion of the civilian population have been able to live away from the conflict, more people focus on the problems caused, particularly the physical and psychological suffering of civilians. This is particularly true for Colombia, El Salvador and the Philippines.

Where the conflicts have proved nearly total, people say certain things should not be allowed because they are wrong: more than 60 per cent among Palestinians and in Somalia and Nigeria; more than 70 per cent among Israelis and in Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Georgia and Lebanon; and more than 80 per cent in Cambodia and Abkhazia. (See Figure 6.) The scale of the suffering in these war zones

FIGURE 6
The normative focus
(per cent of total and in each setting who respond "it's wrong" or "it causes too many problems")

it's wrong		it causes too many problems
66%	Total	29%
32%	Colombia	40%
49%	El Salvador	46%
46%	Philippines	48%
79%	Georgians	19%
86%	Abkhaz	8%
74%	Afghanistan	22%
84%	Cambodia	15%
76%	Bosnia	22%
71%	Lebanon	25%
79%	Israelis	15%
62%	Palestinians	33%
61%	Somalia	31%
65%	South Africa	33%
65%	Nigeria	32%
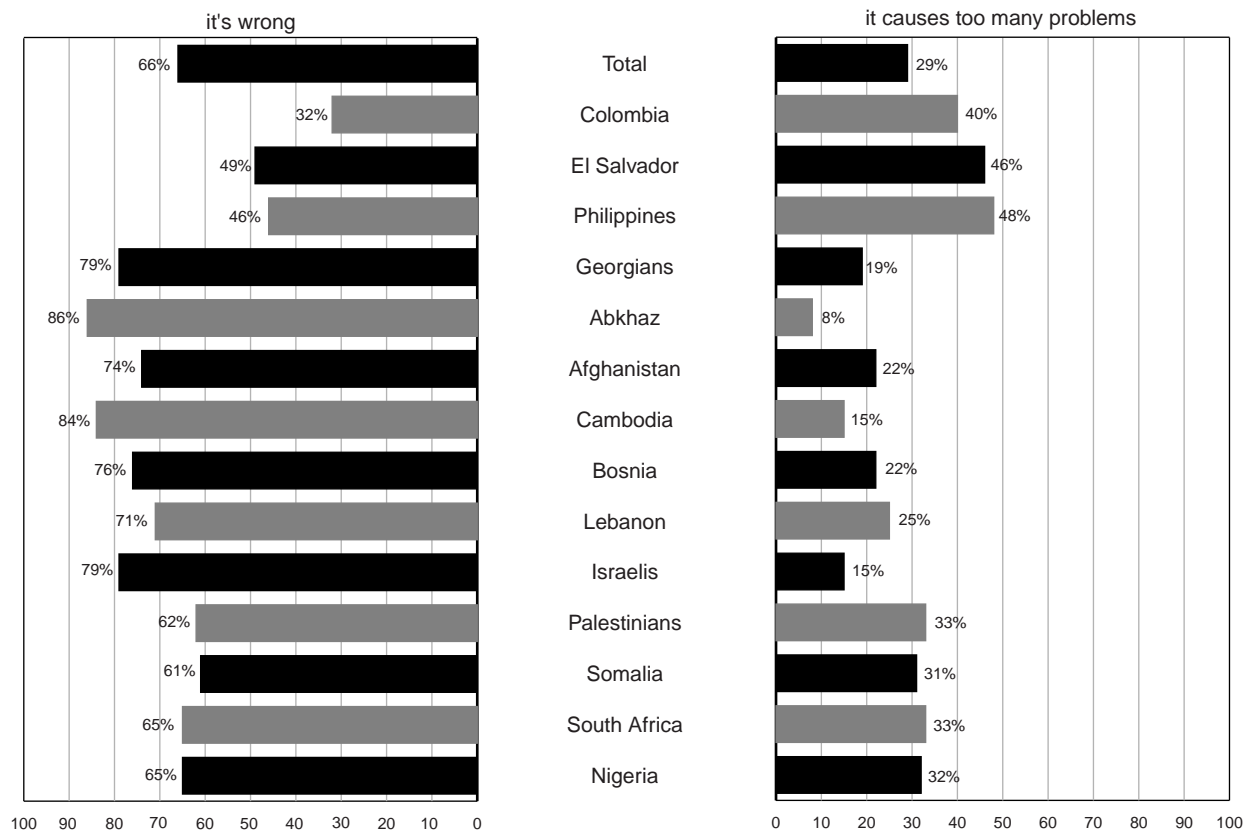
Question: Is there anything that fighters or soldiers should not do in fighting their enemy? (IF YES): Could you tell me the main reason why they should not do that? Is it because...?

pushes people to a normative discourse on the limits in war. The trauma and the seeming lawlessness of these total conflicts produce a reaffirmation of values.

Where people in these most intense conflicts say things should not be allowed because of the problems they cause, they tend to focus on the resulting "hate", rather than on the suffering of civilians. This is evident in Abkhazia, Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cambodia, Lebanon and Somalia and among the Palestinians. These societies that have been fully mobilized and engaged in conflict are still living with the hate that could engulf them again.

Qualifying the limits
For the great majority of the populations in the war-torn countries surveyed, the principle of not attacking civilians is absolute. A striking 64 per cent say that combatants, when attacking to weaken the enemy, must attack only combatants and *leave civilians alone*. The absolute principle prevails by at least a two-to-one ratio over more conditional responses in virtually all these settings, except the Philippines (where most of the population has viewed the conflict from a distance) and among the Israelis and Palestinians (for whom the extended conflict has eroded the principle on both sides). (See Figure 7.)

Very few people in all the war-torn settings surveyed – just 3 per cent – accept the notion of total conflict – in which combatants can feel free to attack both combatants and civilians to weaken the enemy. The figure rises to about 7 per cent for the Israelis, Somalis and Nigerians, and to 15 per cent for the Palestinians.

FIGURE 7
Combatants and civilians
(per cent of total responding)

Attack enemy combatants and civilians	3%
Attack enemy combatants and avoid civilians as much as possible	29%
Attack only enemy combatants and leave civilians alone	64%
Don't know/refused	3%
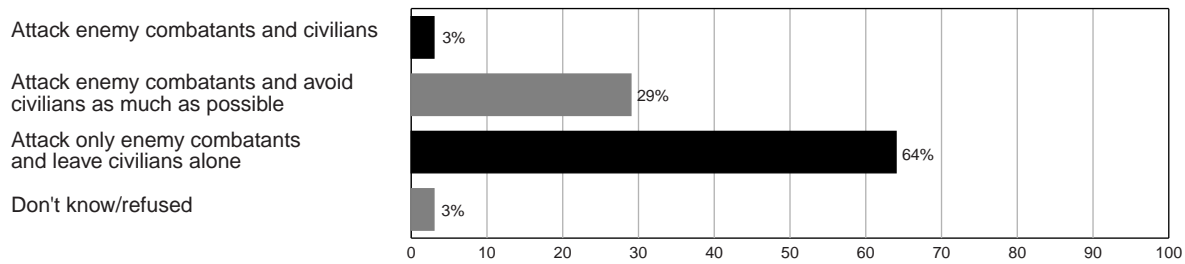
Question: When combatants attack to weaken the enemy, should they...?

The problem in today's wars may be the conditional response, offered by almost a third of the people, that combatants should attack enemy combatants and *avoid civilians as much as possible*. In most of the intense conflict areas, one-quarter to one-third of the people adopt this conditional stance. It is the predominant position for Israelis and Palestinians. Across all the conflict settings, 34 per cent of combatants say civilians should be avoided as much as possible, but not absolutely. Equally important, fully 28 per cent of non-combatants agree.

This attitude is clearly an invitation to blur the line between combatants and civilians. The combatants in the focus group discussions repeatedly refer to the difficulty of maintaining clear lines of distinction once in battle, particularly when the battlefield is a populated area. In Lebanon, for example, a former fighter was clear on the principle and the exception: "The civilians should not be mixed with soldiers, but when there is war, the streets would be part of what is imposed on everybody." A fighter in Afghanistan spoke of the impossibility of separating the two populations: "It is not possible to fight against [combatants] only. Where there [are combatants] there is population. In case of attack both are affected."

When people accept the conditionality of the principle, they seem to be more willing to accept actions that endanger civilians in practice. They are more willing to accept the use of anti-personnel landmines, sieges of villages or towns, and military attacks on populated areas.

The basis for the norms
For the great majority of people in the countries surveyed, war must have limits. It is an unconditional principle, rooted in norms. Those norms have diverse origins, which suggests that any effort to legitimate the principle of limits will have to draw on diverse concepts. International law and conventions are often mentioned, particularly in internationalized conflicts such as Bosnia-Herzegovina and Lebanon, but for the most part, people root their norms in the notion of human dignity, in their religion, tradition or a personal code. (See Figure 8.)

Humanness. The predominant grounding for the conclusion that it is "wrong" for combatants to do certain things in war is in the concept of human rights or human dignity. A majority of the people across all settings centre their normative discourse in this concept. It seems to begin with a "sense of humanness", as described by former soldiers in Bosnia-Herzegovina. "A person goes to war with full awareness. So, he is aware of his actions and should behave accordingly, rather than get out of control." "I don't know of any law, but it is evidently a human rule… basically, human dignity is a stronger rule than any written one." In Colombia, detained guerrillas spoke of respect for the human being: "For respect for human dignity, for respect for the nature of the human being, is that people should not be tortured, regardless of what you want to obtain." "Also for the respect for life and the human being, one should not

FIGURE 8
Basis for the norm
(per cent of total and in each setting responding "it's wrong") (top two responses)

	Total	Colombia	El Salvador	Philippines	Georgians	Abkhaz	Afghanistan	Cambodia	B-H	Lebanon	Israelis	Palestinians	Somalia	South Africa	Nigeria
Against human rights	49%	58%	52%	43%	59%	57%	45%	21%	57%	56%	64%	72%	39%	51%	51%
Against your religion	37%	14%	39%	44%	41%	16%	78%	23%	19%	57%	19%	80%	39%	34%	42%
Against the law	36%	-	20%	58%	51%	45%	27%	56%	24%	37%	40%	45%	27%	44%	30%
Against personal code	31%	18%	19%	18%	31%	36%	21%	18%	27%	46%	73%	59%	53%	28%	12%
Against your culture	12%	2%	5%	4%	20%	20%	14%	5%	6%	9%	27%	31%	31%	11%	5%
Against people's beliefs	11%	5%	13%	16%	27%	15%	17%	1%	6%	10%	4%	30%	10%	13%	8%
Don't know	1%	2%	1%	1%	-	2%	1%	1%	2%	0%	1%	-	1%	1%	2%
Other	1%	1%	2%	0%	-	2%	-	-	0%	-	6%	1%	0%	2%	0%

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

kill a person who is outside of the combat." As a doctor from Lebanon said, "I help him because I am a doctor and humanity has nothing to do with religion and obsession, because a man is a man."

The insistence on humanness is frequently counterpoised to being animal-like and slipping almost into a lower state. Surrounded so often by barbarity, people in these war settings insist on humanness as a way of shutting the door to all kinds of horrors. This is a very strong theme in Bosnia-Herzegovina: "I know prisoners should be treated as human beings and not as animals." "God forbid! I think that we're not on the level of such savages." "...and one of the battles we fought in this war was a battle to stay human." In Lebanon, too, people talked about a war that brought out "animal instincts", "which meant no respect for human beings."

For many people, the war became a personal struggle to maintain their humanness in a setting where state structures and laws were faltering and barbaric behaviour was becoming commonplace. In some places, such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, people talk about helping people on the other side – simple acts that prove to oneself that one is still able to be human in a society where the opposite seems the norm. A journalist in Bosnia-Herzegovina described the significance of these small acts:

> I remember some situations when people proved to be true human beings. And I think those were some individual cases when a person had the possibility to give something to prisoners, e.g., cigarettes to people who were in work squads – and that was a victory over the animal side every human has.

Religious beliefs. A very large bloc of people – 37 per cent – say that certain actions are wrong because they contradict their religious beliefs. This is particularly true in areas where Islam is a strong presence: in Afghanistan (78 per cent), for Muslims in Lebanon (71 per cent) and for Palestinians (80 per cent). (See Figure 8.) In these settings, people appeal very directly to religious prohibitions, frequently citing the Koran and the obligations of believers. Palestinians spoke clearly on this point: "When the combatants carry their guns and decide to go to war, the [principle] that we can ask of them is the historical saying: 'Not to kill old people, not to kill a woman, not to kill a child, not to cut a tree, not to attack mosques or churches." "Because God said, 'don't cut a tree, don't kill a child, don't kill an old person.'"

In Afghanistan, focus group participants almost automatically cited Islamic texts, laws, aphorisms and stories of the Prophet Mohammed to explain their views. An Afghan religious teacher criticized attacks on civilians, saying: "…He [the Prophet] always told people not to interfere with old men, women and children. Those who are not actually in the trenches, they are not to be attacked."

Personal code and tradition. Many people in the settings surveyed draw on a personal code, mentioned by 31 per cent overall, to establish what should not be allowed in war. This is particularly important for Israelis (73 per cent), for white South Africans (50 per cent) and Somalis (53 per cent). For Israelis, a personal code seems to be a notion of a moral-ethical guidance that is seen to be absolute and tested by history and example. In the focus groups and in-depth interviews, Israelis spoke of forbidden actions that "detract from the value of life", that "offend the moral value of human dignity". "These are universal values… because it seems in the human soul there are certain deeds that are commonly considered as unseemly." People referred repeatedly to historic and metaphorical examples that they have learned in school or in the military – examples that illustrate the ethical dilemmas and produce a "personal moral code" to take with them into battle.

People in Somalia also say a personal code is most important, but here they are clearly referring to a kind of unwritten, traditional code of conduct. Combatants in Somalia are conscious of it, despite what has happened there: "To attack civilians is unlawful according to traditions and religion." "Somalis are a hundred per cent Muslim. They also have traditions. It is very shameful to do something that is forbidden as taught by our forefathers." The tribal elders and ordinary people alike described a fairly elaborate code that is intended to rein in abuses in war:

> According to Somali tradition, combatants should not kill the religious elders…
> They should not kill the captured heroes who are well known… because if they
> are killed, war increases. They are not allowed to kill civilians, women and
> children, to break into personal houses, loot property, kill captured prisoners. This
> is how our traditional wars used to be… During our ancient times, people used to
> make appointments and agreements on time or days when they would fight.

> Nowadays, people write down laws but previously during our time, those ancient
> days, people used to pay 100 camels for the life of one man in compensation.
> Then, they pay for other abuses and mistreatments. If a person is tortured, you
> cut the ears and nose in the payment of compensation.

> Somalis had a tradition which prohibited all bad things. If the war became too
> long, there was an exchange of girls and horses so the long-lasting enmity would
> finish there.

Law. In a number of settings where there is an established or legitimate State, people turn to law as the basis for declaring these certain actions to be wrong. This is evident in the Philippines, where 58 per cent say certain actions are wrong because they are against the law; it is also true in Cambodia (56 per cent). It is particularly true for black South Africans, 51 per cent of whom say that certain acts are wrong because they are against the law. For black South Africans, who are looking at a newly established, legitimate State, a new constitution and bill of rights and the recent deliberations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, law emerges as the most common response.

In Muslim countries, the law has a different meaning. In Afghanistan, for example, 78 per cent of Afghans point to religious principles as the basis for their beliefs and 27 per cent look to laws. Those who cite laws, however, are probably referring to Islamic law.

Whether certain acts in war are wrong because they contradict human dignity, religious beliefs, a personal code or tradition or because they violate laws, it is clear that people in countries affected by conflict have well-developed views on the limits in war. A large majority believe that soldiers and fighters should not be allowed to endanger civilians; they believe such actions are "wrong"; they root that conclusion in a well-developed belief structure. That structure has survived the war on civilians.

Geneva Conventions

The Geneva Conventions embody universal principles on the conduct of war that have broad adherence in the world – even in the war zones that have produced the slaughter and dislocation of civilian populations. But the Conventions are a backdrop, not the foundation for the rules of war, as people understand them. For the most part, people ground these rules in their own traditional belief structures.

The Geneva Conventions might be a more important part of the equation with people if their prohibitions, obligations and applicability to internal conflicts were better known. Thirty-nine per cent of the people in the war and armed conflict settings surveyed say they have heard of the Geneva Conventions. (See Figure 9.) But awareness is very uneven, and specific knowledge of their function is very uncertain. According to the assessments of the interviewers – most of whom were staff and volunteers of the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies – about 60 per cent of those who say they have heard of the Geneva Conventions offer a roughly accurate description of their content. This means that about one in four across all the settings surveyed have an accurate knowledge of the Conventions.

FIGURE 9
Geneva Conventions
(per cent of total responding)

Question: Have you ever heard of the Geneva Conventions?
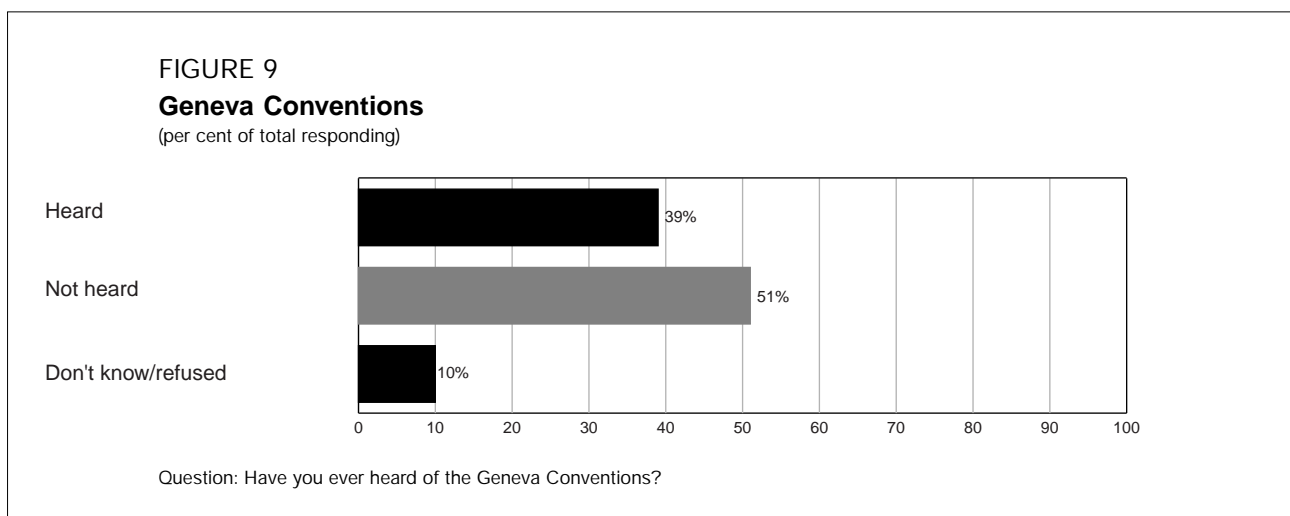
In conflicts such as in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Israeli-Arab conflict, which have been internationalized to a great degree, awareness is more widespread: 80 per cent in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 89 per cent among Israelis and 65 per cent among Palestinians. In these conflicts, there has been much public debate about the applicability of the Geneva Conventions and, at least in the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina, a great deal of discussion on war crimes and war crimes trials.

There are many places where only about a third of respondents have heard of the Geneva Conventions – Colombia (37 per cent) and El Salvador (33 per cent), for example. In other places, awareness of the Geneva Conventions is closer to the 20 per cent mark – Cambodia (23 per cent), Afghanistan (24 per cent) and Nigeria (25 per cent). In still others, less than 20 per cent have heard of them – Georgia (18 per cent), South Africa (17 per cent) and the Philippines (12 per cent).

In an era when war and armed conflict frequently include military pressure on populated areas, the public in these settings is only moderately conscious of laws that would bar such practices. Just 36 per cent of the people in these settings say that it is wrong and that there is a law to bar combatants from attacking the enemy in populated villages or towns where many civilians would die, indeed, even when many women and children would die; a similar number, 32 per cent, say it is wrong and that there is a law to bar combatants from depriving a village of food, water and medicine to weaken the enemy. (See Figure 10.)

FIGURE 10
Knowledge of laws
(per cent of total and in each setting responding "it's wrong" and who think there are laws)

	Total	Colombia	El Salvador	Philippines	Georgians	Abkhaz	Afghanistan	Cambodia	B-H	Lebanon	Israelis	Palestinians	Somalia	South Africa	Nigeria
Depriving the civilian population of food, medicine or water	32%	45%	17%	23%	17%	23%	44%	36%	41%	38%	30%	27%	49%	26%	19%
Attacking the enemy in populated villages or towns knowing many civilians/women and children would be killed	36%	49%	24%	42%	22%	22%	48%	41%	46%	36%	18%	29%	50%	30%	21%

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

While Protocol II additional to the Geneva Conventions further extends protections to civilians and captured combatants in armed conflicts within States, it is unclear whether many of the people in these "civil wars" or "domestic" conflicts understand the reach of these international treaties. Black South Africans, for example, might have heard of resolutions passed by the UN or sanctions imposed by various governments or the international community, but these are not the same as international rules that limit what soldiers and fighters can do in war. The apartheid state, according to many, maintained effective control over a long period and seemed little influenced by such conventions: "I can just tell you from the old apartheid system of government, sadly, the government thought that they could do anything… and just from that, I knew there were no laws." For many in South Africa, and apparently for many people in other internal conflicts, international conventions seem a remote idea.

The lack of a connection between the Geneva Conventions and what is happening on the ground in all the places surveyed is not the result of a difference in principle. It is already apparent in this study that ordinary citizens in these conflict zones believe war should have limits – that, above all, civilians should be kept apart from the fighting. What is missing is an understanding that international conventions have something to say about the types of conflict being waged today.

Consciousness of the Geneva Conventions matters. This is particularly true when respondents are asked to project their own behaviour in a wartime situation. People that are unaware of the Geneva Conventions are more likely *not* to help or save a wounded or surrendering enemy combatant that had killed someone close to them: 38 per cent of those not aware of the Conventions compared with 31 per cent of those who are. Awareness also matters when considering whether rights should be extended to prisoners. Those less aware of the Conventions are more likely to deny minimal rights to captives. While 22 per cent of those who have not heard of the Geneva Conventions say it is acceptable to deny prisoners visits from an independent representative, only 13 per cent of those who have heard of them agree.

When people are given information about the Geneva Conventions and a connection is established, a sizeable majority in the conflict settings surveyed conclude that the Conventions can make a difference for civilians. This response came after people were read the following description:

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

FIGURE 11
Information matters
(per cent of total responding)[21]

	Would not help/save a wounded/surrendering enemy combatant	Prisoners not allowed visit from independent organization	Would approve of killing prisoners if the other side were doing so
Have heard of the Geneva Conventions	31%	13%	13%
Have not heard of the Geneva Conventions	38%	22%	16%

After hearing the statement, 56 per cent of all the respondents conclude that the Geneva Conventions can "prevent wars from getting worse", compared with 28 per cent who think they "make no real difference". Despite the massive upheavals that people have endured, in eight of the twelve countries surveyed, a significant majority is relatively positive about the efficacy of international conventions in shaping the course of war. (See Figure 12.)

FIGURE 12
Impact of Geneva Conventions
(per cent of total and in each setting responding)

prevent wars from getting worse / make no real difference

	prevent wars from getting worse	make no real difference
Total	56%	28%
Colombia	45%	38%
El Salvador	71%	20%
Philippines	61%	26%
Georgians	60%	32%
Abkhaz	59%	27%
Afghanistan	44%	48%
Cambodia	86%	4%
Bosnia-Herzegovina	59%	29%
Lebanon	43%	48%
Israelis	41%	53%
Palestinians	39%	51%
Somalia	51%	13%
South Africa	40%	28%
Nigeria	71%	17%
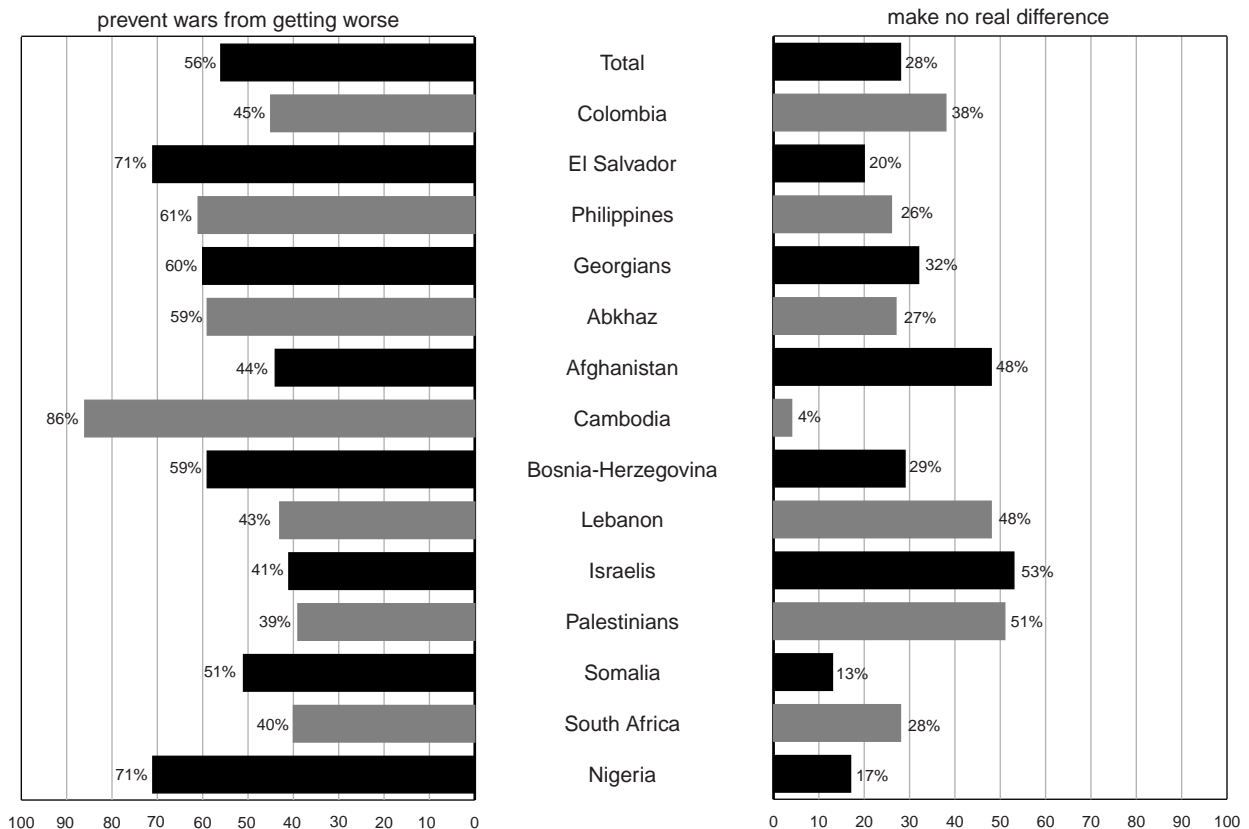
Question: Do you think the existence of the Geneva Conventions prevent wars from getting worse or does it make no real difference?

[21] This figure shows the effect that awareness of the Geneva Conventions has on respondents' attitudes towards international humanitarian law. For example, 13 per cent of those who have heard of the Geneva Conventions would not allow prisoners a visit from an independent organization, while 22 per cent of those who have *not* heard of the Geneva Conventions would not allow such a visit.

Assessments of the possible efficacy of the Geneva Conventions seem to depend on national experiences with the international community, rather than on the application of the Geneva Conventions themselves. The optimism is overwhelming in Cambodia, where 86 per cent believe the Conventions can prevent wars getting worse. It is also high in El Salvador and Nigeria, where international pressure may be seen to have made a difference in the resolution of domestic conflicts. The public is divided in Afghanistan and Lebanon, where the international track record is mixed. And lastly, after many decades of unresolved conflict and complex international involvement, a majority of Palestinians and Israelis doubt the Geneva Conventions can make much of a difference in protecting civilian populations.

To gain relevance for the people in these conflicts, there will have to be a new consciousness of how the Conventions can affect the course of today's wars. This consultation finds that in the great majority of these conflicts, people are open to the idea that the Conventions can make a difference.

