

PEOPLE ON WAR

Country report South Africa

ICRC worldwide consultation on the rules of war

Report by Greenberg Research, Inc.

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INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

About the People on War project

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

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

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

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

Greenberg Research, Inc.

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

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

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

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Country context

In 1948, one year before the nations of the world gathered to sign the Geneva Conventions to impose limits in war, the white voters in South Africa elected a National Party government to create a racial order called apartheid. It marked the beginning of a period of growing conflict, that turned increasingly violent as the decades unfolded.

Racial segregation had marked South Africa since the formation of the State in 1910. Indeed, segregation in access to land had deep roots in the colonial period. Yet before 1948 there had at least been a limited political space for better-educated segments of the population that were not white. Coloureds could vote. Black South Africans had a limited franchise.¹ Some unions represented coloured and black South African workers. A number of organizations advocated civic equality. The new government, however, ran on a programme of rigid segregation, known as apartheid, and quickly formalized and intensified the country's system of racial separation and domination.

What characterized South Africa after World War II was not a civil war that would have brought this conflict within the purview of the Geneva Conventions, but a set of repressive practices that imposed a kind of order, at least for a time. The apartheid regime eliminated the franchise for black South Africans, then coloureds. It devised elaborate racial classifications and a pass system for black South Africans. It created racial group areas in the urban areas and began forced removals that ultimately displaced millions. It froze black South African land ownership in white areas and created rural homelands, or "bantustans", which were intended to accommodate black aspirations. At the same time, the State barred black South Africans from trade unions and suppressed the black political opposition.²

The black resistance to apartheid, at least until 1960, involved mostly non-violent protests – including the growth of the African National Congress (ANC), founded in 1912, and later, the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC). After 1948, the groups expanded their efforts to include civic protests, such as bus boycotts, refusal by black women to carry passes and adoption of a Freedom Charter in 1955.³

In 1960, however, the dynamics between the apartheid state and the black majority changed fundamentally. On 21 March, police opened fire on protesters in Sharpeville, near Johannesburg, killing 67 and wounding 186. Further demonstrations followed, and the government cracked down on the protest movement. It declared a state of emergency, banned the ANC and PAC, mobilized the army reserves and arrested well over 10,000 blacks, including much of the protest movement's leadership.⁴

The years that followed this crackdown were marked by effective repression of the opposition. The sheer efficacy of the apartheid state, especially from 1961 to 1976, precluded widespread civic disorder. In fact, until its demise in the early 1990s, the apartheid state largely preserved domestic order in white areas, maintained control over the rural areas, and confined military incursions by the ANC/PAC to particular areas and to occasional urban attacks.

Yet the system of apartheid was being challenged, even as it was being elaborated after 1960. At least three major factors helped contribute to the eventual downfall of the apartheid regime nearly a quarter century later. The first was the decision of the previously peaceful protest movements to create military wings, such as the ANC's Umkhonto we Sizwe ("Spear of the Nation" or "MK") established in 1961. After the collapse of colonial regimes in neighbouring States, these military wings had somewhat broader

¹ For the purposes of this report, the term "blacks" encompasses, as it commonly does in South Africa, three groups – blacks, coloureds (mixed race) and Asians – all of whom were subject to varying degrees of racial discrimination under apartheid. When wishing to refer to the black sub-group alone, the report uses the term "black South Africans". There are 30.7 million black South Africans (76 per cent of the total population); 3.4 million coloured (8 per cent); 1 million Asians (3 per cent) and 5.2 million white South Africans (13 per cent) – Thompson, Leonard, *A History of South Africa*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1995, p. 278.

² Thompson, Leonard, *A History of South Africa*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1995, pp. 191, 226.

³ Thompson, Leonard, *A History of South Africa*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1995, p. xvii.

⁴ Thompson, Leonard, *A History of South Africa*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1995, p. 210.

areas in which to operate, and the South African military mobilized in order to confront them. Over the next three decades, the extended opposition was to undertake hundreds of bombings on governmental and sometimes non-governmental targets and attacks on police, resulting in hundreds of deaths and injuries.