The modern culture of war

Despite a half-century of violent upheaval that has left the protection of civilians in tatters, and despite the fact that only a minority have heard of the Geneva Conventions, the great bulk of the population in the war settings surveyed accept the general principle of limits in war. Indeed, overwhelming majorities of the people surveyed reject the increasingly commonplace practices of war — siege tactics and assaults on populated villages or towns that have increasingly endangered civilians.

- Two out of three reject the practice of combatants putting pressure on the enemy by denying civilian populations food, water and medicine.

- Two out of three reject combatants attacking each other in populated villages or towns where many civilians would die.

- Three out of four reject attacks on civilians who are voluntarily providing food and shelter to enemy combatants.

Nonetheless, a significant minority in these embattled areas – about one in four people – have come to accept practices that put civilians in mortal danger. And in situations where state structures have uncertain authority, where armies are disorganized or have given way to paramilitaries, or where fighting is being carried out by loosely organized guerrilla bands or even by young crowds, one in four being prepared to endanger civilians can cause a great deal of havoc – and apparently they have.

A half-century of conflict centred on civilians has left societies in which a significant minority believe indifference to civilians or direct attacks on them are just "part of war". That is the empirical reality on the ground, though a majority refuse to give in to it and continue to insist that practices that endanger civilians are "wrong". Yet, there is a strong minority culture of war that is having its way in the conflicts themselves. (See Figures 13, 14 and 15.)

Since today's conflicts are usually waged in populated areas, family and community support for the defenders or combatants is often characteristic of the conflict itself. If that support redefines civilians as combatants, then all limits fall away. In some senses, this is the most important measurement, since it challenges the principle of limits at its most natural point.

Where the material support for the combatants is "voluntary", 22 per cent across all the settings surveyed believe civilians who provide such support have forfeited their protected status and have joined the conflict. It is the civilians' choice to aid their defenders or combatants that opens them up to attack. If they are "forced" to provide such support, only 12 per cent of respondents would strip them of their civilian status. Still, some would put civilians on the battlefield no matter how they come to play a supporting role.

In areas of reluctant conflict, where the mobilization of the population has been more limited, the principle of separation is intact. Families and communities routinely help combatants in the course of the conflict, but the great majority of people in these settings do not think that this should make them targets of the warring parties. Just 3 per cent in El Salvador would accept attacks on "collaborating" civilians. The number remains below 20 per cent in the Philippines and South Africa.

Yet in areas where the conflict is more widespread, the divide is not as clear. More than 20 per cent in Lebanon, Afghanistan and Cambodia say such attacks on civilians are acceptable, rising to one-quarter in Abkhazia and almost one-third in Georgia and Nigeria, and to almost 40 per cent in Somalia and

among Palestinians and Israelis. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the numbers who have been subsumed into the culture of war – 17 per cent – is relatively low at this point. (See Figure 13.)

FIGURE 13
Providing food and shelter
(per cent of total and in each setting responding)

	okay		not okay
Total	22%		73%
Colombia[22]			
El Salvador	3%		95%
Philippines	14%		82%
Georgians	29%		69%
Abkhaz	25%		67%
Afghanistan	21%		74%
Cambodia	22%		77%
Bosnia-Herzegovina	17%		75%
Lebanon	22%		69%
Israelis	38%		55%
Palestinians	40%		58%
Somalia	37%		54%
South Africa	17%		76%
Nigeria	31%		66%

Question: 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?

A slightly larger portion of the public in these settings (26 per cent) are willing to accept as "part of war" organized efforts to deprive the civilian populations of food, medicine and water to weaken the enemy (26 per cent) and attacks on populated areas where many civilians, including women and children, would die (23 per cent).

In some of these conflicts, a sizeable minority have come to accept this "civilian battlefield" — in Georgia and Abkhazia, Lebanon, Nigeria, and particularly among Israelis and Palestinians. In some of these, upwards of 40 per cent say that attacks on combatants in civilian areas that will almost certainly kill women and children are "part of war" and not "wrong".

It is striking that in Afghanistan, Cambodia and Somalia, where some of the worst abuses have taken place, there is a great reluctance to accept these practices as part of war. In Afghanistan, just 11 per cent accept depriving civilian populations of basic necessities and just 7 per cent accept attacks on populated areas that risk the lives of women and children. In Cambodia, 12 per cent accept depriving civilians of basic necessities and 11 per cent accept attacks on populated areas. Among Somalis, 17 per cent accept depriving civilians and just 13 per cent would allow attacks on civilian areas. (See Figures 4 and 14.)

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[22] The numbers for Colombia are not reported because the wording of the questionnaire was not fully standardized until the results of the questionnaire pilot tested in Colombia were received and analysed.

FIGURE 14
Deprivation
(per cent of total and in each setting responding "it's wrong" or it's "part of war")

wrong		part of war
66%	Total	26%
74%	Colombia	17%
63%	El Salvador	25%
50%	Philippines	41%
48%	Georgians	41%
58%	Abkhaz	34%
84%	Afghanistan	11%
82%	Cambodia	12%
59%	Bosnia-Herzegovina	32%
65%	Lebanon	27%
64%	Israelis	29%
64%	Palestinians	31%
70%	Somalia	17%
68%	South Africa	23%
62%	Nigeria	31%

100 90 80 70 60 50 40 30 20 10 0   0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
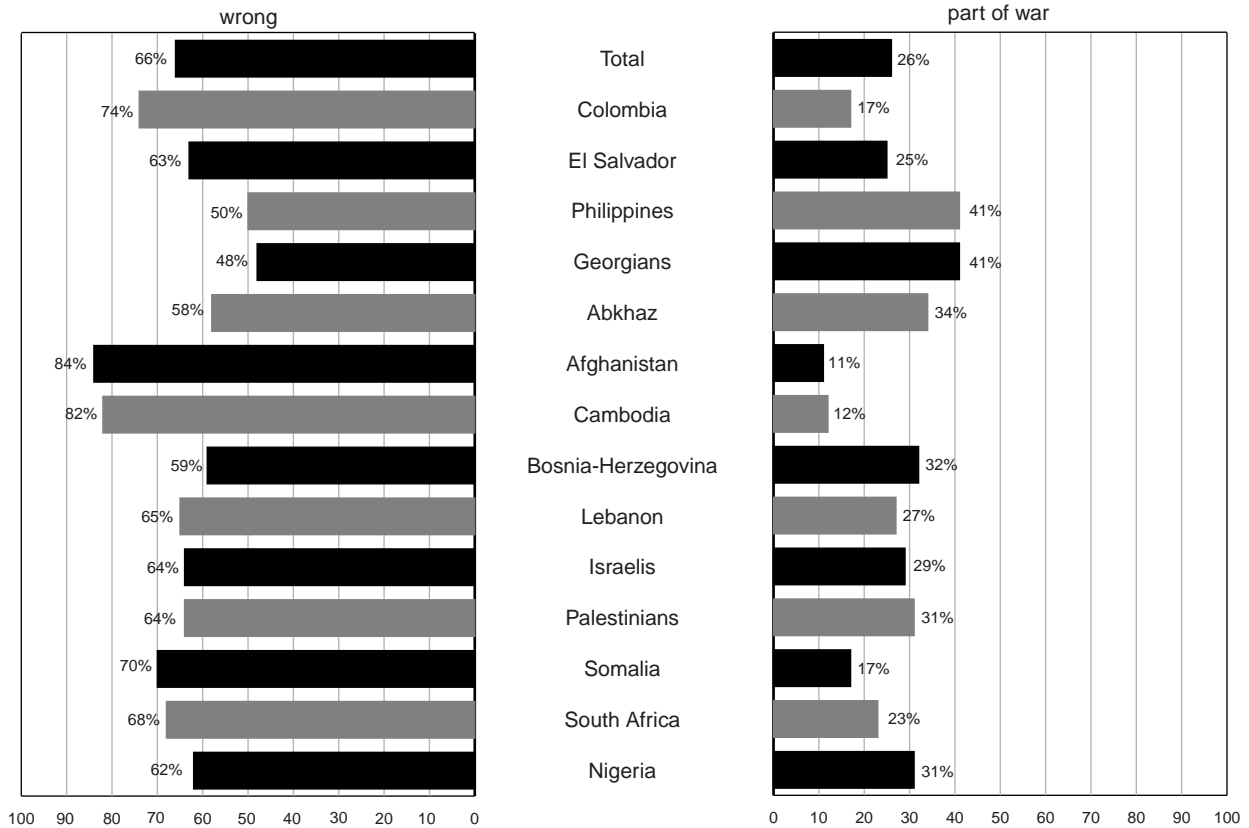
Question: What about depriving the civilian population of food, medicine or water in order to weaken the enemy? Is that wrong or just part of war?

When civilians become more actively involved in supporting their combatants, the definitional and normative barriers that protect them begin to break down. For example, if civilians are handling the transport of ammunition for the troops, this substantially changes the situation, according to the findings of this consultation. When they provide this kind of support voluntarily, 36 per cent in the settings surveyed say this can open them up to attack along with combatants. If civilians are forced to transport the ammunition, 20 per cent would still attack them. For a significant minority, involvement with anything "military", whether voluntary or forced, changes the status of civilians.

It is important to keep in mind, nonetheless, that 57 per cent of the people surveyed across all the settings would not countenance any attacks on civilians, even if they voluntarily transported ammunition for combatants. For a majority, civilians are civilians, no matter what their actions.

But the existence of a minority culture that accepts civilian losses as part of war today can, in practice, overshadow the significance of the majority that would maintain absolute protections for civilians. Across all the settings, those who accept a conditional principle – *avoid civilians as much as possible* – are much more willing than those wedded to an absolute protection (combatants should *leave civilians alone*) to accept practices that endanger civilians. As can be seen in the table below, those only conditionally committed to the combatant-civilian distinction are significantly more likely to accept attacks on civilians providing material support to combatants; they are more likely to sanction withholding food, medicine or water from civilian populations, to accept attacks on populated villages or towns, and to accede to the use

of landmines, even though civilians may step on them accidentally. (See Figure 15.) A sense that civilians are potentially part of today's battlefield – perhaps a part of war – is an opening to practices that put civilians at risk.

FIGURE 15
Consequence of attitudes
(per cent of total responding)

	Attack enemy combatants and avoid civilians as much as possible	Attack only enemy combatants and leave civilians alone
Okay to attack civilians who voluntarily give food and shelter to enemy combatants	26%	19%
Part of war to deprive civilian populations of food, medicine or water	30%	23%
Part of war to attack populated villages or towns knowing that many women and children would be killed	29%	19%
Okay to plant landmines even though civilians may step on them accidentally	25%	18%

This more pragmatic view is stronger among the combatants who took up arms and who obviously played a big part in the dislocation of and assaults on civilians. Nearly one-third of combatants (32 per cent compared with 20 per cent of non-combatants) say it is acceptable to attack civilians who voluntarily provide material support to the enemy, and a like number say it is acceptable to deprive civilian populations of basic necessities in order to weaken the enemy; slightly more (34 per cent compared with 20 per cent of non-combatants) say it is part of war to attack populated areas knowing many women and children would be killed. A near majority of combatants (43 per cent versus 19 per cent of non-combatants) say it is okay to use landmines if necessary, even if civilians may step on them. That likely reveals an attitude about war that is no doubt reflected in the civilian toll during the war and afterwards.

Landmines and other weapons

The focus of international attention on landmines mirrors the strong opposition to landmines among the people who have lived through these bloody conflicts. Overall, 73 per cent of the people surveyed say it is not acceptable to use landmines when civilians may accidentally step on them. In areas where the conflict has been more limited, opposition to landmines is almost absolute – 91 per cent in Colombia, 94 per cent in El Salvador, 86 per cent in the Philippines and 86 per cent in South Africa. Opposition is very strong in Afghanistan and Cambodia – 86 per cent and 87 per cent respectively – countries that contain millions of landmines.[23] Opposition is also strong in Somalia (70 per cent) and Lebanon (71 per cent). (See Figure 16.)

In three of the conflict settings surveyed, the public is much less certain about what to do about landmines. The public is divided on the question in Georgia and Abkhazia, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and among Israelis and Palestinians. In these conflicts, landmines have been used by all sides and, for many, the weapon has a defensive character, particularly for communities facing great force on the other side. This is apparent in the comments from Abkhazia: "Mines were needed because it was impossible to wage war only with submachine guns against tanks." It is also the case in Bosnia-Herzegovina: "This is the way to prevent the enemy from entering your territory." "I would plant the mines if that would save our people."

In both settings, there was a hope that the mines could be used "properly" – with maps and plans that would allow the protection of civilians. A soldier in Bosnia-Herzegovina said: "It is okay to plant

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[23] Some 4-6 million landmines have been planted in Afghanistan. UNDHA, Afghanistan. *The Development of Indigenous Mine Action Capacities*, February 1998, p. 9. There are an estimated 4-6 million landmines planted in Cambodia. American Embassy, Phnom Penh, Response.

landmines to stop the enemy. You just need to draw a plan, so when the aggressor is expelled, you could dig the mines out." A number of focus group participants in Abkhazia spoke of having a scheme. As a former military man recommended, "Whatever mines you plant you must make up a map, a clear scheme of the minefield so that you'll be able to clear them…" But he also lamented that "the mines are planted not by professionals" and the man (who planted them) was either "killed or lost the scheme". "Yes, there was a necessity to lay the mines, but it should have been organized." As a consequence, he concluded, "mines must be banned as weapons".

FIGURE 16
Landmines
(per cent of total and in each setting responding "okay" or "not okay")
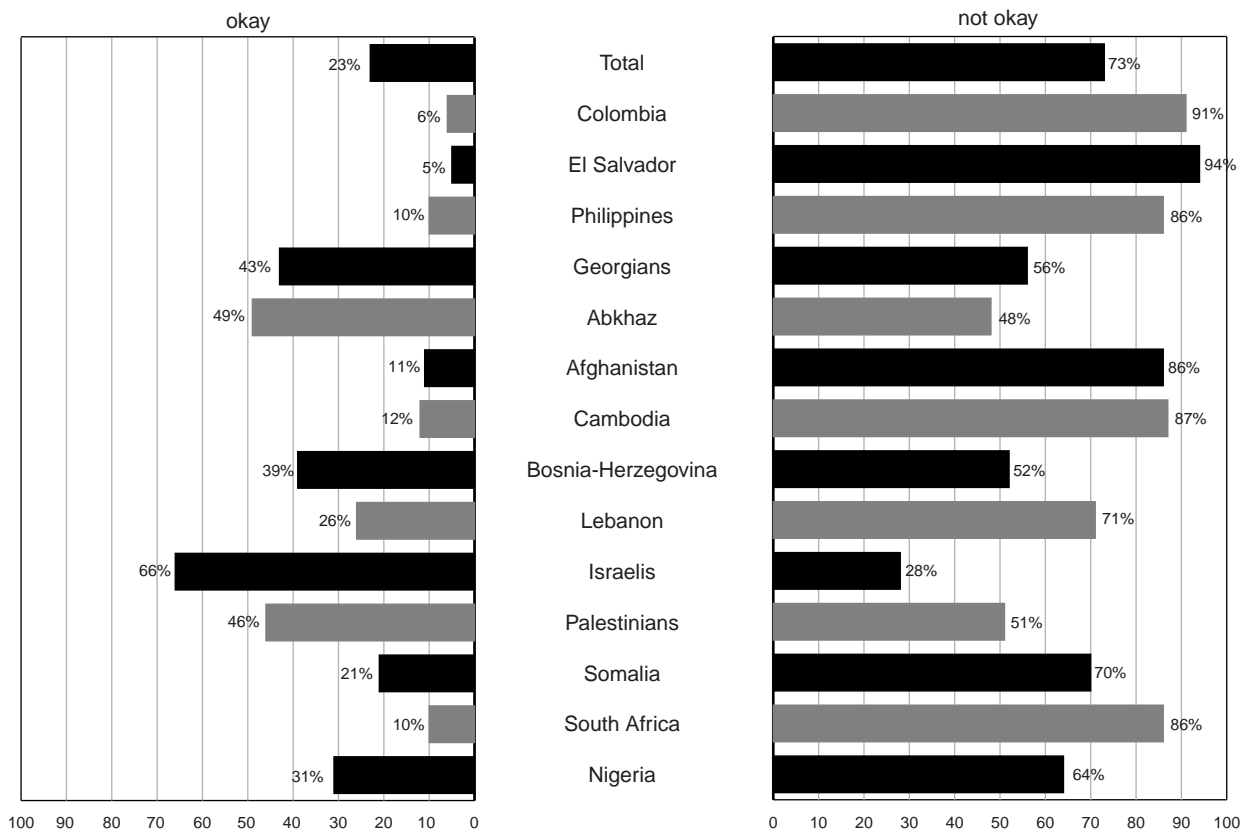
	okay	not okay
Total	23%	73%
Colombia	6%	91%
El Salvador	5%	94%
Philippines	10%	86%
Georgians	43%	56%
Abkhaz	49%	48%
Afghanistan	11%	86%
Cambodia	12%	87%
Bosnia-Herzegovina	39%	52%
Lebanon	26%	71%
Israelis	66%	28%
Palestinians	46%	51%
Somalia	21%	70%
South Africa	10%	86%
Nigeria	31%	64%

Question: 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?

People in all settings surveyed universally condemn the use of weapons of mass destruction. Nuclear weapons (39 per cent) and chemical and biological weapons (33 per cent) are mentioned in every country surveyed and volunteered by respondents with greater frequency than any other type of weapon. Beyond that consensus, people tend to focus on the weapons with which they are most familiar — the ones that were used predominately in their specific context. And while only 4 per cent of those surveyed in the consultation would simply ban all weapons, this blanket opposition to weaponry is at least twice that high in countries where the damage caused by these weapons has been most devastating: Cambodia and Afghanistan (20 and 19 per cent, respectively).

Out of bounds
The one area in which people everywhere are clear on the limits in war is the destruction of religious, cultural and historical sites to weaken the enemy. More than 80 per cent of the people who have lived through these conflicts reject the idea of combatants targeting such sites.

Obviously, there is a big gap between what happens in the heat of battle and what people believe should happen – no more so than in this area. Almost no one in the focus groups or in-depth interviews would acknowledge attacking religious sites, unless there was a sniper or fighter in the building. People spoke of such situations, suggesting that these buildings were indeed hit, but no one discussed it as a strategy for demoralization and ethnic cleansing. Even so, people do think it happened in these conflicts – the destruction of archives, libraries, old bridges, temples, mosques and churches – to destroy the "soul of the people".

Explaining the breakdown of norms and conventions

The biggest quandary for international humanitarian law posed by this consultation is the gulf between what has happened to civilians in these late 20th-century wars and the norms and conventions that would protect them. If the quandary was reduced just to the gap with the Geneva Conventions, the burden of explanation would not be so great. Since the contents of the Geneva Conventions are known to only one in four, it would be a surprise if they greatly restrained the behaviour of many in the midst of today's battles. But the gap also exists with respect to the beliefs and norms that are dominant in the societies surveyed. Large majorities believe war has limits and that breaching those limits is "wrong". These beliefs are rooted in well-developed ideas of human dignity, in religious traditions and personal ethical codes that draw on historical experience. Despite those beliefs, the limits have been regularly ignored, with seemingly boundless wars and armed conflicts threatening civilians wherever they occur.

Explaining the gap

The explanation for the gap lies in part in the uncertain State authority that has left many areas of conflict with the central authority contested or without any central authority at all. The result is a space where individual and collective animosities have a great deal of room to express themselves. In Somalia, elders and militiamen alike talked about the disappearance of government, but also the weakening traditional leaders that created a customary law. The result is a society without apparent restraints:

> Since there is no government in Somalia, no one punishes the evildoers and they therefore continue killing. Formerly people were punished accordingly, but nowadays people do what they feel like.

> [Fighters] never used to kill children and mothers, and now they are even bombing holy places. This wasn't a written law, but a traditional law… At the present time, there is nobody or no rule rejecting the killing of civilians and therefore they are killed whenever one feels like [it]… All the former laws have been destroyed... People are now making their own.

> In the old days, there was a leader highly respected and obeyed and it was him who decided the course of action in the war zone. But today everyone is his own leader.

In some civil war situations, State authority becomes disorganized or contested, seeming to free the combatants to express their most extreme claims. The women of Abkhazia are eloquent about this type of conflict:

> 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.

> [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.

In both Georgia and Abkhazia, respondents spoke of the breakdown of authority and law: "Police had no power at that time, they were not doing anything, there was no one that would judge people." "When the war started, there were no rules, and it didn't matter if there were a regular army or not." A woman in Abkhazia recounted the horror of the state's withdrawal: "When the war began, I didn't believe… [I] never thought that the government would leave us face to face with the invaders."

In South Africa, political fighting among blacks came in the last years of the apartheid state and in areas where the police pulled back to allow the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP)-African National Congress (ANC) conflict to widen or, as many believe, acted to encourage it. On all sides of that conflict, participants in the focus groups talked about the police role: "Sometimes the police are being brought in to defuse conflict, but only to find that these policemen are the same people that are supplying the guns." "The government used dark forces…" "[the] police created animosity and hatred among the people in the community." It was in this context that inter-group animosities were pushed beyond normal bounds.

But uncertain or contested State authority cannot be a sufficient explanation, because armed conflict does not break out or does not engulf civilians whenever the State pulls back. The uncertainty of State authority clearly creates an environment in which dark forces may emerge, but other dynamics clearly contribute to the deterioration of limits, despite the conventions and strong norms that would sustain them.

When asked why they think combatants harm civilians despite the prohibitions, almost one-third of those surveyed focus on the sides' determination to win at any cost (30 per cent) and the strong commitment to their cause (2 per cent); more than half focus on the hate the sides feel for each other (26 per cent) and the lack of regard for laws and rules (27 per cent). These views are reinforced by a sense that others are doing the same thing, thus demanding reciprocity (14 per cent). Across the war settings surveyed, people see a world in which a weak, absent or contested State has allowed extreme passions to push beyond the limits, with people unrestrained by laws or society. (See Figure 17.)

FIGURE 17
Why combatants attack civilians
(per cent of total and in each setting responding)

	Total	Colombia[24]	El Salvador	Philippines	Georgians	Abkhaz	Afghanistan	Cambodia	B-H	Lebanon	Israelis	Palestinians	Somalia	South Africa	Nigeria
Win at any cost	30%		28%	35%	15%	19%	28%	41%	13%	29%	22%	30%	38%	33%	51%
Don't care about laws	27%		20%	39%	22%	12%	48%	41%	15%	26%	4%	16%	34%	25%	32%
Hate the other side	26%		20%	32%	21%	32%	14%	17%	28%	33%	25%	41%	36%	31%	15%
Are told to do so	24%		59%	13%	29%	11%	20%	25%	20%	28%	14%	26%	11%	30%	14%
Lose all sense	18%		14%	13%	22%	27%	12%	13%	25%	26%	28%	19%	9%	21%	16%
Alcohol/drugs	15%		20%	17%	30%	35%	8%	6%	19%	18%	0%	0%	9%	11%	28%
Don't know the laws	14%		9%	19%	19%	9%	25%	25%	9%	10%	3%	7%	17%	12%	12%
Other side doing same	14%		6%	9%	21%	19%	7%	2%	31%	14%	22%	24%	14%	11%	8%
Are too young	9%		9%	5%	13%	15%	13%	21%	7%	5%	10%	2%	13%	5%	4%
Are scared	8%		9%	7%	8%	5%	5%	3%	15%	6%	12%	11%	3%	11%	6%
Committed to cause	2%		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	33%	14%	-	-	-
Abuse of power	0%		-	2%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

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 may be against the law?

This interpretation of the gulf between principle and practice is dominant in Somalia, among black South Africans, in Lebanon, Nigeria and the Philippines and among Israelis and Palestinians. The emphasis in Bosnia-Herzegovina is on the combination of hate and reciprocity.

Some believe that most people are following the orders of leaders who have larger designs (24 per cent). That interpretation is dominant in El Salvador, where 59 per cent of respondents think combatants have been told to breach the limits. It is also predominant among white South Africans.

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[24] The numbers for Colombia are not reported because the wording of the questionnaire was not fully standardized until the results of the questionnaire pilot tested in Colombia were received and analysed.

And some think that people in this environment have just got out of control: soldiers and fighters have lost all sense (18 per cent) and are on drugs or alcohol (15 per cent). In Georgia and Abkhazia, they believe these are significant factors in what happened to civilians in that conflict, though in the latter instance, they also focus on hate.

These results, together with the in-depth discussions, suggest a number of interpretations – a number of avenues – to explain the gulf between principle and practice that has left so many civilians in harm's way.

The culture of war. Part of the explanation for the gulf lies in the culture of war described earlier. There are significant minorities in these war-torn societies – about one in four people – who accept breaches in these limits as "part of war". Indeed, many people see war or armed conflict in an area heavily populated with civilians as conventional; that attacking, dislodging and demoralizing civilians is the way wars are conducted today. In the current world of war, they fail to see any distinctions.

For some, the attacks on civilians come simply from their proximity to the conflict and the difficulty of unravelling the differences between combatants and civilians. A paramedic in Lebanon observed, "In the civil war, the combatant is with the civilian in the same building. It was difficult to avoid the civilians… It was inevitable to attack civilians." A young city-dweller in Cambodia highlighted the difficulties of identifying non-combatants: "If we attack a village, we cannot see who are soldiers, who are the soldiers' wives, and who are the real civilians."

But for many, the proximity of civilians to the fighting is really an opportunity to enlist their support, which makes them part of the same military force. A former detainee in Lebanon made it clear: "If they voluntarily provide the combatants with food, then they become part of war and are no longer civilians. They [are] the back line." In Afghanistan: "…if the people of that area had given shelter to our opponents and are helping them against us, then we had no choice but to suspend food supply there."

Militiamen in Somalia described the war on civilians as central to their very concept of war:

Depriving the civilian part of the population of food and water to weaken the enemy is just part of war, and it is very effective as it will weaken the enemy, making them shift from one place to another… If this is not done, then the war will not end.

They should be harassed as they are just the same as fighters. Cutting off the water and food is part of war.

And in Georgia and Abkhazia, combatants and non-combatants alike see how integral the support of civilian populations is to progress in the conflict:

Because the population is the only support of soldiers and fighters. They help the combatants with products, military ammunition – all they need. So this is why it is necessary to attack them, in order to annex the whole territory.

In the conflict between the Israelis and Palestinians, the contending forces operate, as one former Israeli soldier put it, "in an unclear moral framework since we don't consider them a State and they don't acknowledge our existence." This has centred the conflict over a number of years on maintaining order and control, which has eroded the barrier between combatants and civilians. Perhaps as in no other context surveyed for this consultation, both sides, Palestinians and Israelis, see civilians as a normal part of the conflict. A former soldier described the process:

[As] to the Palestinians, there we're in contact with civilians who are fighting, so
we have to break into houses. We have to… We have to do many things that we
wouldn't have to do when facing an enemy country – such as enter a town full of
citizens.

In such situations, according to one settler, "If the entire population" is involved, "like the
people of Nablus, then of course they must be deprived of everything." On the Palestinian side too, the
battle elided the soldiers who were fighting and the civilians who supported them: "Our struggle turned to
attacking civilians because at the start the Israelis wanted to empty our country of its people. All civilians
are combatants, and all combatants are civilians."

While some have come to see the eliding of combatants and civilians as normal, it is
important to emphasize that the great majority of the respondents in these conflicts resist it. In a focus
group discussion conducted in the conflict area in Colombia, the women declared up front that a "civilian is
an innocent person", even the ones who provide material support for the fighters or soldiers: "He had to
protect his family, he had no choice to do anything else."

But when the women were advised that the man was providing military information, then they
concluded differently: "He is entering the conflict." But that is no easy conclusion for the women, since
they understood the consequences: "[He] has to be punished but his life should not be taken away."
Others were more harsh, "I think he has to be attacked because he hurt our group." And one woman
concluded, completely ambivalently: "There's just too much blood, but it's a difficult situation. It really is an
eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." It is out of such tortured discourses that some people give in to the
culture of war, but most resist it in principle and struggle to find ways to protect civilians from the fighting.

Whole societies in conflict. In conflicts in which the whole society seems to be involved it
becomes very difficult to distinguish who is a combatant and who is a civilian. Sometimes, nearly everyone
is involved in the military effort, but frequently, involvement takes the form of moral support or the provision
of food and shelter. Everyone is thrown together in the defence of the community or in the expulsion of
another. In either case, civilians and combatants are becoming conceptually indistinguishable when all
levels of society are in conflict.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, people spoke of joining of combatants and civilians in their
communities' defence as a point of pride and as a justification for setting aside the distinction between
combatants and civilians when attacking other communities:

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

[They] are soldiers too. They just do not have uniforms.

I was the biggest soldier in my opinion. If soldiers stay in a civilian apartment, you
have to attack the apartment.

My mother and everyone who stayed in Sarajevo was a soldier. My opinion is that
soldiers were all civilians who stayed in Bosnia – the children, the journalists who
tried to explain to the world what was going on. They are all soldiers.

In Somalia, there was the same pressure to bring the whole community together in battle: "I
believe that those civilians and fighters belong to one family group, once the civilians are going with the
fighters – doing things like cooking, treating them, and any other necessary thing." Everyone is drawn in

because "people are fighting for their tribes or clans." In Abkhazia, a young man simplified the formula: "Somebody can hold a submachine gun and somebody only a ladle. But it doesn't mean a cook is less responsible than a soldier."

For Israelis and Palestinians, the formula is all-encompassing. A former Israeli soldier described it this way: "[Our] people as a whole fought… The whole of the Israeli people, without exception, were at war." As a consequence, Israelis talked about fighting a whole society – "the people", "everybody." The Palestinians talked about fighting the Israelis who they say are nearly wholly militarized: "The Israelis are known to be 90 per cent military, even if they did not wear military uniforms." "We look at the Israeli people, they are all fighters."

In the settings where whole societies are in conflict, distinctions fall away, which leaves civilian populations heavily exposed.

Sides and hate. The more conflicts engage and mobilize the population, and the more committed the public is to a side and its goals, the greater the hatred of the enemy and the greater the willingness to breach whatever limits there exist in war.

Partisans, or those who identify with a side, are significantly more likely than non-partisans to accept attacks on civilians – 29 per cent of those who have taken a side think it is acceptable to attack civilians who voluntarily provide material support to combatants (compared with 17 per cent of those who have not taken a side), 30 per cent say it is part of war to deprive civilians of food, medicine or water (compared with 23 per cent), and 30 per cent say it is part of war to attack enemy combatants in populated villages or towns knowing many civilians, including women and children, would be killed (compared with 19 per cent).

Committing to a side and being mobilized for the conflict apparently reaffirms for people the importance of achieving group and national goals and defeating the enemy; it likely confirms the dangers if the other side were to prevail. In that equation, the barriers protecting civilians become more and more of an encumbrance.

Reciprocity and revenge. For many in the war-torn countries surveyed, the barriers protecting civilians have come down because the other side in the conflict has ignored them. There is apparently a need for reciprocity in attacks on civilians – perhaps even revenge – that threatens whatever protections stood in the way of total war. This impulse, as shown earlier, was an important factor in the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina, with Palestinians and Israelis, and in the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict. The impulse for reciprocity and revenge, as illustrated below, was very strong in the last case:

> War is always a mess… When the Georgians came to our land, they mocked non-combatants. And when our offensive started, our fighters did the same in revenge.

> 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.

> 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.

In Afghanistan, an example of the principle of reciprocity can be found in the Islamic teachings which govern most Afghans' behaviour. In the words of an Afghan doctor, "Islam gives us a law of *Qasas*. The way one torture[s the] other, he should be tortured the same way."

While most Palestinians resist reciprocity as a principle, the concept is important to many nonetheless, as reflected by this student: "Nothing is forbidden because [the acts of our fighters] are usually a counteraction to what the enemy had done earlier." The teacher elaborated:

> When I see an Israeli soldier standing on a child's neck in Bethlehem, I would be very happy when I see an Israeli child getting the same. It is not that I don't respect humans, but I feel very happy when I see their children bleeding and their parents weep on them. They are attacking civilians at home, and therefore, I would be very happy if our combatants take revenge.

Israelis resist the principle, too, but acts of terror break down the prohibitions, as expressed by this retired soldier: "It ought to work for both sides, and when the Palestinians plant bombs in buses full of civilians, when the Palestinians indiscriminately kill civilians, women and children, it's a very serious offence. It's a very serious offence."

When presented with a hypothetical but believable situation – the other side killing prisoners – the great majority of people in the war settings reject the idea of reciprocity: almost 80 per cent say they would not approve of doing the same; only 15 per cent would. But there is a small minority – approaching one in five people – in Afghanistan, Lebanon, Somalia and among Israelis and Palestinians who would take revenge.

Circularity. Being hurt in the violent upheaval of conflict increases the hate and willingness to break down the limits in war. Being injured or displaced does not necessarily educate one to the costs of war, create empathy or open one to the need for civilians to be protected. Instead, an embittering war experience intensifies the threat to the barriers protecting civilians. (See Figure 18.)

Unequal power. In the conflicts, some groups tend to see themselves as weak relative to better armed and organized defenders or as armies of their communities against a strong aggressor. In either case, the weak defenders feel they can suspend the limits in war in order to do what is necessary to save or protect their communities.

In South Africa during the urban uprising of black youth, some noted the power of the apartheid state and its police apparatus. A displaced person in Cape Town and a combatant in Thokoza Township described the seeming futility:

> Mothers seeing their children being destroyed, and people sense the futility of it all, the futility of resisting a mechanical oppressor and the driving around of armoured vehicles and a faceless opponent.

> Death was all around us, that was the worst thing. Human life had become nothing. The worst thing was we'd find dead bodies in the playground, I lived near a playground, almost daily… Every morning there were dead bodies, men, women and kids.

The Palestinian youth in the territories gained latitude in their actions based on the same imbalance. A student depicted a "Palestinian child" who "for seven years defied the tank with a stone".

FIGURE 18

Circularity

(per cent of total with specific war experiences)[25]

	Total	Non-combatants	Combatants	Relative killed	Imprisoned	Knew someone who was raped	Wounded
Okay to attack civilians who voluntarily give food and shelter to enemy combatants	22%	20%	32%	27%	30%	25%	32%
Not okay to attack civilians who voluntarily give food and shelter to enemy combatants	73%	75%	65%	70%	65%	72%	65%
Part of war to deprive civilians of food, medicine or water	26%	24%	32%	22%	30%	23%	28%
Wrong to deprive civilians of food, medicine or water	66%	67%	61%	69%	65%	70%	64%
Part of war to attack enemy combatants in populated villages or towns knowing many women and children would be killed	23%	20%	34%	21%	29%	19%	27%
Wrong to attack enemy combatants in populated villages or towns knowing many women and children would be killed	67%	71%	55%	71%	64%	70%	63%
Okay to plant landmines even though civilians may step on them accidentally	23%	19%	43%	22%	33%	23%	30%
Not okay to plant landmines even though civilians may step on them accidentally	73%	77%	54%	75%	65%	74%	66%

Others drew the conclusion that followed from that imagery: "We have no army, and we rely on our people to do the job. Any tool that is available should be taken advantage [of]."

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, people in all three communities spoke of their soldiers as "defenders". They were defending their communities from the most dire consequences. As one student put it, "They went to defend their families, country and home." Soldiers who are defenders gain a kind of special exemption from the rules of war, as they are required to do whatever is necessary to stop the aggression. The limits are suspended.

Defenders cannot break any rules. Maybe they made some mistakes, but not many. If you defend yourself, you cannot break any rules.

There is no crime if you have done something defending your home and family. There is no crime then.

[If] you are in a position to defend your own life, to defend your family, you would be forced to do what you would have never done otherwise in a normal situation.

[25] Figure 18 demonstrates how people's experiences during the war affect their views on the treatment of civilians. For example, 43 per cent of combatants believe it is acceptable to plant landmines, even though civilians may step on them.

Orders and plans. As Figure 17 shows, many people think the limits are breached because rank and file combatants have been ordered to harass, dislodge or even attack civilian populations, sometimes uncomfortably at odds with their own beliefs and prevailing norms. Political and military leaders, it is believed, have chosen to pursue the battle in ways that endanger civilians, but people are prepared to believe that the leaders have a plan or a good reason for their course of action. At the very least, they are ready to follow their orders, because as ordinary people they have little choice.

In El Salvador, for example, 59 per cent say that the rules were breached because soldiers and fighters were ordered to do these things. In the conflict area, people talked about the soldiers and fighters being drugged and ordered to do terrible things or face terrible consequences: "They did it obligatorily, because if they killed a guerrilla or a soldier… they also give it to you, because you didn't have the courage." "They have someone who gave them orders… someone who sent them to…" "They were orders, and if they didn't comply… well, … like I say… They'd say, 'You want to be a soldier, you can't be in the army, because you feel pity, he who enters the army cannot feel pity, not for your mother, or your family, nobody…'" Few mention belief in the goals of either side, only a feeling that combatants had no choice but to attack and kill.

Israelis also talked about soldiers following orders in their encounters with civilians in Arab States and Palestinians. Some expressed support for destroying Arab houses as a form of collective punishment and some oppose it, but all the discussions presume State decisions were legal and legitimate. These policies, former soldiers pointed out, were "completely legal"; they had been approved "as high as the Supreme Court". There are also "rules for opening fire", which "cannot be arbitrarily violated. This is a law." And one woman in the north of Israel observed, "[They] don't do things for no reason."

Losing all sense. The collapse of traditional controls and law has created an environment in which a whole range of pathologies goes unchecked. A large number of people think that this is an important part of why the limits fall away: as indicated earlier, 33 per cent of respondents say the limits have given way because combatants lose all sense and because they are under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

In some settings, people describe the extremists and psychopaths that have been given the stage. Many of the former soldiers in Bosnia-Herzegovina talked about "non-normal" people who pushed the conflict to excess: "Normal people would never do that, although one wonders to what extent sanity existed at all in this war." "There are many people of suspicious moral qualities in the military, who will do anything in a critical situation." "For the disturbed persons, it is irrelevant who they are shooting at – be it a Serb or anything else. When they are drafted, their mental state is not considered."

In many of the war-torn settings surveyed, people offer graphic descriptions of out-of-control fighters and soldiers, heavily drugged or drunk. Many were mercenaries and fought for both money and drugs. Such combatants abided by few rules and produced havoc in the lives of civilians.

In the Lebanese consultation, people spoke of these dangerous elements that preyed on civilians: "The young men fighting in the Lebanese war were under drugs, and when they woke up, they did not know what had happened." "Those who were killing people during the war were hired." "I think the combatants were not aware of what they were doing. They gave them drugs to brainwash them and do whatever they ordered them to do." "They were tempted with money to kill civilians."

In El Salvador, too, people spoke of drugged soldiers and fighters who knew no limits: "They had someone who gave them orders… [Some] were drugged, some killed their own mother and father and felt no remorse." One former soldier described his own experience:

I was drugged. My mind worked only as I wanted it to do. Or, you could say, under the orders of others or it could be my own turbulence that I was lost. Yes, I killed on a whim with a machete… I did it.

In Georgia and Abkhazia, the interviews were replete with accounts of plunder and looting, led by former felons, many drunk or drugged. As seen in Figure 17, this was the main reason given in this context for the collapse of rules, limits and principles. Many of the combatants were out to loot and prey on civilians as much as to achieve any particular national goal.

A lot of prisoners were released and sent to fight in Abkhazia. There were a lot of drug addicts as well. They went for plunder, not for fighting.

There were abnormal soldiers on our side as well. They attacked our people… What do you think a person that was convicted to death and then was freed will do with you?

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.

Protection

Civilians find themselves at the centre of today's armed conflicts, which has clearly elevated the need for their protection. Sizeable minorities have come to accept that threats to civilians are now "part of war", but people want protection. In fact, they are desperate for it. Across the settings surveyed, the non-combatants express a sense of helplessness before the assaults, "ethnic cleansing" and criminality. In South Africa, black women described the reactions when the military and police forces began to move in: "You just run away not knowing where you are going." "They're just going to flee. Grab the children and flee now, for their lives."

The biggest role in protection

According to the respondents in the countries surveyed, the organizations that played the biggest role during the conflicts in protecting civilians from harm and in providing relief were the ICRC or Red Cross or Red Crescent (42 per cent), followed by the UN (32 per cent), international humanitarian organizations or NGOs (25 per cent) and religious leaders (18 per cent). In Afghanistan, Lebanon and Somalia – countries with prolonged wars and relatively weak central governments – more than one in ten respondents say nobody did anything to help. Based on the findings of a parallel independent study, there is reason to believe that the ICRC consultation using Red Cross/Red Crescent interviewers overestimates this by about 8 percentage points.[26] But even with that adjustment, it is reasonable to conclude that the ICRC, along with the UN, played a leading role in all the countries surveyed, followed by international humanitarian organizations in general. (See Figure 19.)

FIGURE 19

Biggest role

(per cent of total and in each setting responding) (top two responses)[27]

	Total	Colombia	El Salvador	Philippines	Georgians	Abkhaz	Afghanistan	Cambodia	B-H	Lebanon	Israelis	Palestinians	Somalia	South Africa	Nigeria
ICRC/Red Cross/ Red Crescent	42%	72%	60%	26%	37%	42%	40%	52%	24%	48%	31%	30%	44%	27%	60%
United Nations	32%	12%	34%	16%	28%	14%	44%	56%	56%	25%	14%	65%	28%	17%	31%
Int'l humanitarian organizations	25%	32%	28%	20%	20%	23%	34%	41%	19%	27%	36%	7%	16%	12%	36%
Religious leaders	18%	23%	25%	23%	10%	2%	11%	2%	2%	13%	5%	41%	45%	24%	28%
Government leaders	18%	15%	13%	46%	36%	34%	4%	29%	15%	8%	17%	1%	3%	26%	9%
Other countries	11%	2%	9%	4%	5%	11%	7%	1%	34%	20%	7%	4%	5%	13%	6%
Military and combatants	7%	-	4%	26%	9%	21%	1%	3%	13%	4%	-	11%	3%	4%	5%
Combatants on your side	6%	8%	-	-	8%	21%	-	-	17%	2%	33%	5%	2%	7%	-
Combatants on other side	0%	2%	0%	-	0%	0%	-	-	1%	-	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%
Journalists and media	7%	5%	7%	18%	11%	4%	1%	3%	2%	7%	11%	16%	5%	4%	7%
Int'l criminal court	3%	3%	2%	3%	11%	2%	2%	4%	3%	1%	1%	3%	0%	3%	1%
Nobody did anything	5%	4%	4%	3%	7%	4%	14%	0%	1%	14%	6%	3%	12%	4%	0%
Don't know	7%	5%	10%	3%	1%	4%	6%	3%	2%	3%	8%	0%	12%	23%	6%

Question: Please tell me which *two* of these have played the biggest role during the war to stop civilians being attacked or deprived of food, water, medical supplies and electricity.

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[26] It is likely that the findings in this section are overstated because in most settings interviewers were working for the Red Cross or Red Crescent. This assumption has been confirmed in the parallel research, in which differences were noted on awareness of the ICRC and the National Red Cross or Red Crescent Society. See Parallel Research Programme report, p. 10, Figure 12 for details.

[27] Respondents were read a list and asked to select *two* organizations. As a result, the aggregate responses add up to more than 100 per cent.

An in-depth interviewee responsible for demining in Cambodia said: "In times of war there is only the International Red Cross that has the important role and the UN. But if the UN can't help, in the country we also have the national Red Cross that can help partly in the war. The International Red Cross serves as a model. It means they can help all the injured [soldiers] from all sides." A civil servant in Abkhazia described the ICRC in this way: "To say the truth, [the] International Red Cross helped a lot. They saved from captivity, hunger and death dozens of people. I don't know any other international organizations that saved people during the war."

The combined data mask important differences between countries – differences that reflect the nature of the war, the combatants, the extent of international involvement and the consequences suffered by civilians.[28] Nonetheless, a few trends emerge:

The UN and international humanitarian organizations in general are seen to play very important roles in helping civilians in conflicts that feature large numbers of displaced persons and refugees. The UN was seen to have played the largest role in Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Cambodia and with the Palestinians.

Few people currently living in these settings say the media and journalists provided protection during the conflict (7 per cent), with the exception of the Philippines, the Georgians and the Israelis and Palestinians (18, 11, 11 and 16 per cent, respectively). Government leaders are not seen to have played a major role – mentioned only by 18 per cent. The exceptions are found in the Philippines, Georgia and Abkhazia, Cambodia and South Africa.

Overall, about 13 per cent of those surveyed say they got protection from the combatants in the conflict, which might suggest that the combatants were helpless to provide such protection or that few combatants view civilian protection as a major part of what they do today, but, in fact, the opposite may be the case. Although only a few of the people surveyed mention the military as protectors in places where the civilian death toll was very high – Afghanistan, Somalia, Cambodia and Nigeria – in the Philippines, the public was inclined to rely on the country's military forces. Combatants also play a much larger role in helping civilians in countries where the wars are more partisan (where more people say they supported a side). In the three contexts where partisanship is the strongest – Georgia and Abkhazia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict — respondents said they depended on the combatants on their own side to provide protection. In these contexts, respondents are more than three times as likely (28 per cent versus 6 per cent) to credit combatants with helping them.

In South Africa, a large portion of the public say they do not know who provided protection for civilians (23 per cent); many in Somalia (12 per cent) also do not know. That is a measure of how alone some people may feel in this world of conflict – either because the dominant forces operate unchecked or because nobody has been able to effectively protect civilians.

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[28] For example, Bosnians and Palestinians credit the UN more than the ICRC/Red Cross/Red Crescent for helping them in these situations (56 per cent versus 24 per cent and 65 per cent versus 30 per cent, respectively). In Afghanistan, where 5 million people were displaced internally and externally, the UN is credited with playing a greater role than the ICRC/Red Crescent. Somalis and Palestinians are more than twice as likely than those in other countries to say that religious leaders played an important role in protecting civilians in these circumstances (45 per cent and 41 per cent, respectively versus an average of 18 per cent in other settings). Colombians, Filipinos, South Africans and Israelis report very little contact with the UN.

Prisoners in armed conflict

It should not be surprising that in conflicts where civilians have faced grave dangers, prisoners have suffered widespread mistreatment as well. The absent or contested State authority, frequently disorganized military forces interspersed with criminal elements, and all the passions of war discussed earlier have put prisoners at risk.

About 8 per cent of the total population responding in the war-torn settings surveyed say they were imprisoned during the war or armed conflict. In some places, the number who found themselves captive is much higher: 19 per cent in Abkhazia, 20 per cent in Somalia, 22 per cent in Afghanistan and 25 per cent of Palestinians.

FIGURE 20

Imprisoned or under enemy control

(per cent of total and in each setting who were "imprisoned" or lived in an area that came "under enemy control")

	imprisoned	lived under enemy control
Total	8%	19%
Colombia	2%	1%
El Salvador	3%	22%
Philippines	3%	5%
Georgians	1%	1%
Abkhaz	19%	32%
Afghanistan	22%	38%
Cambodia	4%	44%
Bosnia-Herzegovina	6%	11%
Lebanon	6%	22%
Israelis	1%	2%
Palestinians	25%	64%
Somalia	20%	31%
South Africa	3%	3%
Nigeria	2%	11%
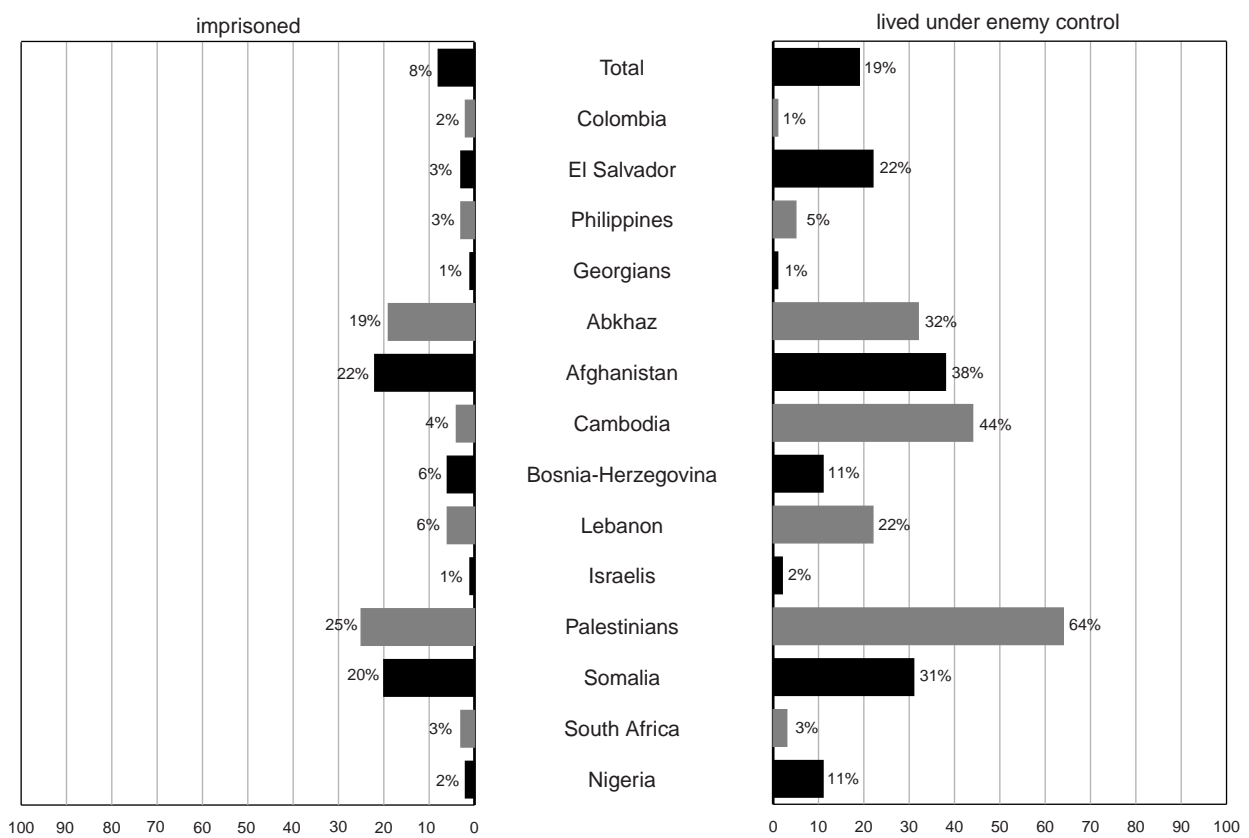
Question: Were you imprisoned by enemy combatants or were you living in an area that came under enemy control?

Another 19 per cent of the population found themselves in areas under enemy control and, therefore, vulnerable to abuse and potentially in need of protection. What is extraordinary is the number of conflicts today in which large portions of the population report that they came under enemy control – one in five in El Salvador (22 per cent) and Lebanon (22 per cent), one in three in Somalia (31 per cent) and Abkhazia (32 per cent), almost four in ten in Afghanistan (38 per cent), nearly one half in Cambodia (44 per cent) and two out of three Palestinians (64 per cent). That puts a lot of civilians in potential danger, when the institutions for providing oversight and protection may be underdeveloped, given the massive scope of the task.

Mistreatment of prisoners

Virtually every one imprisoned in these various conflicts around the world – four out of five persons — reports being "mistreated". While the type of mistreatment is unclear from the study, almost half (48 per cent) say they were physically injured while imprisoned. The mistreatment and abuse have gone on without a great deal of independent oversight. Just 27 per cent of the prisoners report that they had contact with a representative of an independent organization. (See Figure 21.)
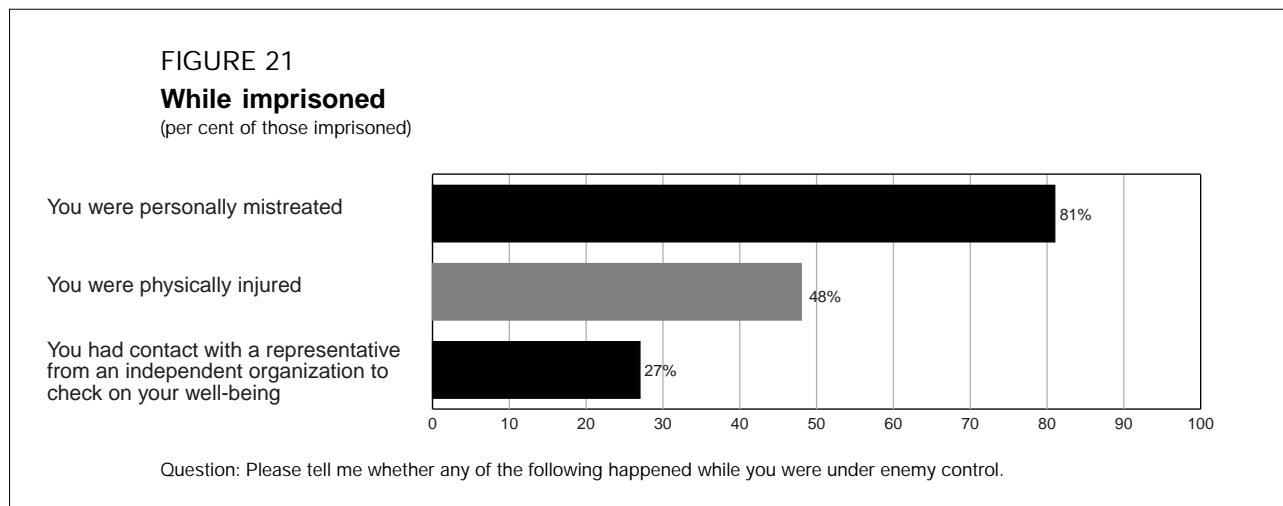
FIGURE 21
While imprisoned
(per cent of those imprisoned)

Question: Please tell me whether any of the following happened while you were under enemy control.

To the extent that prisoners were visited while in captivity, the role was fulfilled almost entirely by the ICRC – mentioned by 80 per cent of those who had contact with an independent representative.

Obligations on the treatment of captured combatants

Though mistreatment of prisoners was commonplace in the conflicts in the places surveyed, most people in these settings support the idea that captured combatants should enjoy special protections, that they should not be treated like other soldiers and fighters. Across the different settings, people spoke of harming a captured combatant as "cowardly" and "wrong". In Bosnia-Herzegovina, a soldier said, "I would never allow that. A prisoner is somebody under your control and you should take care of him. You should feed him and leave him alone… He is not able to fight any more." In Georgia and Abkhazia, people gave a broad range of reasons for protecting captured combatants : "It's not mannishly. Captives must be exchanged."; "We should use him… but try to save his life. He is a man in a helpless situation." A Palestinian, wounded in the conflict, expressed similar views: "Injured prisoners are harmless and cannot kill anybody. Prisoners should be saved." South Africans spoke with a moral passion against the idea of harming captured combatants: "If you kill the prisoners, then you become as evil as the system itself." "If you do kill them, it would show you were not fighting for a good reason, but were merely destroying."

In fact, large majorities in these settings support the obligations for the proper treatment of captured combatants. Across the settings, 69 per cent would allow captured combatants to contact relatives. A not very impressive majority of 62 per cent say that captured combatants cannot be tortured, even to get important information. Seventy-four per cent say there is an obligation to allow visits by independent representatives. Asked who should be allowed to visit captured enemy combatants, nearly three-quarters of respondents (72 per cent) name ICRC representatives. This is followed by representatives of human rights organizations (51 per cent), UN representatives (32 per cent), religious leaders (25 per cent) and journalists (21 per cent).[29]

But with many of these wars and armed conflicts focused on the whole society, it is hard to imagine that the narrow principle of protecting "helpless" captured combatants would not come under great pressure. As one of the South Africans observed, it would mean that the war's purpose was "merely destroying", but that may in fact *be* the war's purpose in many cases.

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[29] Respondents in different countries reflect their own experiences. In South Africa the ICRC was mentioned less frequently (36 per cent). In Cambodia – where violations of human rights have been routine and widespread – 82 per cent say human rights representatives should be allowed to visit, compared with 63 per cent for UN officials and 60 per cent for ICRC personnel.

FIGURE 22
Obligations to captured combatants
(per cent of total and in each setting responding)

	Total	Colombia	El Salvador	Philippines	Georgians	Abkhaz	Afghanistan	Cambodia	B-H	Lebanon	Israelis	Palestinians	Somalia	South Africa	Nigeria
Allow an independent representative to visit	74%	68%	74%	67%	72%	70%	89%	94%	79%	80%	57%	80%	80%	54%	67%
Allow contact with relatives	69%	69%	78%	68%	59%	56%	87%	92%	63%	78%	67%	75%	75%	57%	44%
Can't subject to torture	62%	78%	71%	78%	72%	53%	64%	63%	56%	68%	45%	48%	70%	52%	35%
Can subject to torture	31%	15%	23%	19%	25%	37%	30%	36%	30%	27%	44%	49%	21%	32%	58%
Not allow contact with relatives	25%	25%	17%	30%	40%	36%	10%	6%	29%	18%	29%	23%	16%	30%	48%
Not allow an independent representative to visit	17%	24%	19%	27%	21%	15%	7%	4%	13%	12%	38%	16%	5%	29%	23%

A sizeable number of people (31 per cent) do think that captured combatants can be tortured to get important information. This is particularly true for Israelis (44 per cent) and Palestinians (49 per cent) and in Nigeria (58 per cent).

Reciprocity and the passions of war

In principle, the notion of reciprocity in the treatment of captured combatants is rejected by the great majority of people from these war zones. When asked if they would support the killing of prisoners if the other side were doing it, 80 per cent say they would not; it is unacceptable.

Only 15 per cent would approve of it, although in some of the conflicts, the experiences of the captured combatants fuelled a desire for revenge. That was very apparent in Georgia and Abkhazia, where one side sometimes killed its captives immediately before an exchange: "It used to be our side received still warm corpses of captives. Then we couldn't contain ourselves and our guys did the same thing."

People from the settings surveyed are much less clear about how they would respond if they were faced with a wounded or surrendering enemy combatant who had killed somebody close to them. About half think they would help or save one, but there is a large minority who admit their reaction would be less charitable under the circumstances. (See Figure 23.)

Fully 33 per cent say they would not save a surrendering enemy combatant who had killed somebody close to them; more, 38 per cent, say they would not help a wounded enemy combatant who had killed someone close to them. Refusing actively to help such combatants may capture for people the way they would react under such circumstances. The number refusing to help or save wounded or surrendering enemy combatants was highest among respondents in some of the most intense conflicts, such as Georgia and Abkhazia and Nigeria, where a majority would let them die. A majority in South Africa also say they would not save or help them.

In the focus groups and in-depth research conducted as part of this consultation, many people acknowledged that they would not be able to control their passions under these circumstances, but they were almost always conflicted. The passions usually vied with other instincts, based on humanity or religious beliefs. In Colombia, many of the respondents talked about having "to respect other human

FIGURE 23
Wounded or surrendering combatants
(per cent of total and in each setting responding)
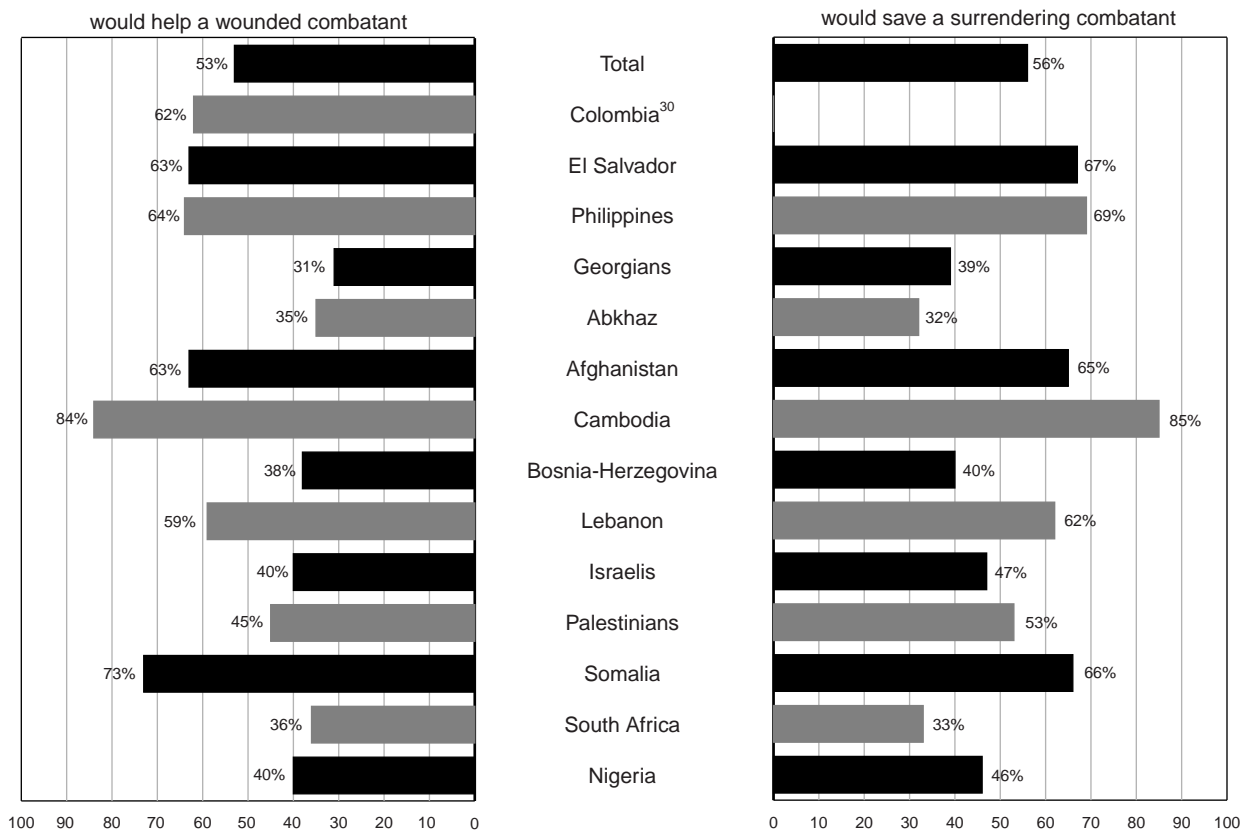
would help a wounded combatant   would save a surrendering combatant

Setting	would help a wounded combatant	would save a surrendering combatant
Total	53%	56%
Colombia[30]	62%	
El Salvador	63%	67%
Philippines	64%	69%
Georgians	31%	39%
Abkhaz	35%	32%
Afghanistan	63%	65%
Cambodia	84%	85%
Bosnia-Herzegovina	38%	40%
Lebanon	59%	62%
Israelis	40%	47%
Palestinians	45%	53%
Somalia	73%	66%
South Africa	36%	33%
Nigeria	40%	46%

Question: Would you help a wounded enemy combatant/save the life of a surrendering enemy combatant who killed a person close to you?

being's lives". "I would save him because he is a human being." Yet people acknowledged the conflict, "It's difficult to handle your emotions in such circumstances." "You would lose control, become animalistic." In Bosnia-Herzegovina, respondents described their own thinking and beliefs as follows: "If somebody killed my child, I would not guarantee my behaviour. I just hope I would be human."; "I think I could kill 100 of them for my husband, but I do not think I would be able to torture someone. I would not let him live, but would not slaughter him either." "When you lose someone close to you, you seek ways to avenge. Simply, you lose control over the situation."

In Somalia, a discussion with women farmers revealed the cross-cutting currents that affect the decision to help or save a wounded or surrendering enemy combatant:

I will release him even if he killed my brother.

I will take him to the Islamic law court.

I will not do it. Revenge is bad.

Personally, if I get a person who killed my brother, I will kill him.

If I meet the person who killed by brother, I will slaughter him.

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[30] The other figure for Colombia is not reported because the wording of the questionnaire was not fully standardized until the results of the questionnaire pilot tested in Colombia were received and analysed.

I will take him to the Islamic court of law. Once you kill a person for revenge, your relationship with God is cut off because he forbids it.

Some were more certain of their course, as evident in these comments from Georgia and Abkhazia: "To shoot him for sure." "I know the guy who killed my sister-in-law. I remember him really well. And if I met him, I would kill him. That is decided for me." The thinking in South Africa, particularly in light of the political fighting among blacks, was unforgiving: "Why should we spare the lives of people whose men didn't think twice about killing our women and kids?" "I will take my dead relative and leave the injured fighter." "I would also kill him because if I don't he will kill me. That is the situation of war."

In Cambodia, despite the degradation that the population has suffered, focus group participants and interviewees talked more of the need for justice than for revenge. One female returnee said, "The wrongdoers will depend on the people, the international [community]. They harm people, they must be put on trial. But importantly, there should be a good reconciliation."

War crimes

An overwhelming proportion of the population in the countries surveyed by the ICRC believe there are war crimes so serious that wrongdoers should be tried and punished. The culture of war – and the constant assault on the norms and conventions of war – have produced a demand for justice among both combatants and non-combatants. What form citizens expect justice to take – what punishment should be based on and who should sit in judgment – varies widely from one setting to another.

Fifty-nine per cent of those surveyed agree with the statement that there are rules in war that are so important that people who break them should be punished. Only 18 per cent disagree. People in Colombia, Israel, Georgia and Abkhazia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Somalia – all countries with ongoing wars or harsh memories of recently ended ones – are more likely to support punishment of war crimes than people in other countries surveyed.[31]

FIGURE 24
Punishment
(per cent of total and in each setting responding)

	Total	Colombia	El Salvador	Philippines	Georgians	Abkhaz	Afghanistan	Cambodia	B-H	Lebanon	Israelis	Palestinians	Somalia	South Africa	Nigeria
Yes	59%	71%	60%	51%	63%	73%	56%	57%	82%	51%	74%	61%	63%	38%	44%
No	18%	14%	29%	30%	17%	8%	33%	8%	5%	14%	18%	28%	12%	19%	24%
Don't know	23%	15%	11%	19%	20%	19%	10%	35%	13%	35%	8%	11%	25%	43%	31%

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

Humanitarian law and specific rules governing wartime conduct, including the Geneva Conventions, are most often mentioned when people volunteer the types of laws and rules they have in mind. When respondents are asked to identify the sources for those laws, a near majority (47 per cent) say they are grounded in international law, 23 per cent point to their country's laws, 13 per cent cite people's values, and 9 per cent cite religious principles. (See Figure 25.)

Predominantly Muslim peoples – Afghans, Palestinians and Somalis – are about twice as likely as others to mention religious principles as the source for these laws. In the internationalized conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the largest bloc refer to laws beyond the country's borders: 69 per cent of respondents focus on international law.

Firsthand exposure to fighting and conflict seems to increase acceptance of punishment of war criminals. Seventy-three per cent of combatants say that people who break important rules of war should be punished, compared with 57 per cent of non-combatants.[32] In addition, 65 per cent of those who say they lived in an area where the war took place believe that people should be punished, compared with 51 per cent of those who did not live in such areas. In Nigeria, for example, 52 per cent of people in the south-east – the site of the Biafran war in the late 1960s – support punishment, while only 39 per cent of people who live elsewhere agree.

The situation in Lebanon, however, illustrates that people's attitudes are shaped not only by where they live but on their expectations about who will be punished. Only 37 per cent of residents of

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[31] The exception to this rule is Afghanistan, where one-third of respondents (33 per cent) say there are no such laws or rules demanding punishment. Afghan attitudes are due in part to "war fatigue" and the wish to put 20 years of conflict behind them and in part to Islamic principles that say Allah will punish wrongdoers.

[32] In line with this finding, 64 per cent of men favour punishment for those who break rules of war, compared with 54 per cent of women.

FIGURE 25
What laws are based on
(per cent of total and in each setting who believe laws exist)

	Total	Colombia	El Salvador	Philippines	Georgians	Abkhaz	Afghanistan	Cambodia	B-H	Lebanon	Israelis	Palestinians	Somalia	South Africa	Nigeria
Country's laws	22%	30%	27%	41%	28%	24%	19%	35%	12%	21%	5%	3%	23%	26%	18%
International law	46%	34%	38%	12%	31%	28%	47%	64%	56%	53%	66%	73%	35%	46%	63%
Religious principles	9%	3%	8%	7%	12%	1%	26%	0%	3%	10%	6%	16%	27%	7%	6%
The values people hold	13%	20%	19%	5%	22%	40%	1%	1%	13%	16%	17%	5%	7%	16%	7%
Other	1%	1%	1%	-	-	2%	2%	-	0%	0%	2%	-	1%	1%	4%
Don't know	9%	12%	6%	34%	6%	5%	4%	0%	16%	-	3%	1%	7%	4%	4%

Question: Are there rules or laws that are so important that, if broken during war, the person who broke them should be punished? (IF YES) What are these laws based on?

Beirut – where most of the civil war atrocities occurred – support punishment. But in the south, which has been an ongoing battleground between Israel and Lebanon, the majority (58 per cent) support punishment. Respondents in southern Lebanon are clearly thinking about punishment of an external enemy – Israel – that is occupying their land, rather than punishing their fellow countrymen.

Overall, three in four of those surveyed (76 per cent) say that those who have violated certain rules of war should be put on trial. In focus groups and in-depth interviews, participants offered a variety of moral and pragmatic reasons to support their convictions. After 50 years of almost constant civil war, Colombian fighters and civilians both insisted that trials and punishment are needed:

Not trying [the war criminals] gives a sense of impunity for future generations.

If I do a thing like that, then I will be judged, but so will they judge everybody.

They violated rules: the right to life, they have taken away the right to liberty. They did too much harm to Colombia.

…if the individuals who commit atrocities are not tried and penalized, they remain free to continue committing atrocities…

It would be a great day when the people could say: "Come here, we are going to judge you."

About one in six respondents (16 per cent) are looking for closure rather than trials and punishment; they believe that the perpetrators of war crimes should be granted amnesty or otherwise forgiven. Exhaustion with the memories of brutal war makes them hesitant to reopen the book, revive old hatreds or relive their experiences. The three countries where people are least likely to want to put people on trial – El Salvador, the Philippines and Nigeria – are home to the wars that are either a part of history (albeit with long-lasting influence) or have been mostly contained. (See Figure 26.)

This is clearest in El Salvador, where the highest percentage of respondents say that war criminals should be granted amnesty or forgiven or forgotten (43 per cent). Salvadorans approach the

question of war crimes with somewhat contradictory views that reflect competing beliefs. Six of ten Salvadorans believe there are rules or laws so important that those who break them should be punished

FIGURE 26
After the conflict
(per cent of total and in each setting who believe laws exist)

	Total	Colombia	El Salvador	Philippines	Georgians	Abkhaz	Afghanistan	Cambodia	B-H	Lebanon	Israelis	Palestinians	Somalia	South Africa	Nigeria
Be put on trial	76%	72%	43%	65%	82%	77%	71%	91%	94%	90%	67%	83%	79%	70%	62%
Be exposed to the public but not put on trial	5%	7%	8%	3%	9%	9%	5%	2%	2%	3%	5%	5%	3%	9%	4%
Granted amnesty	7%	-	18%	18%	1%	1%	14%	2%	2%	3%	12%	5%	3%	13%	16%
Be forgiven after the war	5%	-	19%	9%	1%	5%	6%	1%	1%	3%	5%	4%	5%	3%	12%
Be forgotten when the war is over	4%	15%	6%	3%	2%	3%	1%	2%	0%	1%	4%	2%	1%	3%	3%
Don't know	3%	6%	5%	2%	6%	5%	3%	2%	-	1%	6%	2%	9%	2%	3%

Question: When the conflict is over, should people who have broken these rules...?

(60 per cent). They want someone to pay the price for the vicious behaviour in the war – and yet they seem desperate to put the war far behind them.

In Mindanao in the Philippines, many of those who live near the conflict and have felt its effects are looking to close this chapter of their lives. One-half (50 per cent) believe that those who break laws should be brought to trial, while 43 per cent believe they should either be given amnesty, forgiven or simply forgotten after the armed conflict ends.

In the focus groups and in-depth interviews, there is a broadly held belief that the blame for many of the atrocities lies with military leaders, who put incredible pressures on soldiers and fighters to commit heinous acts to gain a strategic advantage. In their comments, both civilians and combatants attempt to absolve young, ill-trained combatants of responsibility for their actions.

"When we consider the matter of conscience," one former Serb soldier declared, it is the "power wielders", military commanders and "politicians, not fighters, are those who should be asked." A Lebanese religious sister said that fighters "were put in circumstances they were not able to analyse. The ones to be punished are the leaders…" In Cambodia, a journalist denied the culpability of rank and file soldiers, "I think most of the soldiers, nearly all of the simple soldiers… don't know anything about war… what they have done they have done according to the order of their commanders."

In El Salvador, two women – one a former combatant, the other a civilian who lived in a conflict zone – put it simply:

So they, too, were repressed to be able to carry out orders, so I think that those who should be punished are those who were giving orders to kill.

For me, they shouldn't punish those who did the act but the heads of the acts, the ones who brainwashed and put these ideas into the heads of the people who acted.

Respondents are divided on who should be given responsibility for punishing war criminals. A majority (55 per cent) believe that their own government, courts, military or politicians should handle such affairs. More than one-third (36 per cent) say that an international criminal court should handle these cases.

FIGURE 27

Who should punish wrongdoers?

(per cent of total and in each setting who believe laws exist)

	Total	Colombia	El Salvador	Philippines	Georgians	Abkhaz	Afghanistan	Cambodia	B-H	Lebanon	Israelis	Palestinians	Somalia	South Africa	Nigeria
Int'l criminal court	36%	23%	34%	10%	16%	14%	11%	54%	61%	43%	30%	76%	37%	38%	52%
Own government	24%	45%	27%	41%	37%	34%	34%	8%	6%	29%	12%	3%	9%	30%	13%
Own courts	19%	15%	18%	31%	9%	15%	34%	33%	11%	15%	23%	1%	30%	12%	9%
The military itself	7%	3%	7%	5%	19%	17%	2%	0%	2%	6%	20%	4%	5%	11%	19%
Own political leaders	5%	2%	2%	6%	8%	12%	6%	2%	11%	4%	1%	2%	4%	2%	1%
The civilian population	2%	3%	4%	3%	4%	4%	3%	1%	1%	0%	-	-	3%	3%	1%
Other	2%	1%	1%	-	1%	0%	4%	0%	5%	1%	11%	2%	3%	1%	0%
Don't know	4%	7%	6%	2%	6%	4%	4%	2%	4%	2%	3%	4%	10%	3%	4%

Question: Who should be responsible for punishment?

These data mask wide differences between countries and among groups within countries. Two factors help explain these differences. First, people's past experiences with the institutions in question – international court, national courts, government leaders and the military – undoubtedly shape their opinions about whether that institution is capable of providing fair justice in the future. Second, in most countries without strong State authority, more people tend to turn to an international court, believing their country's institutions to be either too weak or corrupt to render fair judgment.[33]

Examples drawn from a variety of settings illustrate these trends:

· In South Africa – a society where the once-oppressed majority is now in control – white South Africans are more than twice as likely as black South Africans to see an international criminal court as the proper venue for punishing war criminals (65 per cent of whites, compared with 27 per cent of blacks). Black South Africans, on the other hand, are three times more likely to put their trust in the hands of the country's government, courts or political leaders.

· Seventy-six per cent of Palestinians – who lack long-established state authority – would turn to an international criminal court to punish wrongdoers. Only 30 per cent of Israelis would; the majority would vest the Israeli military with this responsibility (20 per cent) or the national courts or government (35 per cent).

· In Nigeria, although the majority (52 per cent) support trial by an international court, a significant minority would look to government institutions or political leaders (23 per cent) or the military (19 per cent).

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[33] Again, Afghanistan is the exception to the rule; only 11 per cent of respondents opt for an international criminal court despite the lack of a strong central government. This can be explained in part by traditional Afghan suspicion of foreign interference in their country's affairs and an almost absolute belief in following the dictates of Islamic law, which does not countenance rulings by non-Islamic courts.

· In Afghanistan, 40 per cent of men say that such cases should be decided by Afghan traditional all-male courts, but only 24 per cent of women agree. Afghan women want to vest the government with the power to handle these cases.

· Serbs demonstrate less faith in an international criminal court than Bosniacs and Croats. Only 41 per cent of Serbs say an international court should assume responsibility for punishing war criminals, compared with more than half of both Bosniacs and Croats.

International community

As the barriers meant to protect civilians from the consequences of war have crumbled around the world, shoring up those walls has become a central focus of the international community. In the past two decades, countries, regional alliances and international institutions have joined together to help save civilians targeted by "ethnic cleansing"; to shield those caught in the crossfire of violent conflict; to save millions from starvation; and to assist displaced persons and refugees. It is safe to say that without such interventions, millions more civilians would have been added to the list of those killed, injured or driven from their homes by war.

This is not to say that the protection of civilians has replaced the traditional reasons behind international intervention in cross-border and civil wars; countries still act based on perceived threats to national security, protection of economic interests and attempts to stop trouble before it spreads. The context of intervention, however, has been significantly changed by the end of the Cold War and the demise of superpower proxy wars, the increasingly destructive power of modern weaponry, rising global interdependence, and media-driven awareness of the plight of civilians in every corner of the world.

In the countries surveyed as part of the People on War project, the impact of the international community on the course of conflict has varied considerably. Two countries – Afghanistan and El Salvador – were among the last battlegrounds of the Cold War. Perhaps no war has been the subject of more international attention – or more attempts to negotiate peace – than the ongoing dispute between the Israelis and Palestinians. In other cases – Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cambodia and Lebanon, for example – foreign powers and institutions have had an immense impact on the course of the war. In others – like the Philippines – their role has been much more muted.

Focus groups and in-depth interviews revealed that opinions about the international community – indeed, the very definition of the term "international community" – reflected participants' firsthand experiences with its representatives. These attitudes have been largely shaped by contacts with three distinct groups: foreign powers, the UN and humanitarian organizations. UN peacekeepers along the Israeli-Lebanese border, Soviet helicopter gunship crews flying above remote Afghan villages, and volunteers in Cambodian refugee camps – all have had their impact on the views of those caught up in war. It is not surprising that attitudes towards the international community differ as much as the conflicts themselves.

These attitudes were marked by deep ambivalence and contradictory impulses. There was a tendency among many to decry the influence of foreigners in their country's internal affairs. Others saw the introduction of international armed troops into their country as the only guarantee that they will survive to see another day. Once foreign peacekeepers, troops or humanitarian personnel have arrived in a country or territory, many complained that they lack the force to implement their mandate. Others said they arrived too late. Yet the lack of strong internal institutions and the fear of continued chaos and conflict help drive a majority of people to support future intervention on behalf of civilians. For the most part, people offered a positive but cautious evaluation of the role of the international community in the wars they have experienced. In many countries included in the consultation, attitudes were primarily shaped by contacts with the UN – its peacekeeping forces, its observers and humanitarian aid agencies.[34]

Overall, the majority of respondents (51 per cent) in settings with an international peacekeeping presence believe that these forces have had a positive impact; only 14 per cent say they've made the situation worse. Yet more than one in four (27 per cent) say their presence has made no difference at all. (See Figure 28.)

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[34] Overall, a slim majority of respondents (51 per cent) in the countries where the UN had a peacekeeping or observer presence – Georgia and Abkhazia, Cambodia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Lebanon and Somalia – say that the UN made conditions better for them and their fellow citizens. Only 14 per cent say the UN made things worse, while 27 per cent say it made no difference.

FIGURE 28
International peacekeeping forces
(per cent of total and in these settings responding)

	Total	Georgians[35]	Abkhaz[36]	Cambodia	B-H	Lebanon	Somalia
Better	51%	31%	81%	88%	41%	41%	46%
Worse	14%	9%	2%	2%	13%	8%	27%
No difference	27%	52%	15%	9%	40%	44%	10%
Don't know	7%	8%	2%	1%	7%	8%	17%

Question: Is the (international force) making it better or worse, or isn't it making any difference?

Impressions differed greatly within each country, however. Bosnia-Herzegovina and Georgia and Abkhazia, in particular, illustrate the varying perceptions of the effectiveness of the UN peacekeepers and observers and their ability to remain non-partisan and to inspire confidence.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, which is the most internationalized of the conflicts surveyed by the ICRC, there is deep ambivalence among Bosniacs, Serbs and Croats about the role of the UN and the NATO forces. Bosnians regularly credit the international community with bringing the fighting to an end, but they are critical of many of its actions. For example, respondents in Bosnia-Herzegovina are equally divided between those who say that the UN force (UNPROFOR) made life better and those who say it made no difference. Attitudes about the so-called "safe areas" are also illustrative: while 52 per cent of respondents say they are a good idea, 38 per cent say they made things better and fully 33 per cent say they made no difference.

The resentment born of the international community's failure to protect the safe areas was heightened because of the expectations created. A displaced person from Bihac stated it clearly: "They [UN forces] are good if they help people get food, etc., and bad if they proclaim something to be [a] security zone and at the end, the town gets attacked and destroyed." Bosniacs whose family members were reported "missing" in the war echoed this feeling:

I would like to stress that in my opinion even more guilt for that crime [the massacre at Srebrenica], more than the Serbs, is [the] international community. These people were in a protected area.

At the end, the international community gave me pain. They really disappointed us.

But we know what happened. A lot of civilians got killed in these zones. The international community should have protected them better.

For many Serbs questioned in the in-depth research, the "safe areas" symbolized the partiality of the international community in this conflict. They allowed arms to be held in these zones, which threatened the Serbs and delayed the war's conclusion. Again, expectations were raised and the failure to create safe areas as promised endangered the civilians. "The international community was responsible for

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[35] These numbers refer to UNOMIG - the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia.

[36] These numbers refer to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Peacekeeping Forces (PKF).

every single life in those areas," a Serb who lost a family member in the war said, adding "UNPROFOR was on one side and it made it worse for us here."

In Georgia and Abkhazia, the war left combatants and civilians alike with a limited faith in the ability of international organizations to prevent or ameliorate conflicts and wartime abuses. On both sides – despite tremendously different views of the international forces involved – there is a perception, backed up by the reality of the conflict, that these forces were powerless to prevent the worst abuses of the war. As one man who said that he had taken hostages during the conflict declared: "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."

Both the Russian peacekeeping forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the 100-member UN observer mission are viewed as partisan by one side or the other. The CIS peacekeepers are credited by the Abkhaz with preventing a recurrence of the violence ("We sleep peacefully," an elderly woman in the city of Sukhumi said) but the Georgians see them as proof of Russia's ongoing attempts to maintain a presence in the region. "Nothing will change as long as Russians are here," an internally displaced Georgian woman observed.

Respondents in Georgia and Abkhazia were critical of the UN in almost all of its roles – as preventer of war, peacekeeper, and observer through its military observers. Although young Abkhaz men harshly criticized members of the UN force for doing little or nothing and collecting large salaries, they also recognized the dilemma facing the UN: "We can't accuse them of much. The 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."

Despite these reservations about the efficacy of international organizations, the Abkhaz, and to a lesser degree, the Georgians, acknowledge that the presence of these forces brings a welcome measure of calm to the situation: 81 per cent of Abkhaz feel the CIS Peacekeeping Force (PKF) is making the situation better; 31 per cent of Georgians feel similarly about the presence of the UN observer force (UNOMIG). And 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. In focus groups, however, a number of participants said they are tired of outside intervention, echoing the words of a young man in Sukhumi: "I think the best aid is not to interfere."

Extended contact with UN peacekeepers has left the Lebanese pessimistic about the power of the UN. Although many in the country's south – where the UN force (UNIFIL) is stationed – expressed support for its activities, there is far from universal support. One young Lebanese man call the UN "beautiful and… international, but it didn't have enough power to… force anybody to respect a certain law." A former combatant compared UNIFIL to "the ostrich who hides its face under the ground and cannot see the main problems happening."

The vagaries of intervention are well illustrated by the experience of UNTAC, the 22,000-member UN civilian and military force which went into Cambodia in 1992 and 1993. Its efforts and impact were supplemented by the tremendous efforts of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which worked to help Cambodians in camps along the Thai border. Although UNTAC succeeded in holding elections that were judged to be free and fair, it failed in one of its basic missions: to disarm members of the many warring factions.

Although credited with stabilizing Cambodia, these exchanges among two groups of Cambodian women – the first a group who make their living as market stall vendors in Phnom Penh, the second women heads of household – illustrated the extremely difficult task facing the UN:

[Moderator: Did the presence of UNTAC make the situation in Cambodia better, worse or did it make no difference?]

It is better than before.

It is easy to do business. There is progress. [All agree]

UNTAC spread AIDS.

Without UNTAC my life would be terrible.

They [UNTAC] could protect us during the election.

It made a difference. We had a free and fair election to select our representatives.

They found peace for the Cambodian people.

It is better than before to a certain extent. People have [a] chance to do business easier. No "K5" and no amputees [caused] by the "K5".[37]

Except one thing [which is not good], they introduced HIV/AIDS to Cambodia.

No difference. Cambodia is still the same. I used to sell vegetables and now I still sell vegetables.

It should come as little surprise that in a country like Cambodia – whose people have lived through extended periods of violence for 30 years and whose trust in their central government has been challenged time and again – people are looking outwards for help.

We want our land, our territory to stay without any invasion. We want the United Nations to help look at our Cambodian country, not allow Cambodia to be gradually swallowed, and Cambodia becomes smaller and smaller, and finally like Cham people who don't have any more land and have to live on boats.[38]

Conflicts that began as superpower proxy wars illustrate the dilemma facing people in some of these war-torn countries: on the one hand, they want to assert their independence but, on the other, they seem to rely reluctantly on help from outside powers.

In El Salvador – a country where the government and guerrilla forces were armed and supported by the United States and the Soviet Union and its allies – there is a residue of anger at the outside powers that sustained the war. At the same time, not a few Salvadorans believe that earlier international involvement would have reduced the war's impact. If only the spotlight had focused on El Salvador, they believe, the war may not have gone on for as long or been as brutal. "Too much time went by before they [the international community] got involved", one woman who lived in a conflict zone observed. One former guerrilla fighter said the international community should have taken note of the conflict sooner and intervened, while another said succinctly: "…the international organizations should have come, they should not have let this [war] happen."

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[37] "K5" refers to the project to build a fence along the Thai border. In the process, malaria and landmines killed thousands of people.

[38] The Cham people are an ethnic minority in Cambodia.

Perhaps no country better illustrates the dilemma and contradictions faced by people in war-torn countries than Afghanistan. Afghanistan was the last "hot" battleground of the Cold War and the only one of the wars studied by the ICRC to face an invasion of superpower troops. Centuries of attempts by neighbouring powers and others to dominate their country have left Afghans suspicious of, indeed hostile to, any and all who threaten their independence. People from all walks of life shared the conviction of an Afghan woman displaced by the war that "foreign hands are behind all this" or, as a former *mujahideen* fighter said, Afghan "annihilation has been planned under a conspiracy." "It is just like chess," a doctor said, "External [powers] are using us and making us fight with each other."

In a sign of just how desperate Afghans are to end more than 20 years of conflict, they are ready to temporarily surrender their fierce traditions and independence and ask foreign powers and the international community for help in bringing peace. A combatant in the Northern Coalition fighting Afghanistan's current leaders, the Taliban, suggested that Russia, China and Iran work with the UN to rebuild his country. "We ask our neighbours to take pity and help us resolve this," one farmer said. A housewife added: "We need the outside countries to collect arms and weapons [from] Afghanistan and work out peace in Afghanistan." A religious leader offered a historical view:

> Everybody who was looking at Afghanistan [was] expecting to help Afghanistan after the Russians left… When they saw these parties are fighting amongst themselves, then they withdrew that aid from Afghanistan. So we are still very aggrieved at our treatment by the rest of the world.

Ultimately, however, ambivalent feelings and descriptions about past treatment by the international community, the UN and other groups seem to disappear when respondents are asked whether these organizations should continue to try and help civilians caught in wars. Two of three respondents (66 per cent) say that there is a need for more intervention by the international community on behalf of civilians whose villages are attacked or cut off from food, water or medical supplies. Seventeen per cent say there should be less intervention, while 10 per cent say there should be no intervention. (See Figure 29.)

In countries where the national government is not firmly entrenched or the population lacks trust in the central authorities, support for more intervention is much higher than the average 66 per cent. In Cambodia – which has experienced a succession of governments – an extraordinary 97 per cent of respondents say there should be more intervention. Colombia (89 per cent), Nigeria (82 per cent) and El Salvador (80 per cent) follow closely behind.[39] As one Somali militiaman put it: "It's essential for the organization [like the Red Crescent] to keep helping. There are a lot of people who are weak and we don't have a government."

Bosnia-Herzegovina – a country where people feel the international community promised much but delivered little – is one of two countries in which the percentage of respondents favouring less intervention or none at all (65 per cent) is greater than the respondents favouring more intervention (32 per cent). In the Philippines – which has a relatively cohesive central government and where fighting has been contained – 50 per cent favour less or no intervention, while 44 per cent favour more. Despite their explicit reservations, in times of crisis, people caught in the crossfire of wars seem ready to push aside their cynicism and distrust and welcome assistance from all quarters.

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[39] Only Somalia – which has lacked a central government for a decade – stands as an exception to this hypothesis. A bare majority (51 per cent) support more intervention, while 38 per cent disagree. Among other things, this could be a reflection of their impressions of the UN forces in Somalia during the conflict, and a Somali tradition of staunch independence.

FIGURE 29

Intervention

(per cent of total and in each setting responding)

	want more intervention	want less intervention
Total	66%	17%
Colombia	89%	1%
El Salvador	80%	12%
Philippines	44%	35%
Georgians	69%	19%
Abkhaz	67%	12%
Afghanistan	68%	8%
Cambodia	97%	1%
Bosnia-Herzegovina	32%	55%
Lebanon	69%	6%
Israelis	56%	23%
Palestinians	75%	15%
Somalia	51%	11%
South Africa	64%	11%
Nigeria	82%	8%
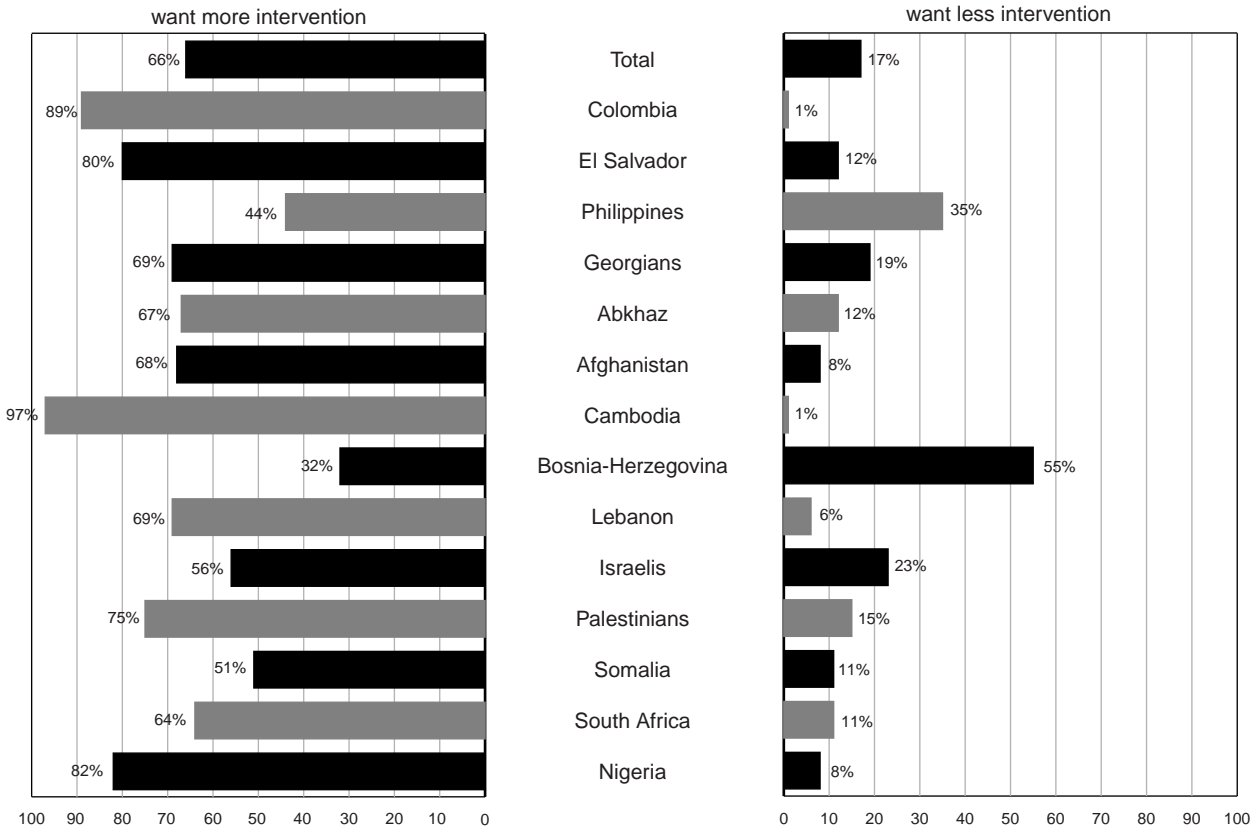
Question: In the future, would you like to see more or less intervention from the international community to deal with these kinds of issues (civilian areas attacked or cut off from food, water, medical supplies and electricity)?

Red cross or red crescent emblem

The ICRC and National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies are familiar to people in war-torn countries worldwide. Eighty-four per cent of respondents correctly identify the red cross or red crescent on a white background.[40]

FIGURE 30
Emblem
(per cent of total and in each setting responding)[41]

	Total	Colombia	El Salvador	Philippines	Georgians	Abkhaz	Afghanistan	Cambodia	B-H	Lebanon	Israelis	Palestinians	Somalia	South Africa	Nigeria
Red Cross	76%	77%	92%	85%	97%	95%	70%	78%	91%	97%	90%	80%	13%	53%	84%
Red Crescent	5%	1%	0%	-	-	-	7%	0%	-	0%	-	2%	53%	0%	0%
Red Cross and Red Crescent	3%	5%	0%	-	1%	0%	4%	3%	3%	1%	-	4%	12%	0%	2%
Medical/hospital	7%	7%	1%	13%	2%	2%	0%	17%	4%	0%	1%	4%	8%	15%	8%
Other	2%	5%	5%	4%	0%	0%	-	0%	1%	0%	2%	1%	0%	3%	1%
Don't know	7%	5%	2%	5%	0%	2%	16%	2%	1%	0%	3%	5%	13%	28%	5%

Question: Are you familiar with this (SHOW RED CROSS OR RED CRESCENT)? What does it stand for?

The vast majority of people associate the emblem with protection of the vulnerable, the wounded and the sick. About one in four (24 per cent) say the emblem protects all those who need help, including civilians and the "unprotected". Twenty-two per cent of respondents say the emblem protects the wounded and sick, 11 per cent say medical personnel, with an additional 7 per cent specifically mentioning Red Cross personnel, and 4 per cent hospitals, clinics and vehicles. Seven per cent cite prisoners of war and 5 per cent single out refugees. (See Figure 31.)

Not surprisingly, perceptions of what the red cross or red crescent emblem protects varies widely according to the nature of the conflict, as these examples illustrate.

· Israelis and Palestinians overwhelmingly associate the red cross emblem with protecting prisoners of war, 34 and 39 per cent, respectively. About one in five Israelis and Palestinians (22 per cent) associate the emblem with helping the wounded and sick. About 15 per cent say it protects people affected by war.

· In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the red cross emblem is seen to protect vulnerable groups such as women, children, the elderly and the sick; 43 per cent say it's for unprotected civilians.

· In Lebanon, fully 98 per cent of respondents recognize the red cross emblem. Nearly half (48 per cent) say that the emblem stands for protecting ICRC/Red Cross personnel, 11 per cent cite medical personnel and 14 per cent mention medical buildings and emergency vehicles.

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[40] In South Africa, fewer than three-quarters of all respondents correctly identify the emblem. Eighty-five per cent of white South Africans identify the emblem correctly, and 48 per cent of black South Africans.

[41] Respondents were asked to volunteer their own answer.

FIGURE 31

Protect

(per cent of total and in each setting responding)[42]

	Total			Total
The wounded/sick	22%	Children/orphans		1%
All who need help	11%	Casualties of war		1%
Medical personnel	11%	People experiencing shortages		1%
Red Cross personnel	7%	The poor		1%
Prisoners of war	7%	The elderly		1%
Everybody	7%	Soldiers and fighters		1%
Civilians	7%	Lonely/pensioners		1%
Unprotected people	6%	Women		1%
Refugees	5%	Symbol of safety		1%
People affected by war	4%	Provide aid		1%
Medical buildings/ emergency vehicles	4%	The hungry		1%
Disaster victims	2%	Other		4%
Aid in emergencies	2%	Don't know		8%

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

· In the Philippines, the red cross emblem is overwhelmingly identified with medical and emergency workers and casualties. Fully 79 per cent of respondents say the emblem protects medical personnel, 19 per cent cite people who aid others in emergencies and 14 per cent cite casualties of war.[43]

· Afghan respondents say the red crescent emblem protects the vulnerable and those injured or displaced by war. More than one-third (37 per cent) say it protects all who need help, while another 18 per cent say it protects those living in conflict areas, refugees and civilians more generally.

· In Georgia, 39 per cent associate the red cross emblem with helping the wounded and sick, while 25 per cent cite the elderly and pensioners. Eleven per cent say it protects refugees. Among the Abkhaz, 32 per cent say the emblem protects everyone or civilians in particular. More than a quarter (27 per cent) say it protects medical or Red Cross personnel; 23 per cent say it protects people experiencing food shortages, 15 per cent cite the elderly and 11 per cent women.

· Fifty per cent of Nigerians say the red cross emblem protects the wounded and sick; 16 per cent say it protects medical personnel, of which 12 per cent specifically mention Red Cross personnel. Thirteen per cent say it protects medical buildings and emergency vehicles.

· In Somalia, 20 per cent say the red crescent emblem protects civilians; 13 per cent say it protects the wounded and sick. Seven per cent of Somalis say it protects the hungry.

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[42] Respondents were asked to volunteer their own answer.

[43] Responses were open-ended, that is, respondents were not given a list of options from which to choose. The numbers add up to more than 100 per cent because this was an open-ended question in which people were allowed to list more than one kind of person or activity they associate with the red cross or red crescent emblem.

· In El Salvador, 42 per cent say the red cross emblem protects everyone; one in five mention the wounded and sick and 12 per cent say the red cross protects all those who need help.

· Eight per cent of South Africans mention refugees; 12 per cent say the red cross emblem protects people affected by war and 5 per cent say it helps the poor.

FIGURE 32
Turn to for help
(per cent of total and in each setting responding)[44]

	Total	El Salvador	Georgians	Abkhaz	Afghanistan	Cambodia	B-H	Lebanon	Israelis	Palestinians	Somalia	South Africa	Nigeria
ICRC/Red Cross/ Red Crescent	43%	58%	15%	36%	40%		61%	52%	31%	65%	32%	24%	52%
Government	11%	23%	30%	0%	5%		4%	5%	19%	5%	0%	21%	14%
UN organizations (e.g. UNHCR)	10%	1%	6%	7%	36%		2%	11%	9%	28%	16%	4%	9%
Humanitarian orgs	9%	7%	3%	1%	10%		15%	14%	20%	6%	6%	2%	13%
No one	8%	1%	2%	32%	8%		6%	19%	1%	1%	0%	13%	5%
Religious leaders	5%	3%	0%	0%	1%		0%	4%	9%	6%	21%	4%	5%
Int'l organizations	5%	5%	5%	0%	0%		0%	5%	20%	6%	16%	1%	9%
Local govt leaders	4%	2%	16%	19%	1%		0%	5%	2%	2%	1%	4%	1%
Other	4%	4%	5%	0%	2%		8%	0%	7%	4%	8%	2%	0%
God/church	3%	0%	0%	0%	16%		0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	11%
Army/military	2%	3%	4%	0%	1%		0%	3%	2%	0%	0%	4%	2%
The people	1%	0%	18%	0%	1%		0%	0%	2%	2%	0%	0%	1%
UN (general)	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%		9%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Don't know/refused	11%	5%	6%	11%	6%		11%	4%	0%	15%	0%	24%	17%

Question: 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 be protected?

Philippines	Total	Colombia	Total
Government or government agencies	77%	Red Cross	48%
Government officials	34%	International court	4%
Red Cross	31%	The government	28%
Other people/Filipinos	10%	The military	13%
God/priest/minister/church	5%	The church	4%
Military	3%	UN	9%
Police	3%	Medical centre	2%
Non-governmental organizations	2%	Civilian corps	4%
Can't turn to anybody	2%	People's defender	5%
UN	2%	The family	1%
Civilian corps	2%	No answer	16%
Don't know/refused	4%		

[44] Data for Cambodia were not available at the time of writing the report. The numbers for Colombia and the Philippines are not reported precisely because the coding scheme was not fully standardized until after the initial stages of the research were conducted.

Turn to for help

When respondents are asked to name whom they would turn to for help if civilians were attacked or cut off from food, water and medical supplies, 43 per cent say the ICRC/Red Cross or Red Crescent – almost three times the next most frequently chosen group.[45] Fifteen per cent say they would turn to national or local governments, while 10 per cent say UN agencies, 9 per cent say humanitarian organizations and 8 per cent mention religious leaders and institutions. (See Figure 32.)

For the most part, these answers reflect the organizations and groups of people named when respondents are asked who has played the greatest role in protecting them in the past. (See Figure 19.) Experiences with certain agencies have, however, tempered some people's views. Only 11 per cent of those surveyed in Bosnia-Herzegovina – where the UN has played a very large role – say they would turn to UN organizations. Thirty-two per cent of those in Abkhazia and 19 per cent of those in Lebanon say they would turn to no one.

[45] It is likely that this finding is overstated by about 17 percentage points because in most settings interviewers were working for the Red Cross or Red Crescent. This assumption has been confirmed in the parallel research, in which differences were noted on awareness of the ICRC and the National Red Cross or Red Crescent Society. See Parallel Research Programme report, p. 10, Figure 11 for details.

France, Russian Federation, United Kingdom and United States — permanent members of the UN Security Council

As part of the People on War project, the ICRC conducted surveys in four of the five permanent member countries of the UN Security Council: France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States.[46] These surveys were meant to complement the findings of the ICRC's year-long consultation with people living in war-torn countries around the world. They were also meant to help provide new perspectives on attitudes about war that are shared – or not shared – by people with direct experiences with conflict.

It should be noted from the outset that there are wide gaps in attitudes among respondents within each group of countries. The results in these four Security Council countries surveyed reveal differences in attitudes between respondents in France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States – sometimes very large differences – just as they do in the war zones. A country's global position, its history, its core beliefs and the firsthand experiences of its citizens all play important roles in defining these attitudes.

The major conclusions of this comparison between attitudes in these four Security Council countries and attitudes in the 12 war-torn countries surveyed include:

· The vast majority of respondents in the four Security Council countries and war-torn countries believe in absolute protection for civilians during wartime. Significant minorities in all countries, however, say that combatants should avoid civilians "as much as possible".

· Across a wide range of measures, respondents in the United States demonstrate much greater tolerance of attacks on civilians than do their three Security Council counterparts. The Russian Federation, on the other hand, holds the hardest line against attacks on civilians and displays the greatest knowledge of, and commitment to, international law.

· A belief in human rights is cited most frequently by people in both groups of countries as the basis for their convictions that attacking civilians is wrong.

· There is evidence to suggest that people in war-torn countries that have endured extended, chaotic conflicts in which civilians have routinely been casualties are less likely to approve of actions that could harm civilians than are those who have been involved in highly partisan wars.

· Nuclear weapons, chemical weapons and landmines rank highest among the weapons that people in both groups of countries want to see prohibited. There is overwhelming rejection of landmines, although respondents in the United States and the Russian Federation are more likely to approve of their use.

· Understanding of obligations towards prisoners is uneven in both sets of countries, and about one-third of respondents in the United States (32 per cent) and the war-torn countries (31 per cent) believe prisoners can be subject to torture. There is only minimal support, however, for killing prisoners if the enemy is doing the same.

· There is evidence to suggest that exposure to war in their own country causes people to identify personally with those who cannot defend themselves. Respondents in war-torn countries – combatants and non-combatants alike – are twice as likely as those in the four Security Council countries surveyed to say captured combatants deserve to die, yet, when

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[46] A full analysis of the surveys can be found in the People on War Country Reports for France, United Kingdom and United States and for the Russian Federation. It should be noted that the timing of the surveys was planned prior to the outbreak of the conflict in Yugoslavia. The surveys themselves were conducted in March-May 1999. It was not possible for the ICRC to organize a similar survey in the People's Republic of China.

faced with a difficult personal dilemma, they are more likely than their four Security Council counterparts to say they would save or help a defenceless enemy combatant who had killed someone close to them.

· Nowhere in the ICRC consultation are the differences between the Security Council countries and the war-torn countries surveyed more pronounced than in awareness of the Geneva Conventions. While the Security Council country respondents are much more likely to have heard of the Conventions, those surveyed in the war-torn countries have much stronger convictions that the Conventions can prevent wars from getting worse.

· The publics in the four Security Council countries surveyed are more likely than the people in the war-torn countries to believe that wrongdoers should be punished for breaking laws during wartime, that these people should be put on trial and that international institutions should be responsible for punishing them.

Protection of civilians

The vast majority of respondents in the four Security Council countries and war-torn countries surveyed believe in absolute protections for civilians during wartime. Sixty-eight per cent in the four Security Council countries say that combatants should "attack only enemy combatants and leave civilians alone". Sixty-four per cent of those in war-torn settings agree. Only a handful of people – 2 per cent and 3 per cent, respectively – sanction attacks on both combatants and civilians.[47] (See Figure 33.)

FIGURE 33
Combatants and civilians
(per cent of total and in each setting responding)

	Attack enemy combatants and civilians	Attack enemy combatants and avoid civilians as much as possible	Attack only enemy combatants and leave civilians alone
Total Security Council*	2%	26%	68%
United Kingdom	1%	26%	72%
United States	4%	42%	52%
France	1%	17%	76%
Russian Federation	2%	17%	77%
Total war-torn**	3%	29%	64%
Colombia	1%	20%	72%
El Salvador	1%	9%	84%
Philippines	1%	65%	29%
Georgians	0%	28%	72%
Abkhaz	3%	34%	62%
Afghanistan	3%	32%	62%
Cambodia	1%	10%	88%
Bosnia-Herzegovina	2%	18%	76%
Lebanon	2%	29%	68%
Israelis	7%	58%	33%
Palestinians	16%	43%	41%
Somalia	8%	21%	66%
South Africa	2%	32%	62%
Nigeria	8%	29%	60%

Question: When combatants attack to weaken the enemy, should they...?

* The four permanent Security Council members surveyed
** The war-torn settings surveyed

[47] However, a large gap in the attitudes of the Security Council countries and the war-torn settings is highlighted when respondents are asked in an open-ended question to name actions that combatants should not be allowed to take in fighting the enemy. Twenty per cent of Security Council respondents say that there should be no restrictions on the actions of combatants, compared with only 4 per cent of those surveyed in war-torn settings.

A significant minority of people in both groups of countries, however, agree with another, conditional response: they say that combatants should "avoid civilians as much as possible". About one-quarter of the four Security Council country respondents (26 per cent) choose this response, compared with about one-third (29 per cent) of those surveyed in war-torn countries. Whether this answer is more realistic or less humane than the absolute position is hard to say, but the end result is that the door to attacks on civilians can more easily be pushed open.[48]

Among the four Security Council countries surveyed, respondents in the United States demonstrate greater tolerance of attacks on civilians. A bare majority (52 per cent) say that combatants should leave civilians alone, while 42 per cent say civilians should be avoided as much as possible. In contrast, nearly three-quarters of respondents in the other three Security Council countries surveyed adopt the absolute standard, while 20 per cent – half as many as in the American survey – choose the conditional option. Across a wide range of questions, in fact, Americans demonstrate much laxer attitudes towards attacks on civilians. Pragmatic views of the power of weapons of mass destruction, lack of direct experience of war on US territory, constant media exposure to conflicts that claim untold numbers of civilian lives – along with many other factors – may help explain this trend.

The impact of direct experience with war is revealed when respondents are asked why they believe combatants should avoid actions during war that put civilians at risk. While the majority in both groups of countries chooses the normative response – "it's wrong", 81 per cent of those in the four Security Council countries choose the normative answer, compared with 66 per cent of those in war-torn countries. Those in war-torn countries are about twice as likely (29 per cent versus 14 per cent) to choose the more pragmatic answer – such actions "just cause too many problems". This gap no doubt reflects the disruptive effects that conflicts have had on those who have lived through them.

The importance of human rights and human dignity stands out across both sets of countries when respondents are asked to say why attacking civilians is wrong.[49] Fifty-nine per cent of those in the Security Council countries surveyed and 49 per cent of those in war-torn settings offer this response. Definitions of "human rights" vary widely from country to country – nonetheless, this shared emphasis among those in both groups of countries may offer future opportunities for greater understanding. (See Figure 34.)

More than four in ten respondents in the Security Council countries surveyed (43 per cent) say attacking civilians is wrong because it violates a "personal code", compared with 31 per cent of those in war-torn countries. Law and religion, however, are much more important elements for those surveyed in the war-affected countries. More than one-third of these respondents cite such principles – double the proportions recorded among the four Security Council countries. (See Figure 34.)

Among those in the four Security Council countries, respondents in the Russian Federation are about twice as likely to cite a "personal code" and three times as likely to cite violations of law in explaining their beliefs. Americans, on the other hand, are much more likely to cite religion – 26 per cent compared with an average of 11 per cent among the other three Security Council countries. In general, people in war settings where Islam is the predominant religion are more likely to cite their personal code and religion as a basis for their views.

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[48] Among the war-torn settings, Filipino, Israeli and Palestinian respondents are much less likely to adopt the absolute standard. In the Philippines – where the conflict has been relatively remote and contained – only 29 per cent of respondents say combatants should leave civilians alone, while 65 per cent adopt the conditional standard. For Israelis and Palestinians, the ongoing conflict seems to have introduced a note of harsh realism into their attitudes about the conduct of war. Only one-third of Israelis say civilians should be left alone, while 58 per cent say civilians should be avoided as much as possible. Palestinians are almost equally divided between the absolute and conditional answers (41 per cent and 43 per cent, respectively) while 16 per cent (the highest of any setting surveyed and more than twice the Israelis — 7 per cent) sanction attacks on both combatants and civilians.

[49] The only exception is Cambodia, where only 21 per cent of respondents cite "human rights". It is possible that some of the 56 per cent of Cambodians who believe it is "against the law" are actually referring to international human rights laws, given the widespread influence of the UN.

FIGURE 34

Basis for the norm

(per cent of total population overall and in each setting responding "it's wrong") (top two choices)

	Against human rights	Against your personal code	Against the law	Against your religion	Against what people believe	Against your culture	Other	Don't know
Total Security Council*	59%	43%	16%	15%	11%	8%	2%	1%
United Kingdom	66%	30%	8%	9%	8%	3%	1%	1%
United States	51%	29%	12%	26%	14%	5%	4%	1%
France	55%	44%	7%	10%	6%	13%	2%	1%
Russian Federation	63%	63%	30%	14%	15%	10%	0%	-
Total war-torn**	49%	31%	36%	37%	11%	12%	1%	1%
Colombia	58%	18%	-	14%	5%	2%	1%	1%
El Salvador	52%	19%	20%	39%	13%	5%	2%	2%
Philippines	43%	18%	58%	44%	16%	4%	0%	0%
Georgians	59%	31%	51%	41%	27%	20%	-	-
Abkhaz	57%	36%	45%	16%	15%	20%	2%	2%
Afghanistan	45%	21%	27%	78%	17%	14%	-	-
Cambodia	21%	18%	56%	23%	1%	5%	-	-
Bosnia-Herzegovina	57%	27%	24%	19%	6%	6%	0%	0%
Lebanon	56%	46%	37%	57%	10%	9%	-	-
Israelis	64%	73%	40%	19%	4%	27%	6%	6%
Palestinians	72%	59%	45%	80%	30%	31%	1%	1%
Somalia	39%	53%	27%	39%	10%	31%	0%	0%
South Africa	51%	28%	44%	34%	13%	11%	2%	2%
Nigeria	51%	12%	30%	42%	8%	5%	0%	0%

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

* The four permanent Security Council members surveyed
** The war-torn settings surveyed

In line with the shared belief that civilians should be protected during wartime, there is little or no difference when respondents in both groups of countries are asked about specific scenarios that put civilian lives and property at risk. (See Figure 35.)

This superficial agreement, however, masks larger variations in attitudes when countries within each group are compared.

· American respondents are far more likely than their Security Council counterparts to sanction actions that put civilians at risk. More than one-third (38 per cent) say it is part of war to attack "enemy combatants in populated villages or towns in order to weaken the enemy, knowing that many civilians would be killed". This compares with 29 per cent of respondents in the United Kingdom, 26 per cent in France and 20 per cent in the Russian Federation. This gap holds true when Security Council respondents are asked if they sanction attacks on civilians who provide enemy combatants with food and shelter.

· There is evidence to suggest that people in countries that have endured extended, chaotic wars in which civilians have routinely been casualties – Colombia, El Salvador, Afghanistan, Cambodia and Somalia – are less likely to approve of actions that could harm civilians. They particularly reject the idea that certain actions, such as attacking villages knowing civilians would be killed, are "part of war".

· Those involved in highly partisan wars in which whole societies are subsumed by the conflict – Georgia and Abkhazia, Israeli/Palestinian conflict, Lebanon and Bosnia-Herzegovina – are more likely to sanction these kinds of actions. For example, 31 per cent of respondents involved in these four wars say that depriving civilians of food, medicine or water is just "part of war". Only 16 per cent of those involved in the conflicts in Colombia, El Salvador, Afghanistan, Cambodia and Somalia agree.

FIGURE 35
Attacks on civilians
(per cent of total and in each setting responding)

	Okay to attack civilians who give food and shelter to enemy combatants	Depriving civilians of food, medicine or water is just part of war	Attacking enemy combatants in populated villages or towns knowing many civilians/women and children would be killed is part of war	Okay to plant landmines, even though civilians may step on them accidentally
Total Security Council*	18%	28%	23%	26%
United Kingdom	16%	28%	29%	18%
United States	25%	36%	38%	37%
France	13%	18%	26%	7%
Russian Federation	9%	28%	20%	35%
Total war-torn**	17%	26%	24%	23%
Colombia	-	17%	17%	6%
El Salvador	4%	25%	22%	5%
Philippines	12%	41%	30%	10%
Georgians	22%	41%	34%	43%
Abkhaz	22%	34%	42%	49%
Afghanistan	14%	11%	8%	11%
Cambodia	12%	12%	10%	12%
Bosnia-Herzegovina	12%	32%	28%	39%
Lebanon	14%	27%	31%	26%
Israelis	34%	29%	42%	66%
Palestinians	49%	31%	35%	46%
Somalia	24%	17%	15%	21%
South Africa	14%	23%	17%	10%
Nigeria	25%	31%	32%	31%

* The four permanent Security Council members surveyed
** The war-torn settings surveyed

Combatants in the Security Council countries and the war-torn countries surveyed are more willing to sanction attacks on civilians. In the four Security Council countries, 35 per cent of those who have served in the military – compared with 26 per cent who have not – say that attacking villages knowing that civilians would be killed is part of war.[50] In the war-torn settings, 35 per cent of combatants say such actions are part of war, compared with 22 per cent of non-combatants. When more than one-third of soldiers and fighters are ready to accept these kinds of attacks, civilians will inevitably become casualties.

Limits on weapons

Those surveyed in both the four Security Council countries and war-torn countries find common ground when asked what types of weapons should be prohibited. Weapons of mass destruction – particularly nuclear and chemical weapons – are mentioned most frequently by both groups, although Security Council respondents were more likely to volunteer them when asked (59 per cent versus 39 per cent for nuclear weapons; 46 per cent versus 33 per cent for chemical weapons). Landmines are the third most frequently mentioned weapons volunteered by both groups of respondents; but those in war-torn
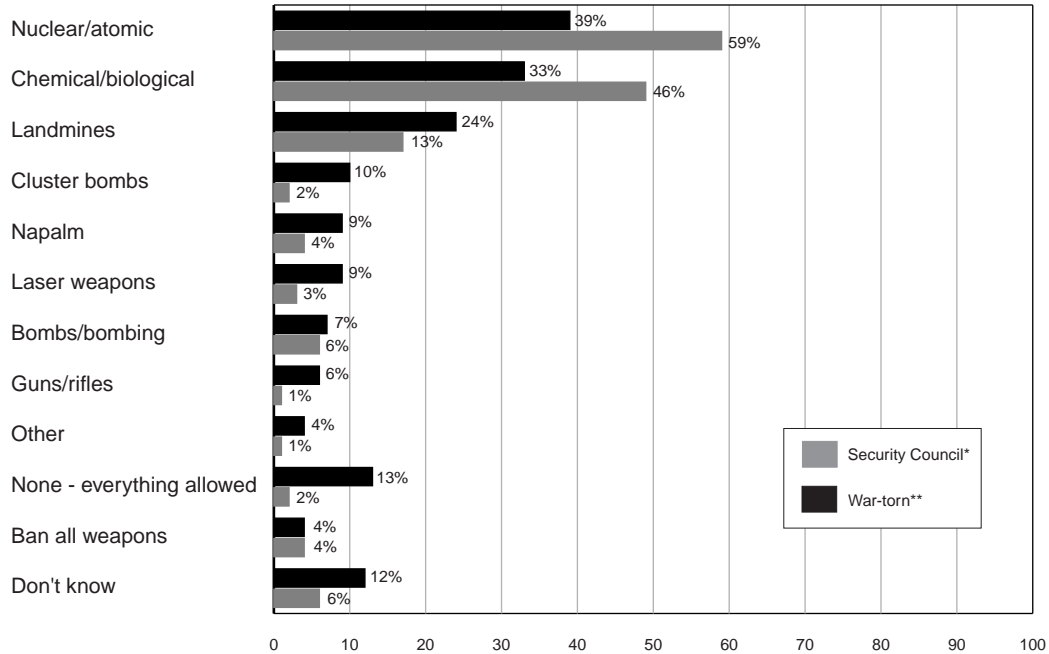
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[50] The 224 Security Council respondents who say they served in the military *and* been in combat were the only group where more people say such attacks are part of war (44 per cent).

countries are almost twice as likely to mention them (24 per cent versus 13 per cent). In both cases, people fear the weapons they know best or are most likely to encounter in the future. (See Figure 36.)

FIGURE 36
Weapons
(per cent of total in each population responding)

Weapon	War-torn**	Security Council*
Nuclear/atomic	39%	59%
Chemical/biological	33%	46%
Landmines	24%	13%
Cluster bombs	10%	2%
Napalm	9%	4%
Laser weapons	9%	3%
Bombs/bombing	7%	6%
Guns/rifles	6%	1%
Other	4%	1%
None - everything allowed	13%	2%
Ban all weapons	4%	4%
Don't know	12%	6%

Question: Are there any types of weapons that should never be used during war? What types of weapons were you thinking of?

* The four permanent Security Council members surveyed
** The war-torn settings surveyed

There is overwhelming opposition to the use of landmines. Nearly three in four respondents (70 per cent among the Security Council countries surveyed and 73 per cent in war-torn countries) say that landmines should never be used if civilians will be endangered; 26 per cent and 23 per cent, respectively disagree. (See Figure 37.)

Again, soldiers and fighters are more likely to sanction the use of mines – another action that endangers civilian lives. In these four Security Council countries surveyed, 35 per cent of those who have served in the military sanction the use of landmines – compared with 23 per cent among those who have not. In the war-torn settings – many of which are sown with millions of landmines that pose a daily threat to inhabitants – 43 per cent of combatants approve using landmines, more than double the 19 per cent of non-combatants who agree.

There are differences, however, among countries within each group. Among the four Security Council countries surveyed, respondents in the United States and the Russian Federation are much more likely to approve of using landmines than their British and French counterparts. More than one-third of Americans and people in the Russian Federation approve of using landmines – twice the level in the United Kingdom, and five times that in France. (See Figure 37.) It should be noted that neither the Russian Federation nor the United States are signatories to the 1997 Ottawa treaty banning the production and use of landmines.

Among people in war-torn settings, there is once again evidence that those involved in highly partisan wars – Georgia and Abkhazia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Lebanon, Israeli/Palestinian conflict – are

FIGURE 37
Landmines
(per cent of total and in each setting responding)

	Okay to plant landmines	Not okay to plant landmines	Don't know
Total Security Council*	26%	70%	4%
United Kingdom	18%	78%	4%
United States	37%	61%	2%
France	7%	90%	2%
Russian Federation	35%	58%	8%
Total war-torn**	23%	73%	4%
Colombia	6%	91%	3%
El Salvador	5%	94%	1%
Philippines	10%	86%	3%
Georgians	43%	56%	1%
Abkhaz	49%	48%	3%
Afghanistan	11%	86%	3%
Cambodia	12%	87%	2%
Bosnia-Herzegovina	39%	52%	8%
Lebanon	26%	71%	3%
Israelis	66%	28%	7%
Palestinians	46%	51%	3%
Somalia	21%	70%	9%
South Africa	10%	86%	4%
Nigeria	31%	64%	5%

Question: 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?

* The four permanent Security Council members surveyed
** The war-torn settings surveyed

more likely to approve of the use of tactics that could harm civilians. Forty-one per cent in these settings approve of using mines, compared with 11 per cent in countries that are involved in extended, chaotic conflicts.

Treatment of prisoners

There is broad general understanding of the rules on the treatment of prisoners among the public in both the Security Council countries and the war-torn countries surveyed. Gaps in knowledge of these obligations exist in countries in both groups, however, exposing not only prisoners but also civilians to harm.

Among the four Security Council countries surveyed, consciousness of the obligations owed to prisoners of war is strongest among the French, the British and the people of the Russian Federation. Once again, American respondents display a lower level of understanding of the rules of wartime conduct. Eight in ten of those surveyed in the three other Security Council countries surveyed say, for example, that an independent representative must be allowed to visit a prisoner of war; only 57 per cent of United States respondents agree.[51] In the same vein, while fully 90 per cent of the French and 81 per cent of the British say that prisoners cannot be subjected to torture, only 65 per cent of Americans and 72 per cent of those surveyed in the Russian Federation agree. (See Figure 38.)

In the group of war-torn countries, there are similar anomalies. While the vast majority of people understand that an independent representative must be allowed to visit (74 per cent) and that

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[51] Asked which representative should be allowed to visit prisoners, people most frequently mention the ICRC – about three of four respondents. About one-half of respondents cite human rights groups and another three in ten mention the UN.

FIGURE 38
Obligations to captured combatants
(per cent of total and in each setting responding)

	Allow an independent representative to visit	Can't subject to torture
Total Security Council*	76%	76%
United Kingdom	81%	81%
United States	57%	65%
France	86%	90%
Russian Federation	82%	72%
Total war-torn**	74%	62%
Colombia	68%	78%
El Salvador	74%	71%
Philippines	67%	78%
Georgians	72%	72%
Abkhaz	70%	53%
Afghanistan	89%	64%
Cambodia	94%	63%
Bosnia-Herzegovina	79%	56%
Lebanon	80%	68%
Israelis	57%	45%
Palestinians	80%	48%
Somalia	80%	70%
South Africa	54%	52%
Nigeria	67%	35%

* The four permanent Security Council members surveyed
** The war-torn settings surveyed

torture is not allowed (62 per cent), a significant portion of those surveyed in war-torn settings demonstrate far less knowledge. In a number of settings only about one-half of respondents agree that prisoners cannot be tortured; these include Abkhaz (53 per cent), Bosnians (56 per cent), Israelis (45 per cent), Palestinians (48 per cent), South Africans (52 per cent) and Nigerians (35 per cent). All of these conflicts involved whole societies and in each case they seem to have discarded the rules of war.

These kinds of views do not translate, however, into tolerance of wholesale slaughter or mistreatment of enemy combatants. In the four Security Council countries surveyed, only 11 per cent of respondents say they would approve of killing prisoners if the enemy forces were doing the same, while 85 per cent say they would not approve. For the war-torn countries, the comparable figures are 15 per cent and 80 per cent. A larger gap appears when respondents are asked if they think "captured enemy soldiers or fighters deserve to die". Seven per cent of those in the four Security Council countries accept this idea, compared with 14 per cent of those surveyed in the war-torn countries. Perhaps it is inevitable that wars –especially extended, brutal conflicts – will breed a cycle of revenge.

It is worth dwelling for a moment on what happens when the scope of the questions is reduced from the very broad – "Would you approve the killing of prisoners if the other side were doing it?" – to hypothetical scenarios involving deeply personal decisions – "Would you help a wounded enemy combatant who killed a person close to you?" In this case, those surveyed in war-torn countries are more likely to say they would act generously; more than half (54 per cent) say they would help a defenceless enemy combatant, compared with about one-third (35 per cent) who say they would not. Security Council respondents are almost equally split between those who say they would help (42 per cent) and those who would not (41 per cent). (See Figure 39.)

One might expect that responses to these more personal questions would echo the pattern of the broader questions. This is not the case. As has been seen, those in war-torn countries are twice as likely as those in the Security Council countries surveyed to agree that "captured enemy soldiers or fighters deserve to die". Yet they are also *more* likely to say that they would save or help defenceless enemy combatants – even when told that the person has killed someone close to them. There seems to be something in the daily experience of living with war that causes people to identify personally with those who cannot defend themselves – and to imagine better their own hopes should they find themselves at the mercy of their enemies.

Given that the military and combatants have direct contact with prisoners, it is significant that these views hold true among both combatants and non-combatants in both groups of countries. In the war-torn countries, there are marked differences between combatants and non-combatants on all of the questions involving prisoners– *except* when respondents are asked how they personally would treat wounded or surrendering enemy combatants.[52] In the four Security Council countries surveyed, the attitudes of military and non-military people on these questions are virtually identical.[53]

This is not to say that the differences in the attitudes of combatants and non-combatants in war-torn countries are insignificant. In these settings, a bare majority of combatants (52 per cent) say prisoners can be subjected to torture – compared with almost one in three non-combatants (28 per cent). Twenty-two per cent of combatants approve of reciprocity in the killing of prisoners, while only 14 per cent

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FIGURE 39
Wounded or surrendering combatants
(per cent of total and in each setting responding)

	Would save/help	Would not save/help	Don't know
Total Security Council*	42%	41%	18%
United Kingdom	47%	36%	17%
United States	54%	42%	4%
France	38%	32%	31%
Russian Federation	28%	50%	22%
Total war-torn**	54%	35%	10%
Colombia	62%	22%	16%
El Salvador	65%	25%	10%
Philippines	67%	30%	4%
Georgians	35%	57%	8%
Abkhaz	33%	53%	13%
Afghanistan	64%	32%	4%
Cambodia	85%	13%	2%
Bosnia-Herzegovina	39%	39%	22%
Lebanon	60%	25%	14%
Israelis	44%	35%	22%
Palestinians	49%	46%	5%
Somalia	69%	22%	8%
South Africa	34%	54%	11%
Nigeria	43%	53%	5%

Question: Would you help a wounded enemy combatant/save the life of a surrendering enemy combatant who killed a person close to you?

* The four permanent Security Council members surveyed
** The war-torn settings surveyed

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[52] Fifty-six per cent of combatants say they would help or save a defenceless enemy, while 36 per cent say they would not. Among non-combatants, the numbers are 53 per cent and 38 per cent, respectively.

[53] Forty-two per cent of military respondents say they would help in such cases, compared with 41 per cent of those who have not served. An identical 41 per cent say they would not help.

of non-combatants agree. While 23 per cent of combatants say captured enemy combatants deserve to die, only 12 per cent of non-combatants agree. These differences contrast with the virtual unanimity on all questions involving treatment of prisoners in these four Security Council countries surveyed.[54] More importantly, they have worrisome implications for the fate of prisoners of war and captured combatants in the midst of extraordinarily violent, partisan and chaotic conflicts.

There are several other differences worth noting between the two groups of countries and among countries in each group.

- Fully half of those surveyed in the Russian Federation say they would *not* help or save an enemy combatant, compared with only 28 per cent who say they would. This compares with an average of 37 per cent and 47 per cent in the other three Security Council countries.

- In marked contrast to other findings, Americans are much more likely than their counterparts to say they would save or help defenceless enemy combatants. More than half (54 per cent) offer this answer –7 percentage points higher than the British, 16 points higher than the French and 26 points higher than the people of the Russian Federation.

- Faced with difficult, deeply personal questions, only one in ten of those surveyed in war-torn settings say they don't know how they would respond. This compares to 18 per cent of those in the four Security Council countries surveyed who do not come down on either side of the question – a number that would be much higher were it not for United States respondents. Only 4 per cent of Americans say they do not know what they would do in this type of situation – compared with 17 per cent in the United Kingdom, 22 per cent in the Russian Federation and 31 per cent in France.

- Among those in war-torn settings, respondents who have endured extended, chaotic wars where civilians have routinely been casualties are significantly more likely than those who have experienced highly partisan wars to say they would save or help defenceless enemy combatants. An average of 69 per cent of respondents in Colombia, El Salvador, Afghanistan, Cambodia and Somalia say they would offer such help, compared with an average of 45 per cent among those involved in the Georgian/Abkhaz, Israeli/Palestinian, Lebanese and Bosnian conflicts.

Geneva Conventions

Nowhere in the ICRC consultation are the differences between the four Security Council countries surveyed and the war-torn countries more pronounced than in awareness of the Geneva Conventions. The implications of this are significant – not only in terms of behaviour during armed conflicts as the 20th century comes to an end but also in terms of education for the next century.

Two-thirds of respondents (66 per cent) in the four Security Council countries surveyed have heard of the Geneva Conventions, while about one-third (31 per cent) have not. In the war-torn countries, only 39 per cent say they have heard of the Conventions, compared with a majority (51 per cent) who have not. (See Figure 40.)

This difference is less pronounced but still significant among respondents who have served in the military in the four Security Council countries surveyed or those in the war-torn countries who have been combatants – the forces charged most directly with carrying out the letter and spirit of the Geneva Conventions. Seventy-six per cent of those who have served in the military in France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States have heard of the Conventions; only 22 per cent have not. In contrast, 62 per cent of combatants in the war-torn countries surveyed are aware of the

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[54] For example, 75 per cent of those who served in the military in the Security Council countries surveyed say prisoners cannot be subjected to torture – only one point lower than those who have not served. Eleven per cent of both military and non-military respondents approve of reciprocity in killing prisoners.

FIGURE 40
Geneva Conventions
(per cent of total and in each setting responding)

	Heard	Not heard	Don't know
Total Security Council*	66%	31%	2%
United Kingdom	86%	14%	-
United States	66%	33%	1%
France	68%	30%	2%
Russian Federation	51%	43%	6%
Total war-torn**	39%	51%	10%
Colombia	37%	54%	9%
El Salvador	33%	63%	4%
Philippines	12%	80%	8%
Georgians	18%	69%	13%
Abkhaz	52%	28%	20%
Afghanistan	24%	62%	14%
Cambodia	23%	72%	5%
Bosnia-Herzegovina	80%	13%	7%
Lebanon	56%	33%	11%
Israelis	89%	10%	1%
Palestinians	65%	28%	7%
Somalia	42%	36%	21%
South Africa	17%	71%	12%
Nigeria	25%	64%	11%

Question: Have you heard of the Geneva Conventions?

* The four permanent Security Council members surveyed
** The war-torn settings surveyed

Conventions, compared with 32 per cent who are not.[55] While knowledge of the Geneva Conventions in no way guarantees that a combatant will abide by them, at the minimum it helps set out a behavioural framework for those who take up arms. When faced with morally difficult decisions – concerning civilians, combatants and prisoners – a basic understanding of a legal framework can at least help combatants to set boundaries.

The difference in levels of awareness of the Geneva Conventions between the two groups of countries can be ascribed to a variety of factors. First, the four Security Council countries surveyed are all original signatories of the Geneva Conventions; and there is far greater awareness and acceptance of international law in France, the United Kingdom and the United States than in the war-torn countries. Second, some of the war-torn countries have professional armies that receive training; spreading knowledge of the Conventions among factions or clans, however, is quite a challenge. Third, as discussed previously, even those in war-torn countries who have heard of the Geneva Conventions probably think of them as guidelines for laws governing conflicts between two countries, rather than conflicts within countries. The Geneva Conventions may be seen as simply not relevant to the situation, despite the adoption of the Additional Protocols in 1977 that further extends their reach.

Within the two sets of countries, there are large differences in the levels of awareness. Among the Security Council group, nearly nine of ten Britons are aware of the Conventions, as are about two of three of the French and Americans. These numbers are lower in the Russian Federation, where only a bare majority (51 per cent) have heard of the Conventions and where also two-thirds could not describe them

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[55] In both groups of countries, soldiers and fighters are more apt to accurately describe the content of the Geneva Conventions than non-combatants. Sixty-six per cent of those who have served in the military in the Security Council countries surveyed describe them accurately, compared with 55 per cent of those who have not served. In the war-torn countries, the corresponding figures are 67 per cent and 57 per cent, respectively. In both groups of countries, men are more likely than women to have heard of the Geneva Conventions and to accurately describe them.

accurately. The differences here are based on history (the Geneva Conventions were not widely discussed during the Soviet era) and orientation towards the outside world – the Russian Federation public believes that institutions in war-torn countries should address the most serious abuses in war and that governments could take more steps to avoid wars and atrocities.[56]

Among the war-torn countries, awareness of the Geneva Conventions – not surprisingly – is highest where the conflicts have been most internationalized. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, where international intervention determined the course of the war, 80 per cent of respondents have heard of the Conventions; and 88 per cent describe them accurately – 18 percentage points higher than in any of the four Security Council countries. Large numbers of Israelis and Palestinians have also heard of the Conventions.[57]

Examining awareness of specific provisions of the Geneva Conventions provides further clues about the differences between the two groups of countries. When respondents are asked whether there are laws that prohibit certain actions that put civilians at risk, those in war-torn countries prove more knowledgeable than those in the four Security Council countries surveyed. Forty-three per cent of respondents in war-torn settings know of laws that prohibit combatants from depriving civilians of food, medicine or water, compared with 32 per cent of those in the four Security Council countries. An even bigger gap – 47 per cent versus 28 per cent – is found when respondents are asked whether there are laws that forbid attacks on combatants in populated villages or towns knowing that many civilians would be killed. (See Figure 41.)

FIGURE 41
Laws
(per cent of total population overall and in each setting that say laws exist that prohibit the following actions)

	Depriving civilians of food, medicine or water	Attacking enemy combatants in populated villages or towns knowing many civilians/women and children would be killed
Total Security Council*	32%	28%
United Kingdom	29%	23%
United States	23%	21%
France	45%	37%
Russian Federation	35%	34%
Total war-torn**	43%	47%
Colombia	56%	63%
El Salvador	27%	37%
Philippines	42%	56%
Georgians	31%	36%
Abkhaz	38%	38%
Afghanistan	50%	54%
Cambodia	41%	45%
Bosnia-Herzegovina	57%	61%
Lebanon	48%	46%
Israelis	43%	38%
Palestinians	37%	41%
Somalia	57%	58%
South Africa	32%	36%
Nigeria	29%	31%

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

* The four permanent Security Council members surveyed
** The war-torn settings surveyed

[56] See ICRC People on War Country Report for the Russian Federation, pp. 9-12.

[57] The 89 per cent of Israelis who have heard of the Geneva Conventions is due in part to mandatory military service in the Israeli Defense Force and its training requirements.

This seeming contradiction can be understood in light of the fact that respondents were asked about these laws outside of the context of questions about the Geneva Conventions. In perhaps a majority of cases – as the focus groups indicate – respondents talking about these laws are referring not to specific provisions of the Conventions but to general international law, national laws, customary laws or codes of conduct, or religious laws, most notably the Muslim canon, the *Sharia.* Evidence of the latter can be seen in the cases of Afghanistan and Somalia.

A higher level of awareness of the Geneva Conventions does not lead to a higher degree of belief in their efficacy. After people were read a description of the Geneva Conventions, those surveyed in the four Security Council countries were almost equally divided between respondents who say the Geneva Conventions can help prevent wars from getting worse (43 per cent) and those who say they "make no real difference" (47 per cent). People in the war-torn countries are more optimistic; 56 per cent say the Conventions can have a positive effect, twice the number of those who say they make no real difference. (See Figure 42.)

FIGURE 42
Impact of Geneva Conventions
(per cent of total and in each setting responding)

	Prevents wars from getting worse	Makes no real difference	Don't know
Total Security Council*	43%	47%	10%
United Kingdom	38%	55%	7%
United States	38%	57%	6%
France	49%	45%	6%
Russian Federation	47%	33%	20%
Total war-torn**	56%	28%	15%
Colombia	45%	38%	17%
El Salvador	71%	20%	8%
Philippines	61%	26%	13%
Georgians	60%	32%	8%
Abkhaz	59%	27%	14%
Afghanistan	44%	48%	8%
Cambodia[58]	86%	4%	9%
Bosnia-Herzegovina	59%	29%	12%
Lebanon	43%	48%	9%
Israelis	41%	53%	6%
Palestinians	39%	51%	10%
Somalia	51%	13%	36%
South Africa	40%	28%	32%
Nigeria	71%	17%	12%

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

* The four permanent Security Council members surveyed
** The war-torn settings surveyed

Among the four Security Council countries surveyed, respondents in the United Kingdom and the United States are far more cynical than their counterparts in France and the Russian Federation. More than one-half of American and British respondents (57 and 55 per cent, respectively) say the Geneva Conventions make no real difference, compared with 45 per cent in France and only 33 per cent in the Russian Federation. Among the war-torn countries, optimism is particularly noticeable in countries like El Salvador and Nigeria, where the conflicts are long over; but less so among people who have endured

[58] After so many years of failed domestic governments and their positive experience with the UN from 1992 to 1993, Cambodians are willing to place their faith in international institutions.

seemingly endless, extremely brutal wars – Colombians, Afghans, Lebanese, Israelis, Palestinians, Somalis and South Africans (who have one of the lowest levels of awareness of the Conventions).

Nonetheless, the generally optimistic stance on the part of the war-torn countries provides encouraging evidence that education about the Geneva Conventions could make a difference in the behaviour of combatants in the future. Awareness of the rules of war is a prerequisite to global efforts aimed at protecting the rights of prisoners and the lives of civilians during wartime.

War crimes and punishment
The publics in the four Security Council countries surveyed are more likely than those in war-torn countries to believe that wrongdoers should be punished for breaking laws during wartime, that people who break the rules of war should be put on trial and that international institutions should be responsible for punishing them. In essence, these countries – all of which are global powers in one way or another – are in favour of more uniform and more international punishment for war criminals.

Fully eight of ten respondents in the Security Council countries surveyed agree that there are "rules or laws that are so important that, if broken during war, the person who broke them should be punished". Six in ten respondents in the war-torn countries agree. There are few differences, however, within the two groups of countries. Americans are more likely than their three Security Council counterparts to say that there are no such laws; 21 per cent of Americans, compared with 12 per cent of Britons, 7 per cent of the French and 8 per cent of people in the Russian Federation. Among the war-torn countries, it is hard to discern any strong patterns. (See Figure 43.)

FIGURE 43
Punishment
(per cent of total and in each setting responding)

	Yes	No	Don't know
Total Security Council*	80%	12%	8%
United Kingdom	81%	12%	7%
United States	78%	21%	1%
France	84%	7%	9%
Russian Federation	77%	8%	15%
Total war-torn**	59%	18%	23%
Colombia	71%	14%	15%
El Salvador	60%	29%	11%
Philippines	51%	30%	19%
Georgians	63%	17%	20%
Abkhaz	73%	8%	19%
Afghanistan	56%	33%	10%
Cambodia	57%	8%	35%
Bosnia-Herzegovina	82%	5%	13%
Lebanon	51%	14%	35%
Israelis	74%	18%	8%
Palestinians	61%	28%	11%
Somalia	63%	12%	25%
South Africa	38%	19%	43%
Nigeria	44%	24%	31%

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

* The four permanent Security Council members surveyed
** The war-torn settings surveyed

In both groups of countries, soldiers and fighters are more likely than non-combatants to agree that people should be punished for breaking laws during wartime. Eighty-six per cent of those who have served in the military in the four Security Council countries believe this, compared with 77 per cent of those who have not served. For the war-torn countries, the gap is much larger, with 73 per cent of combatants saying that people who break the laws or rules should be punished, compared with only 57 per cent of non-combatants.

There is little disagreement between the two sets of countries when respondents are asked what should happen to people who break the laws and rules of war. Eighty-two per cent of those surveyed in the four Security Council countries believe that those who break these laws should be put on trial. In the war-torn settings, 76 per cent agree that alleged wrongdoers should be put on trial. (See Figure 44.)

FIGURE 44

After the conflict

(per cent of total population overall and in each setting who believe laws exist)

	Be put on trial	Be forgiven/ forgotten after the war	Be exposed to the public but not put on trial	Granted amnesty	Don't know
Total Security Council*	82%	6%	6%	4%	2%
United Kingdom	82%	4%	4%	3%	6%
United States	80%	7%	8%	2%	3%
France	91%	2%	1%	3%	3%
Russian Federation	77%	4%	9%	5%	4%
Total war-torn**	76%	9%	5%	7%	3%
Colombia	72%	15%	7%	-	6%
El Salvador	43%	25%	8%	18%	5%
Philippines	65%	12%	3%	18%	2%
Georgians	82%	3%	9%	1%	6%
Abkhaz	77%	8%	9%	1%	5%
Afghanistan	71%	7%	5%	14%	3%
Cambodia	91%	3%	2%	2%	2%
Bosnia-Herzegovina	94%	2%	2%	2%	-
Lebanon	90%	4%	3%	3%	1%
Israelis	67%	9%	5%	12%	6%
Palestinians	83%	6%	5%	5%	2%
Somalia	79%	6%	3%	3%	9%
South Africa	70%	6%	9%	13%	2%
Nigeria	62%	15%	4%	16%	3%

Question: When the conflict is over, should people who have broken these rules...?

* The four permanent Security Council members surveyed
** The war-torn settings surveyed

Both within and between the two sets of countries, there are natural areas of disagreement about who should punish war criminals. An international criminal court is chosen by 42 per cent of Security Council respondents and 36 per cent of those in war-torn countries. The second choice for both sets of countries is the government of the country in question — chosen by about 25 per cent of respondents. Here the similarities end. Thirteen per cent of those in the four Security Council countries surveyed say the country's military should be responsible for punishment, compared with 7 per cent of those in the war-torn countries. While only 8 per cent of Security Council respondents say they would vest responsibility in the courts in the war-torn country, 19 per cent of those in the war-torn settings would trust their own courts. (See Figure 55.)

Among the four Security Council countries surveyed, only 21 per cent of people in the Russian Federation would trust an international criminal court; 73 per cent opt for domestic institutions.[59] This compares with 40 per cent of Americans, 51 per cent of Britons and 62 per cent of the French who would put responsibility in an international court. The French are far less likely than those in the other three Security Council countries surveyed to say the military should take responsibility – 2 per cent compared with 21 per cent of Americans and more than one in ten people from the United Kingdom and the Russian Federation. Thirteen per cent of those surveyed in the Russian Federation say they trust in political leaders to punish wrongdoers, which is ten percentage points higher than in France. The institutions preferred by the various war-torn settings vary according to each context's specific circumstances.[60]

International actors: military involvement and the UN

Since the end of the Cold War, wars within a country's borders have become more and more the province of international institutions. Despite the huge difference in viewpoints between Security Council respondents and those surveyed in war-torn countries, there is general agreement among most respondents about the usefulness and validity of international intervention. Specific views about specific institutions (e.g., a UN peacekeeping force) not only vary widely from country to country, however, but also among opposing sides in the same conflict.

Among the four Security Council countries surveyed, there is little controversy about sending humanitarian assistance to aid the victims of wars; 89 per cent of respondents in the Russian Federation support such action, as do 75 per cent of respondents in France, the United Kingdom and the United States. Questions about military participation aimed at helping to limit casualties or intervening to stop conflicts after they have begun reveals sharp disagreements among the four countries.

In both the United States and the Russian Federation, for example, about six in ten respondents agree that countries should *not* get involved in wars abroad. The proportions are reversed among French respondents, with 57 per cent in favour of involvement and only 37 per cent opposed, while the British are evenly divided (47 per cent on each side). When asked if their countries should try to limit casualties in countries abroad by sending troops as part of peacekeeping forces, however, eight in ten French, British and American respondents agree – compared with only four in ten respondents in the Russian Federation.[61]

In the four Security Council countries surveyed, the presence of international peacekeeping forces in war-torn countries is viewed as a benign, sometimes helpful, ingredient in reducing violence in conflicts. A majority of respondents in each of these countries agree that peacekeepers make life better for civilians caught in the crossfire. Almost one-third of respondents, on the other hand, say that the presence of such forces makes "no difference" – a split that accurately reflects the mixture of great hope that people place in outside intervention and the widespread cynicism that has come to mark attitudes towards the power of the "blue helmets" of the UN forces.[62] (See Figure 45.)

The perils of international intervention are well illustrated when attitudes about the purpose and efficacy of the so-called "protected areas" created by the international community to shield civilians from attack are examined. In the four Security Council countries surveyed, more than eight in ten of respondents agree that creating these areas is a "good idea". Respondents in Bosnia-Herzegovina –

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[59] On attitudes in the Russian Federation towards an international court, see the section on Geneva Conventions, pp. 68-72.

[60] For example, a majority of Nigerians (52 per cent), Cambodians (54 per cent), Bosnians (61 per cent) and Palestinians (76 per cent) opt for an international court, possibly reflecting disillusionment with their own government and courts or the lack of any such systems. About one-third of Afghans say they want their own courts to handle such cases; in these instances, they are referring to Islamic courts. About one-third of Somalis would look to their own courts as well.

[61] Many fewer respondents in the four countries favour contributing troops to an international force in order to stop wars by force. About six in ten in France, the United Kingdom and the United States support such actions, compared with only 16 per cent of those surveyed in the Russian Federation.

[62] Respondents in the four Security Council countries were asked: "Do international peacekeeping forces make it better or worse for civilians during these wars, or don't they make any difference?" There was no direct reference to the UN.

FIGURE 45
International peacekeeping forces
(per cent of total and in these settings responding)

	Better	Worse	No difference	Don't know
Total Security Council*	54%	8%	29%	8%
United Kingdom	58%	4%	31%	7%
United States	52%	15%	28%	5%
France	52%	9%	27%	12%
Russian Federation	54%	4%	31%	11%
Total war-torn**	51%	14%	27%	7%
Georgians[63]	31%	9%	52%	8%
Abkhaz[64]	81%	2%	15%	2%
Cambodia	88%	2%	9%	1%
Bosnia-Herzegovina	41%	13%	40%	7%
Lebanon	41%	8%	44%	8%
Somalia	46%	27%	10%	17%

Question: Is the (peacekeeping force) making it better or worse, or isn't it making any difference?

* The four permanent Security Council members surveyed
** The war-torn settings surveyed

where "safe areas" faced their most severe test – are much less enthusiastic; while 52 per cent agree that establishing them is a good idea, more than one-third (36 per cent) disagree.

There is, however, general agreement on the impact of the protected areas. Forty-five per cent of respondents in the four Security Council countries surveyed say the protected areas have made life better for civilians, compared with 38 per cent of those surveyed in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Among both populations, about one-third (30 per cent in the four Security Council countries; 36 per cent in Bosnia-Herzegovina) say they have made no difference.

The biggest gap in attitudes comes among those who say the protected areas actually made things worse for civilians. Twenty per cent of those in Bosnia-Herzegovina agree with this statement, compared with 11 per cent in the four Security Council countries surveyed.

By building expectations that civilians in these areas would be protected – and then not following through in all cases – the international community established a standard that it was not prepared to meet. Members of all three communities – Bosniac, Serb and Croat – came to view the protected areas as symbols of the international community's ineptitude, ill will or bias.[65]

As Figure 45 demonstrates, attitudes toward UN peacekeeping forces and observer missions vary widely among the populations of war-torn countries; analysing the opinions on average is a false exercise. In Cambodia, for example, the remarkable 88 per cent of respondents who say that the UN forces made things better is a direct consequence of more than two decades of civil war, invasion and internal slaughter. That more than one in four Somalis say the UN force made things worse is not surprising; although millions of lives were saved by international intervention, more than one-third feel that humanitarian aid never reached the people in need and others say that clan warfare might have been curbed had the forces stayed in place instead of withdrawing after suffering casualties.[66]

[63] These numbers refer to UNOMIG, the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia.

[64] These numbers refer to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Peacekeeping Forces (PKF).

[65] For an in-depth discussion of these attitudes, see the ICRC People on War Country Report for Bosnia-Herzegovina, pp. 26-29.

[66] For a full discussion of attitudes towards international peacekeepers and other groups, see the section entitled International Community, pp. 49-54.

International actors: ICRC/Red Cross/Red Crescent and humanitarian organizations

Across the board, respondents in the four Security Council countries and war-torn countries surveyed express faith in the mission of the ICRC, the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and international humanitarian organizations. While opinions vary from country to country about which group played the largest role in helping those in need during wartime, there is overwhelming support for greater intervention by such organizations in the future in order to protect civilians in need.

The vast majority of people in both groups of countries associate the red cross or red crescent emblem with the recipients and providers of medical services and with society's most vulnerable populations. More than six in ten respondents in the four Security Council countries surveyed associate the emblem with medical casualties and personnel.[67] In the war-torn countries, 37 per cent of respondents make similar connections.[68] Forty-two per cent of respondents in the four Security Council countries associate the emblem with the protection of civilians (29 per cent), the weak and needy, victims of conflict, and specific populations such as the elderly and children. Similarly, about four in ten respondents in war-torn settings say the emblem protects the vulnerable, including "all who need help", civilians, the "unprotected", the elderly, children and the poor. Five per cent in all countries associate the emblem with the protection of refugees and the homeless.

More respondents in the war-torn countries than in the Security Council countries surveyed (7 per cent versus 2 per cent say the emblem protects Red Cross personnel and vehicles. Almost equal numbers (7 per cent and 8 per cent, respectively) identify the emblem with the protection of prisoners of war.

When asked about the role of international organizations visiting captured combatants, about three-quarters of respondents in both groups of countries recognize the predominant role of the ICRC in doing so.[69] In both the four Security Council countries and the war-torn countries surveyed, there is also agreement about other independent representatives who should be allowed to visit prisoners; respondents selected representatives of human rights organizations (49 per cent and 51 per cent, respectively), UN representatives (39 per cent and 32 per cent), religious leaders (41 per cent and 25 per cent) and journalists (26 per cent and 21 per cent). In both groups of countries, those who have taken up arms are more likely than those who have not to emphasize the role of ICRC representatives in visiting prisoners.[70]

Turn to for help

When asked about the role of international organizations in protecting civilians who are threatened in wartime, respondents in the four Security Council countries surveyed and the war-torn countries agree that the presence of the ICRC and the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies is crucial. Across all settings, in both groups of countries, the ICRC/Red Cross/Red Crescent is mentioned more frequently than any other group. Within the Security Council countries surveyed, nearly two-thirds (64 per cent) select the ICRC/Red Cross as one of the most important organizations to act on behalf of civilians whose villages are being attacked or cut off from food, water or medical supplies during war. The percentage of respondents selecting the ICRC/Red Cross range from a low of 56 per cent in the Russian Federation to a high of 71 per cent in the United States. Two in five respondents (40 per cent) mention international humanitarian organizations, and one in four (26 per cent) mention the UN. Religious and political leaders, along with the military and combatants, follow with 12 per cent. Respondents in the Russian Federation are more likely to turn to political leaders (24 per cent), while Americans would turn to

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[67] Thirty-five per cent say the wounded/injured/sick, 16 per cent cite hospitals, and 10 per cent say medical personnel.

[68] Twenty-two per cent name the wounded/sick, 11 per cent say medical personnel and 4 per cent say hospitals, clinics and emergency vehicles.

[69] Seventy-six per cent of respondents in the four Security Council countries reference the ICRC when asked "Which of the following people should be allowed to visit prisoners of war?" In the war-torn countries, 72 per cent reference the ICRC when asked: "Which of the following people should be allowed to visit captured enemy combatants?" Of those respondents who say they were imprisoned and allowed visits by independent organizations, 80 per cent say they were visited by an ICRC representative. Eighteen per cent say they were visited by human rights and UN representatives and about one in ten say religious leaders and journalists were allowed to visit them.

[70] In the four Security Council countries surveyed, the figures are: 26 per cent of those who have not served in the military versus 74 per cent of those who have served. In the war-torn countries, the figures are: 81 per cent of combatants versus 70 per cent of non-combatants.

religious leaders (29 per cent) for help. (See Figure 46.) This pattern is similar in war-torn countries, where 43 per cent of respondents identify the ICRC/Red Cross/Red Crescent as one of the primary institutions to which they would turn for protection. Fifteen per cent say they would turn to national or local government, while 10 per cent say UN agencies, 9 per cent say humanitarian organizations and 8 per cent mention religious leaders and institutions.[71] (See Figure 32.)

FIGURE 46

Turn to for help

(per cent of total and in each setting) (top two choices)[72]

	Total Security Council*	United Kingdom	United States	France	Russian Federation
The ICRC or Red Cross	64%	63%	71%	65%	56%
Int'l humanitarian organizations	40%	36%	30%	64%	34%
The United Nations	26%	34%	28%	15%	25%
Religious leaders	12%	6%	29%	5%	6%
Government leaders	12%	7%	10%	5%	24%
Military and combatants	12%	14%	14%	7%	11%
Journalists and media	10%	10%	9%	6%	12%
Int'l criminal court	7%	5%	4%	9%	9%
Other countries	2%	2%	3%	3%	3%
Don't know	2%	3%	1%	4%	2%
Nobody did anything	2%	0%	1%	1%	6%

Question: During wars, civilian areas are sometimes attacked, towns or villages cut off from food, water, medical supplies and electricity. I'm going to read a list of organizations and people to whom civilians can turn to stop these kinds of things. Please tell me which *two* are most important to be there.

* The four permanent Security Council members surveyed

In both groups of countries, worries about the power and goals of international actors or ambivalent feelings about their past performance are all but swept aside when respondents are asked about continuing intervention on behalf of civilians in need of protection. To be sure, support for such activities varies widely in war-torn countries, from an astounding 97 per cent of Cambodians who favour more intervention to 51 per cent of Somalis and 32 per cent of respondents in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Overall, however, 66 per cent of those surveyed in war-torn countries support greater intervention in the future, as do 60 per cent of respondents in the four Security Council countries surveyed. Only 17 per cent of those in the war-torn countries want less intervention, compared with 23 per cent of those in the group of Security Council members. Significantly, fewer than one in 10 respondents in either group of countries say there should be no intervention. The international community may have compiled a mixed record in trying to aid civilians in need of protection in war-torn countries, but neither the providers nor the recipients of this assistance want to see it stopped. Optimism prevails about the efforts of organizations such as the ICRC/Red Cross/Red Crescent and the UN and international humanitarian organizations.

[71] It is important to note that Security Council respondents were read a list of possible organizations from which to choose. Respondents in war-torn countries volunteered their responses, so the actual percentages are lower and should only be compared broadly. One can safely conclude, however, that the ranking of the data from one group of settings to another is similar.

[72] Respondents were read a list of organizations and people that civilians can turn to when civilian areas are attacked or cut off from food, water, medical supplies and electricity, and asked to select which *two* organizations are most important to be there. As a result, the aggregate responses add up to more than 100 per cent.

Switzerland

The final element of the ICRC consultation is a survey aimed at determining attitudes towards war and the laws of war among the people of Switzerland.[73] This survey – meant to explore Swiss attitudes in light of their country's role as the depository State of the Geneva Conventions and because of its historic neutrality – provides a valuable complement to the findings in the four Security Council countries and the 12 war-torn countries surveyed around the world.

When compared with the public in France, the Russia Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States, the Swiss start at a similar point:

· They are no more apt than those in the four Security Council countries to favour one side or the other in a war. (Thirty-eight per cent say that when they see stories about wars abroad, they find themselves favouring one side.)

· As in the four Security Council countries, almost seven in ten Swiss respondents believe that wars can be avoided.

· Swiss attitudes about the origin of wars – are they a failure of human nature or of governments? – are similar to those in France, the United Kingdom and the United States. They are about half as likely to blame them on governments as are the people of the Russian Federation.

Differences begin to emerge when respondents are asked about their basis for favouring one side in a war. Twenty-two per cent of those surveyed in the four Security Council countries say they base their attitudes on how opposing sides *act* during the war – compared with 37 per cent of the Swiss. Almost twice as many respondents in the four Security Council countries – 47 per cent, compared with only 25 per cent of the Swiss – say they base their decision on the goals of the parties. (See Figure 47.)

FIGURE 47
Basis for taking sides
(per cent of total in each population responding)

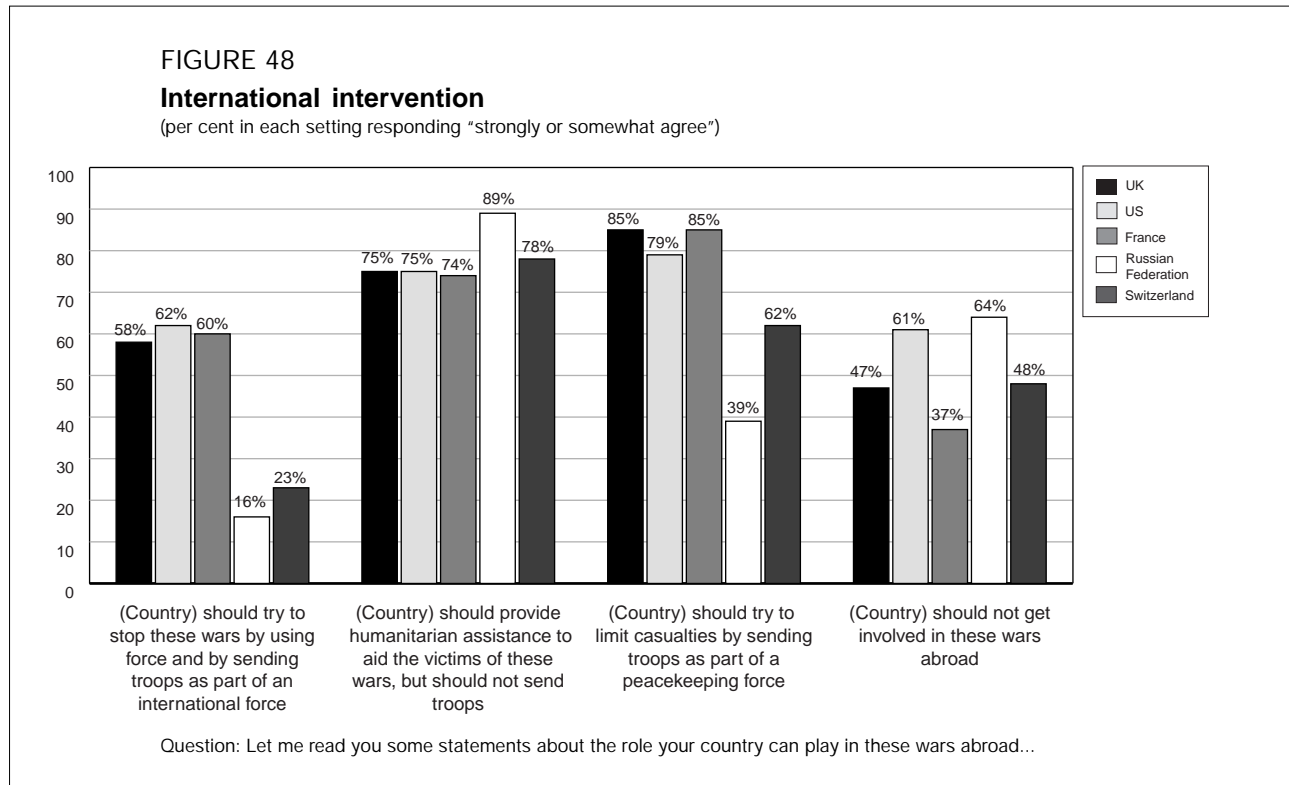|	Switzerland	Security Council*
What each side is fighting for	25%	47%
How each side acts during war	37%	22%
Both	27%	18%
Don't know/refused	11%	13%
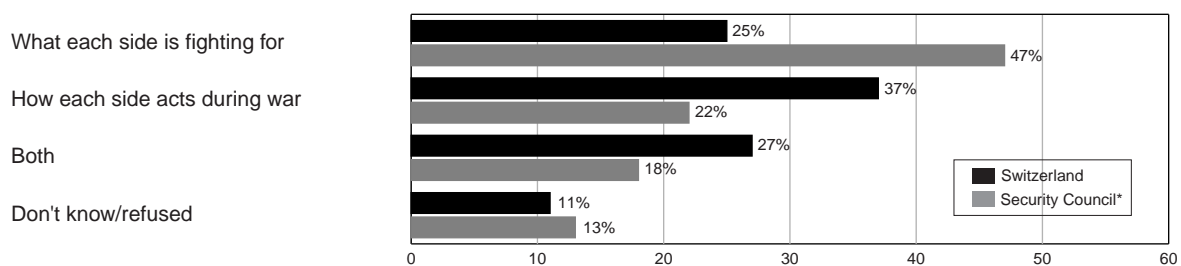
Question: When thinking about favouring one side in a war, which is more important to you, what each side is fighting for or how each side acts during the war?

* The four permanent Security Council members surveyed

The Swiss are on the isolationist end of the spectrum when attitudes about international intervention are explored in comparison with the four Security Council countries. While 78 per cent of Swiss respondents support humanitarian assistance to aid the victims of wars (provided no troops are dispatched), the Swiss rival only the people of the Russian Federation in their rejection of sending troops abroad to try to stop wars. Swiss respondents are almost three times less likely than those surveyed in

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[73] The findings in this section are based on a survey of 751 adults (18 years or older) conducted in Switzerland from 2 to 22 July 1999. The survey – which contained questions similar to those posed to people in the four Security Council countries surveyed – was designed and administered by Greenberg Research, Inc., in conjunction with ICM, a market research firm based in the United Kingdom. Telephone numbers for these interviews were generated by a random digit dial process, thereby allowing access to all listed and unlisted phones. The list was stratified by canton. The data were weighted by gender, education, age, region, split sample and marital status to ensure an accurate reflection of the population. The margin of error was +/- 3.6.

France, the United Kingdom and the United States to sanction such missions. Similarly, while more than eight in ten respondents in France, the United Kingdom and the United States approve of sending troops as part of a peacekeeping force in order to limit casualties, only six in ten Swiss (62 per cent) agree. The Swiss public lies in the middle of the spectrum when it comes to their country's involvement in wars abroad; they mirror the British but are more internationalist than Americans and the people of the Russian Federation.[74] (See Figure 48.) This is the context in which Swiss attitudes towards limits in war can be explored.

FIGURE 48
International intervention
(per cent in each setting responding "strongly or somewhat agree")

Question: Let me read you some statements about the role your country can play in these wars abroad...

Protection of civilians

Swiss respondents differ little from their counterparts in the four Security Council countries and war-torn countries surveyed in their belief in absolute protection for civilians during wartime. Their attitudes most closely mirror those expressed in France and the Russian Federation; 77 per cent of the Swiss say combatants should "attack only enemy combatants and leave civilians alone", while 16 per cent accept the conditional response that civilians should be avoided "as much as possible". (See Figure 49.)

When respondents are asked what soldiers and fighters should not be allowed to do in fighting their enemy, the Swiss offer mixed responses that belie and affirm their reputation as neutral and war-averse. Twenty per cent of Swiss respondents, for example, say there are "no restrictions" on combatants in wartime; this is equal to American respondents, but about seven times greater than those surveyed in the Russian Federation.

At the same time, twice as many Swiss as those in the four Security Council countries volunteer that fighting and war should simply not be allowed. The Swiss, moreover, show particular concern with prevention of some of the more horrible acts of modern war; 19 per cent say rape should not be allowed – more than twice the level volunteered by respondents in any of the four Security Council countries and three times that offered by those surveyed in war-torn countries. In addition, 8 per cent of Swiss and 9 per cent of French respondents single out mass killings and slaughter as acts which should be forbidden.

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[74] Forty-eight per cent of Swiss respondents and 47 per cent of British respondents agree that their country should not get involved in wars abroad. This compares with 37 per ent of the French, 61 per cent of Americans, and 64 per cent of those surveyed in the Russian Federation.

FIGURE 49
Combatants and civilians
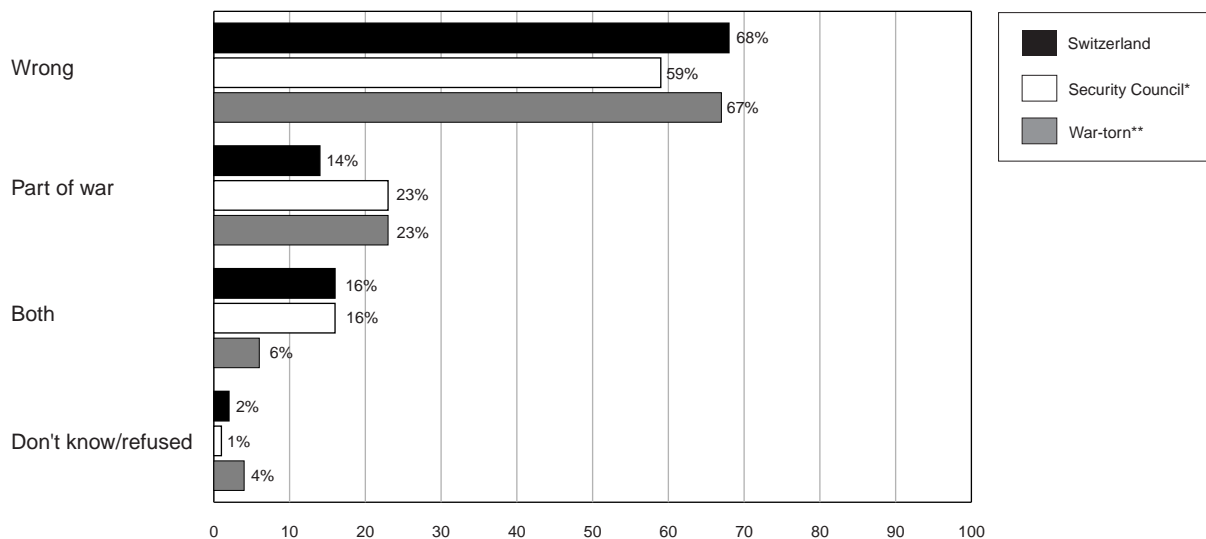(per cent of total in each population responding)
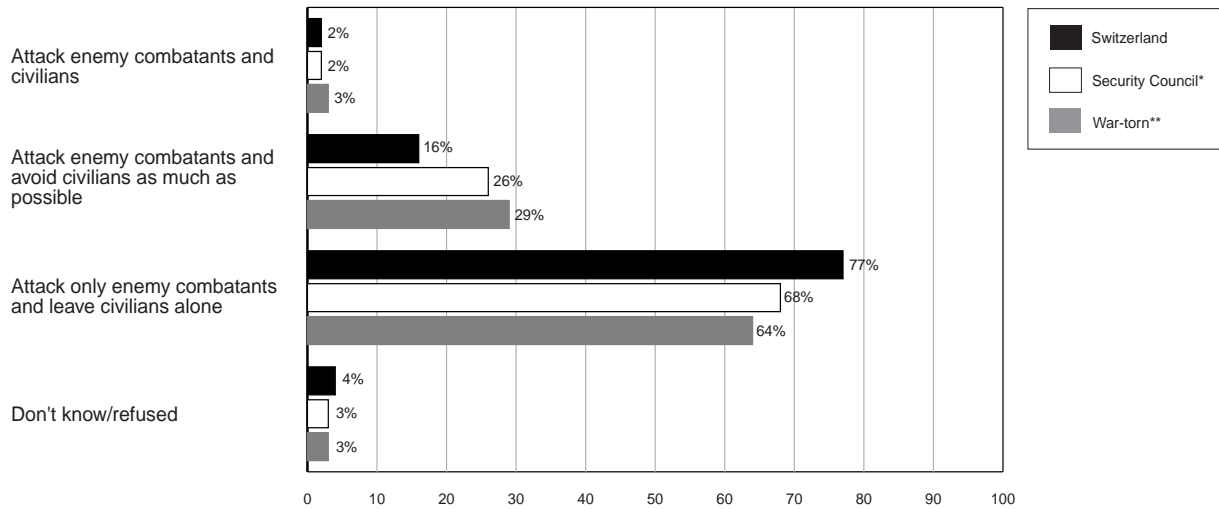
Attack enemy combatants and civilians
- Switzerland: 2%
- Security Council: 2%
- War-torn: 3%

Attack enemy combatants and avoid civilians as much as possible
- Switzerland: 16%
- Security Council: 26%
- War-torn: 29%

Attack only enemy combatants and leave civilians alone
- Switzerland: 77%
- Security Council: 68%
- War-torn: 64%

Don't know/refused
- Switzerland: 4%
- Security Council: 3%
- War-torn: 3%

Legend: ■ Switzerland □ Security Council* ▨ War-torn**

(scale: 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100)

Question: When combatants attack to weaken the enemy, should they ...

*The four permanent Security Council members surveyed
** The war-torn settings surveyed

More than eight in ten Swiss respondents say that combatants should avoid actions during wartime that put civilians at risk because they are "wrong". Swiss respondents, however, are more likely to emphasize human rights in explaining why such actions are wrong. Seventy per cent of Swiss respondents mention human rights, compared with 59 per cent of those in the four Security Council countries and

FIGURE 50
Attacking civilians
(per cent of total in each population responding)

Wrong
- Switzerland: 68%
- Security Council: 59%
- War-torn: 67%

Part of war
- Switzerland: 14%
- Security Council: 23%
- War-torn: 23%

Both
- Switzerland: 16%
- Security Council: 16%
- War-torn: 6%

Don't know/refused
- Switzerland: 2%
- Security Council: 1%
- War-torn: 4%

Legend: ■ Switzerland □ Security Council* ▨ War-torn**

(scale: 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100)

Question: What about attacking enemy combatants in populated villages or towns knowing that many women and children would be killed?

*The four permanent Security Council members surveyed
** The war-torn settings surveyed

49 per cent of those in war-torn countries. Here, as with a variety of other questions that revolve around international law and human rights, Swiss attitudes most closely resemble those of the British.

Swiss respondents are slightly less likely than their counterparts in the four Security Council countries and the war-torn countries to accept that certain actions that threaten civilian lives are just "part of war". For example, when asked about attacks by enemy combatants that are bound to kill women and children, 14 per cent of the Swiss say these are "part of war", compared with 23 per cent of those in the other groups of countries. (See Figure 50.) In all these cases, the opinions of Swiss respondents are closest to those of people in France, the United Kingdom and the Russian Federation – and distant from American respondents, who tend to be more tolerant of such attacks.

Limits on weapons

Swiss attitudes towards weapons of mass destruction closely resemble those of respondents in the four Security Council countries. About six in ten of those surveyed in Switzerland say that nuclear and chemical weapons should never be used.

Swiss respondents are far more likely to mention landmines than are people in either group of countries. Thirty-three per cent of Swiss single out landmines, compared with 24 per cent of those in war-torn countries and 13 per cent of those in the group of Security Council countries. Fully 90 per cent of Swiss and French respondents – who agree on much when it comes to the destructive nature of modern warfare – say that mines should not be used because they threaten civilian lives. Only seven per cent of Swiss and French approve of using mines, numbers matched only by El Salvadorans (5 per cent) and Colombians (6 per cent).[75] In contrast, more than one-third of respondents in the United States and the Russian Federation approve of using mines.

When respondents in Switzerland and the four Security Council countries are questioned about different actions that could be taken to reduce the number of victims in war, the Swiss are the least likely to agree that increasing the accuracy of weapons to reduce unintended casualties could be an important step. Sixty-nine per cent of Swiss respondents agree that these are important, compared with 81 per cent of those in the four Security Council countries. (Only the French, at 73 per cent, are close.) Respondents in Switzerland, France and the Russian Federation all agree overwhelmingly (84 per cent)

FIGURE 51
Landmines
(per cent of total in each population responding)
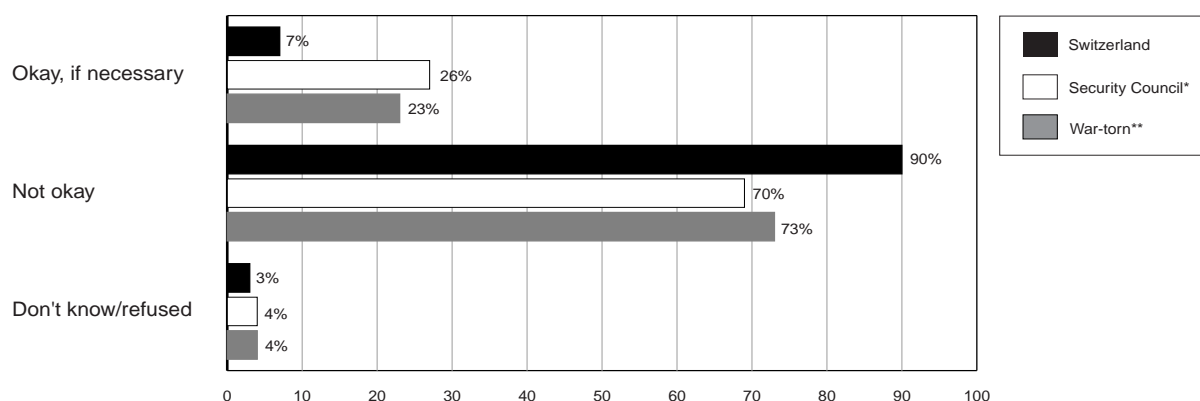
Question: What about soldiers and fighters planting landmines to stop the movement of enemy combatants, even though civilians may step on them accidentally. Is that okay or not okay?

*The four permanent Security Council members surveyed
** The war-torn settings surveyed

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[75] Other countries in which respondents resoundingly reject landmines include the Philippines and South Africa (10 per cent each), Afghanistan (11 per cent) and Cambodia (12 per cent).

that taking steps to decrease the number of weapons available to soldiers and fighters would be an important step to take. Only 69 per cent of the British and 62 per cent of Americans concur.

Rights of prisoners

In their role as the depository State of the Geneva Conventions and living in a society where men are subject to compulsory military service, the Swiss for the most part demonstrate a strong understanding of international obligations towards prisoners of war. Eighty-eight per cent of Swiss respondents, for example, know that prisoners of war have the right to be visited by a representative from an independent organization. This compares to almost equal numbers in France, the United Kingdom and the Russian Federation, and far surpasses the 57 per cent of Americans and 74 per cent of respondents in war-torn countries who know this to be true. Seventy-nine per cent of those surveyed in Switzerland believe that a prisoner of war cannot be subjected to torture – a proportion similar to that recorded on average in the four Security Council countries but below the 90 per cent of French respondents who are aware of this obligation. (See Figure 52.)

Treatment of prisoners

In line with attitudes in both groups of countries, almost nine in ten Swiss respondents (86 per cent) say they do not approve of the killing of prisoners, even if the enemy is doing the same. In comparison with the four Security Council countries, however, Swiss respondents come closest to those in the United States when asked whether they think captured enemy combatants deserve to die. Ten per cent of Swiss agree with this statement, as do 11 per cent of Americans, while only 5 per cent and 4 per cent of respondents in France and the Russian Federation concur.

Faced with difficult life-or-death decisions in hypothetical situations, Swiss respondents demonstrate a strong capacity for generosity towards defenceless enemy combatants. Fifty per cent of Swiss respondents say they would save the life of a surrendering combatant or help a wounded enemy combatant – even in the full knowledge that the combatant had killed someone close to them. About one in four (28 per cent) Swiss say they would not save such a person, fewer than the average in war-torn countries (35 per cent) and far below the 41 per cent recorded in the four Security Council countries. It should be noted, however, that the attitudes of respondents in the United Kingdom and the United States closely resemble those in Switzerland.

FIGURE 52
Rights of prisoners
(per cent of total in each population responding)
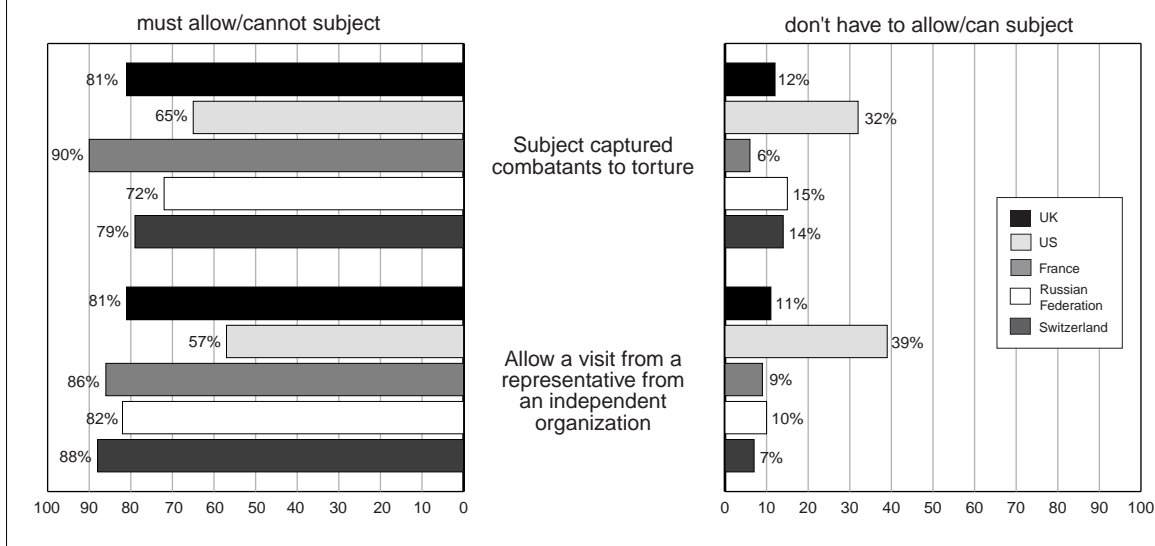
Geneva Conventions

It should come as little surprise that an overwhelming majority of Swiss respondents are familiar with the Geneva Conventions. Eighty per cent of those surveyed in Switzerland say they have heard of the Conventions, a number surpassed only by the 86 per cent of British who claim familiarity with the Conventions.

Overall, the Geneva Conventions are known to 66 per cent of those surveyed in the four Security Council countries and 39 per cent of those in the war-torn countries. Among the Swiss respondents who say they have heard of the Conventions, 65 per cent describe them accurately, compared with 66 per cent of the British, 70 per cent of Americans, 51 per cent of French and only 39 per cent of those surveyed in the Russian Federation.

FIGURE 53
Geneva Conventions
(per cent of total in each population responding)
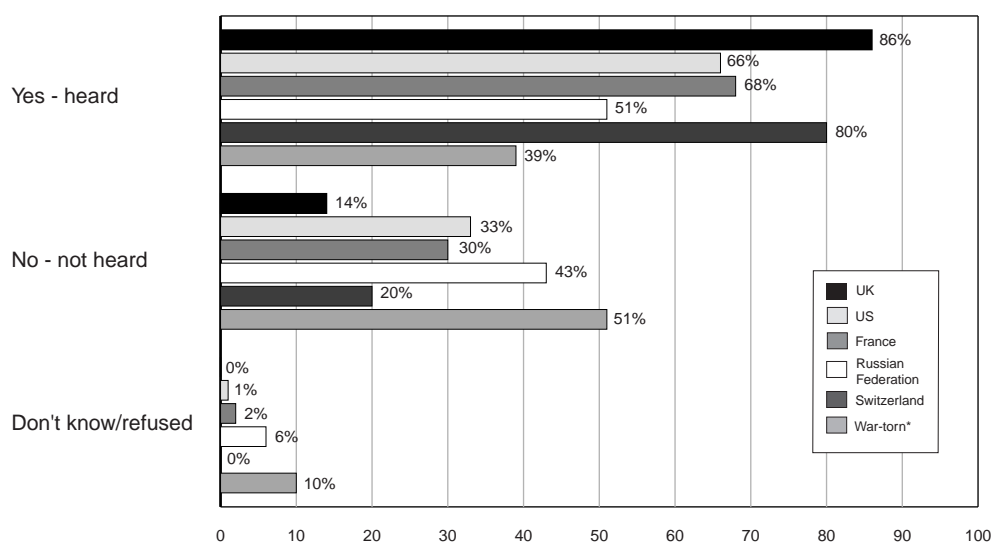
Question: Let me ask you something very different. Have you heard of the Geneva Conventions?

* The war-torn settings surveyed

Asked to describe the Geneva Conventions, Swiss respondents focus on the laws and rules of war (20 per cent), human rights and humanitarian laws (19 per cent) and the treatment of prisoners of war (14 per cent). These responses are similar to those offered by the British, French and Americans – although the Swiss are almost twice as likely to mention human rights and international law as are others.

Along with a spectrum of the four Security Council countries surveyed, the Swiss rank at or near the type when it comes to understanding of specific laws that prevent actions that threaten civilians during wartime. Nonetheless, the Swiss – like their counterparts in France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States – do not match respondents in the war-torn countries in their knowledge of such laws. Thirty-nine per cent of Swiss respondents are aware of laws that prevent attacks on villages that would result in civilian casualties and prohibit depriving civilians of food, medicine or water, compared with 47 per cent and 43 per cent, respectively, of those surveyed in war-torn countries. Among respondents in the four Security Council countries surveyed, the averages are 28 per cent and 32 per cent.
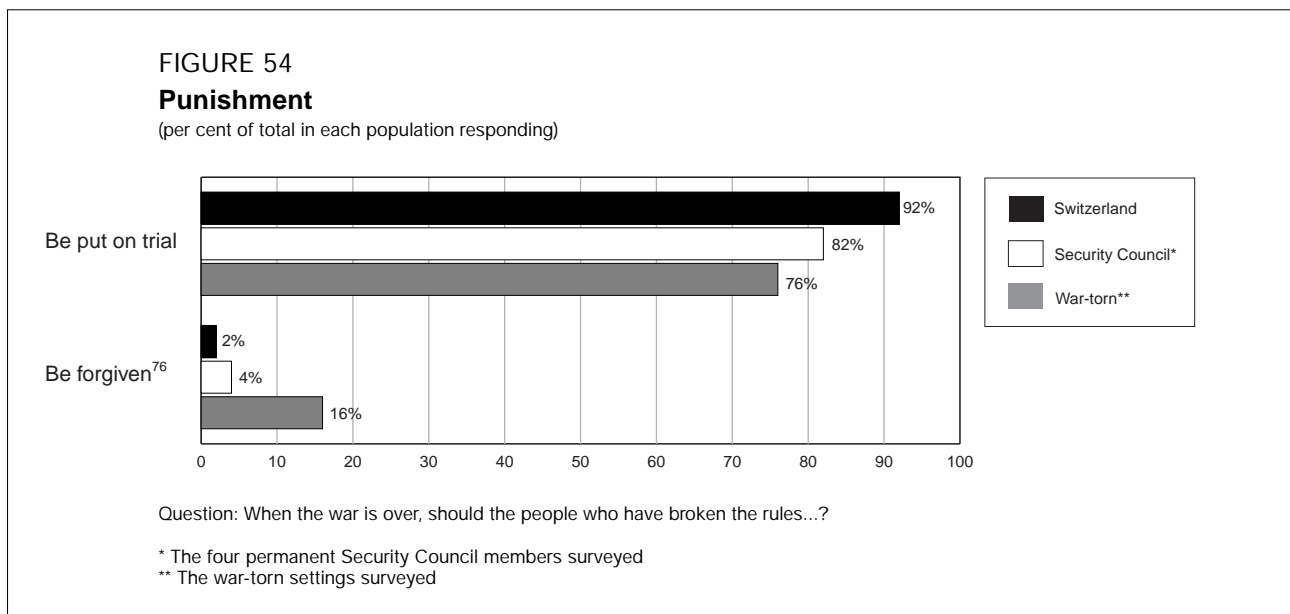
Swiss respondents are no more or less likely than those surveyed in the four Security Council countries to believe that the Geneva Conventions can actually prevent wars from getting worse. Forty-five

per cent of those surveyed in Switzerland agree with this statement but fully 47 per cent say they make "no real difference". This is still well below the 56 per cent of those surveyed in the war-torn countries with positive feelings about the efficacy of the Geneva Conventions.

War crimes and punishment

In keeping with its special interest in – and understanding of – international law, the public in Switzerland has strong convictions that those who break the laws of war should be put on trial in an international criminal court. Of all the peoples surveyed in Security Council countries and the war-torn areas of the world, only the French match the hard-line Swiss attitudes on these questions.

Almost nine in ten Swiss respondents (88 per cent) believe that there are rules or laws in wartime that are so important that people who break them should be punished. This is about ten percentage points higher than in the four Security Council countries surveyed and some 30 points more than among the war-torn countries. There is little disagreement between Swiss respondents and their counterparts in both groups of countries about what should happen to people who break these laws. Ninety-two per cent of those surveyed in Switzerland say they should be put on trial. Only two per cent of Swiss respondents say that those who break the law should be granted amnesty or otherwise forgiven for their crimes – compared with an average of 4 per cent in the four Security Council countries surveyed and 16 per cent in the war-torn countries.
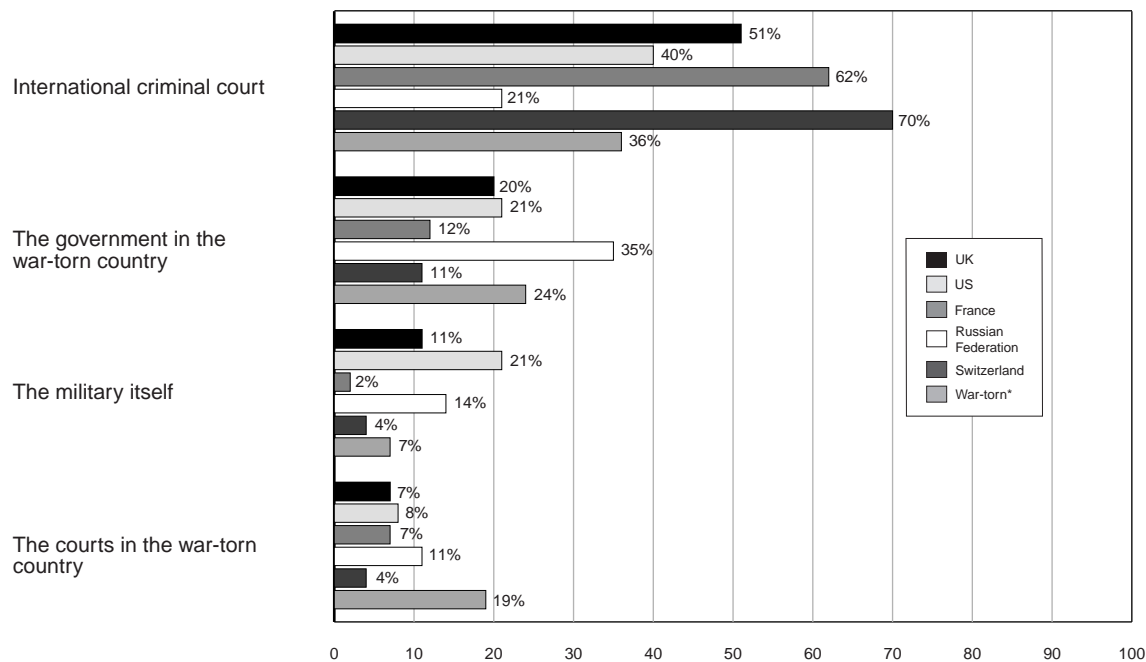
FIGURE 54
Punishment
(per cent of total in each population responding)

Question: When the war is over, should the people who have broken the rules...?

* The four permanent Security Council members surveyed
** The war-torn settings surveyed

In perhaps the most distinctive measure of their country's international role and its belief in international institutions, 70 per cent of the Swiss public say that war crimes cases should be tried in an international criminal court. This compares with an average of 42 per cent in the four Security Council countries and 36 per cent in the war-torn countries.[77] The Swiss are much less likely to believe that any country's domestic institutions are capable of rendering fair judgment in such cases. Only 11 per cent of Swiss respondents say a country's government should be responsible for punishing the wrongdoers; those surveyed in the four Security Council countries and the war-torn countries are twice as likely to choose this option. Only 4 per cent of Swiss respondents say that a country's military should punish war criminals – less even than the 7 per cent of those in the war-torn countries who would take this route. (See Figure 55.)

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[76] "Be forgiven" consists of the responses: "granted amnesty", "be forgiven after the war" and "be forgotten after the war".

[77] French respondents follow close behind, with 62 per cent saying that an international criminal court should try war crimes cases. Fifty-one per cent of British respondents, 40 per cent of American respondents and 21 per cent of those surveyed in the Russian Federation agree.

FIGURE 55
Who should punish wrongdoers?
(per cent of total in each population responding)

International criminal court

The government in the
war-torn country

The military itself

The courts in the war-torn
country

Legend:
- UK
- US
- France
- Russian Federation
- Switzerland
- War-torn*

International criminal court: UK 51%, US 40%, France 62%, Russian Federation 21%, Switzerland 70%, War-torn 36%

The government in the war-torn country: UK 20%, US 21%, France 12%, Russian Federation 35%, Switzerland 11%, War-torn 24%

The military itself: UK 11%, US 21%, France 2%, Russian Federation 14%, Switzerland 4%, War-torn 7%

The courts in the war-torn country: UK 7%, US 8%, France 7%, Russian Federation 11%, Switzerland 4%, War-torn 19%

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

* The war-torn settings surveyed

International actors

As the home country of the ICRC and the headquarters of a number of UN agencies, Switzerland has long been closely identified with internationalist causes. Of all the peoples surveyed in the ICRC consultation, none express more faith in the power of international organizations to help civilians caught in conflict than the Swiss. Yet the Swiss are oddly ambivalent about future intervention on behalf of civilians by such organizations.

Fully two of three Swiss respondents (67 per cent) – compared with 54 per cent on average in the four Security Council countries surveyed – believe that international peacekeeping forces can improve the lot of civilians who are caught in the middle of a war. Fewer than one in five surveyed in Switzerland (18 per cent) say that these forces make "no difference" and only 4 per cent say they make the situation worse, compared with 29 per cent and 8 per cent, respectively, in the four Security Council countries surveyed as a whole. (See Figure 56.)

More so than those surveyed in the four Security Council countries, the Swiss put their faith in the ICRC and Red Cross and international humanitarian organizations.[78] Swiss respondents differ little from those in the Security Council countries surveyed and the war-torn countries when asked to describe what the red cross emblem protects; they are slightly more likely, however, to say – correctly – that the emblem protects Red Cross personnel and vehicles.

Asked which organizations can help civilians who are under attack and cut off from food, water and medicine, almost three-quarters of Swiss respondents (73 per cent) name the ICRC or Red Cross. A majority of Swiss (53 per cent) also point to international humanitarian organizations; only the

[78] Eighty-one per cent of Swiss respondents say that ICRC representatives should be allowed to visit prisoners of war, a level on par or ahead of those recorded in the four Security Council countries surveyed.

FIGURE 56

International peacekeeping forces
(per cent of total in each population responding)
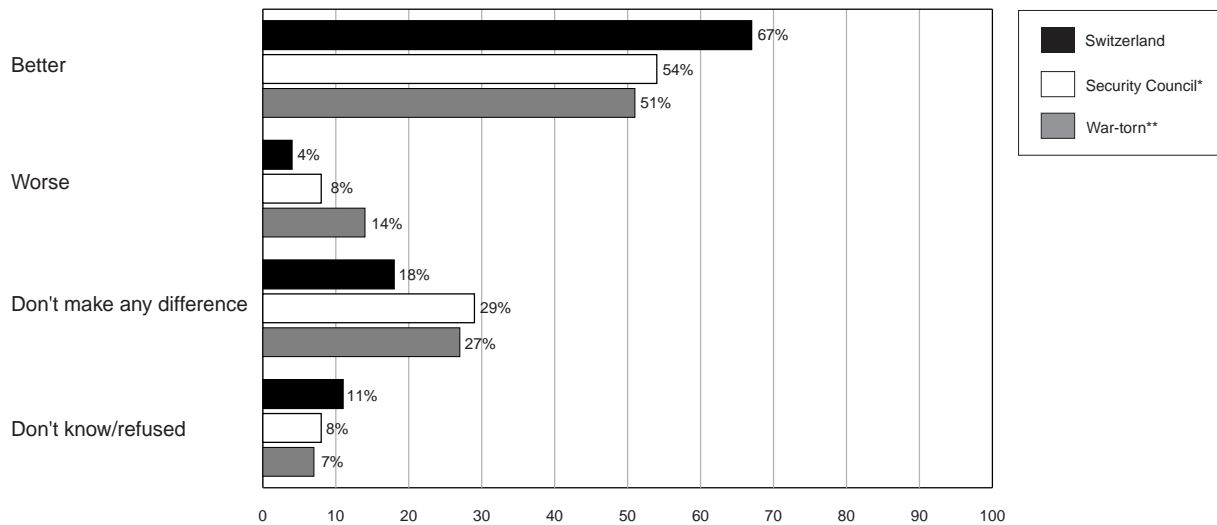
Question: Do international peacekeeping forces make it better or worse for civilians during these wars, or don't they make any difference?

* The four permanent Security Council members surveyed
** The war-torn settings surveyed where the question was asked

French, with 64 per cent naming both the ICRC/Red Cross and humanitarian groups, offer similar answers.[79]

Curiously, the Swiss are less positive about the possibilities of future intervention by international organizations that aim to protect civilians during wartime. Asked if their own country should intervene more in the future, 51 per cent of Swiss respondents agree, while almost one in four (23 per cent) disagree.

While this is comparable to those surveyed in the four Security Council countries, the Swiss are much less likely than those in France, the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom to favour more intervention *by the international community* in the future. Sixty-four per cent of Swiss respondents want more intervention in the future, a number equal to those surveyed in the war-torn countries. Twenty per cent of Swiss respondents, however, favour less intervention – slightly more than in the war-torn countries, more than twice the level in France and the United Kingdom and four times more than in the Russian Federation. Only people in the United States – where 32 per cent favour less intervention – are less supportive of future attempts by the international community to protect civilians under fire.

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[79] The numbers add up to more than 100 because respondents were asked to name the two organizations they feel are most important in such situations.

Annex 1: General methodology

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

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

The consultation was based on three principal research methods:

· A survey of 1,000 (in some cases 1,500) respondents representative of the country's general population;

· Focus groups (between 8 and 12 depending on the country) allowing a professionally moderated and intensive discussion in small groups;

· In-depth, face-to-face interviews (about 20 in each country) with individuals with specific war experiences.

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

Opinion survey

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Annex 2: Questionnaire for war-torn countries surveyed*

Introduction

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

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

1. What is your age? _____
   ☐ [Don't know/refused]

2. How many years of school have you had? ____ years
   ☐ [Don't know/refused]

3. What is your current family situation?

   ☐ Married (have a husband or wife)
   ☐ Single
   ☐ Live together with someone (in a permanent relationship)
   ☐ Divorced (or separated)
   ☐ Spouse of missing person
   ☐ Widow(er)
   ☐ [Don't know/refused]

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

   ☐ No children
   ☐ Yes ___ children

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

   ☐ Farmer
   ☐ Manual worker
   ☐ Skilled worker
   ☐ Self-employed
   ☐ Housewife/home care
   ☐ Soldier (combatant)
   ☐ Government employee
   ☐ Private sector employee
   ☐ Teacher/professor/intellectual
   ☐ Pensioner/retired
   ☐ Unemployed (but looking for work)
   ☐ Unemployed (not looking for work)
   ☐ Student
   ☐ Other **[SPECIFY]**
   ☐ [Don't know/refused]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[IF NO RESPONSE, GO TO Q11]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

    Is that wrong or just part of war?

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

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

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

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

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

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

Is that wrong or just part of war?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- [ ] Landmines
- [ ] Laser weapons
- [ ] Napalm
- [ ] Nuclear weapons
- [ ] Chemical weapons
- [ ] Cluster bombs

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

☐ Must allow   ➜ **GO TO Q27d**
☐ Don't have to allow   ➜ **GO TO Q28**
☐ [Don't know/refused]   ➜ **GO TO Q28**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

    ☐ Yes
    ☐ No   ➜ **GO TO Q46**
    ☐ [Don't know/Refused]   ➜ **GO TO Q46**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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