A second, non-military, and even more direct challenge to the apartheid order came from within South Africa, especially its urban areas. Semi-skilled and unskilled black workers, who were greatly increasing in number, joined a trade union movement that was difficult to contain. Moreover, a range of civic groups began to form. And most important, young black South Africans – many schoolchildren – joined township protests in places like Soweto, that turned violent. The police responded forcefully to what they considered riots. In the initial wave in 1976 over 500 protesters died, a quarter of them under age 18. Yet, in many ways, the regime never fully regained control. The urban disorder soon involved prolonged school boycotts. In some areas, informal black South African groups gained control of the townships at the neighbourhood level.

A third reason for the downfall of the apartheid regime was its increasing isolation within its region and the broader international community. As colonial regimes fell throughout Africa, South Africa became surrounded by black-led States that condemned its apartheid policies. Starting in 1952, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly passed annual resolutions condemning apartheid, and in 1973 declared apartheid to be a “crime against humanity”. In 1977, the UN Security Council imposed a mandatory arms embargo on the country. While these actions initially had limited impact, the increasing tide of international opinion eventually led to the divestment of investment capital, which encouraged some members of the business elite in South Africa to search for a negotiated end to the apartheid regime.

By the mid-1980s, the regime was increasingly relying on force to retain its grip. In 1983, the ANC and more than 500 other organizations created the United Democratic Front. The pace of demonstrations grew, and with it, the number killed by police. In June 1986, the government imposed a nationwide state of emergency, which gave the police broad powers of arrest without warrant, empowered them to ban meetings and curtailed media coverage of protests. Tens of thousands were arrested and detained.⁵ Many were tortured. Trade unions were banned. The repression escalated, but in reality heralded the erosion of state control.

As 1989 marked the fall of the Berlin Wall and the beginning of the end for the Soviet empire, so it marked the beginning of the end for the apartheid regime. A growing black population, continuing recession and widening domestic unrest continued to cut into the foundations of white rule. The end of the Cold War undermined the last basis for Western support for white domination in Pretoria. In 1989, Prime Minister P.W. Botha suffered a stroke and relinquished power to F.W. de Klerk, who decided to seek reforms. On 2 February 1990, he lifted the bans on the ANC, PAC and other organizations. Nine days later, Nelson Mandela emerged from prison a free man after 27 years in prison. Over the next three years, Mandela and de Klerk led the country's array of parties and organizations along a rocky but ultimately successful path that achieved a peaceful transition to democracy.⁶

The relaxing of apartheid's iron grip did not, however, bring instant relief. As the white regime began to lose control, informal black structures formed in its place. It was an environment in which violence and crime were rampant. Housed in separate hostels, migrant workers, mostly from KwaZulu, clashed with the urban residents of the urban townships around Johannesburg. While pulling back from direct control, the white government frequently worked to encourage political violence among blacks, particularly in the towns of KwaZulu. In the years leading up to multiracial elections, competition between the ANC and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP, founded in 1975 by Zulu chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi) fuelled the violence in some townships and in KwaZulu. According to various estimates, close to 10,000 people died in the township violence.⁷

⁵ Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report, Volume 1, Chapter 1, Executive Summary.

⁶ Based on the chronology of events in Thompson, Leonard, *A History of South Africa*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1995, pp. xv-xx.

⁷ Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report, Volume 1, Chapter 1, Executive Summary.

Not until South Africa's first non-racial elections in 1994 did the country start to see the beginnings of civil peace. The late April elections were peaceful, and observers deemed them free and fair. On 10 May 1994, nearly a half century after the National Party had imposed its apartheid regime, Nelson Mandela was sworn in as the first President of a new South Africa. Since then, the country has grappled with a range of challenges, including economic reconstruction, one of the world's highest crime rates and the difficulties of reconciling South Africa's people across racial lines while seeking accountability for those who engaged in brutality during the apartheid era. The country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), led by Nobel laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu, issued its five-volume report in 1998 based on testimony from over 23,000 persons.

South Africa's march from apartheid to democracy was painful and costly. From 1960 to 1994, over 2,500 people – 95 per cent of them black South Africans – were hanged for political crimes. An estimated 80,000 people were detained without trial.⁸ Millions were forcibly displaced. Thousands died in protests, and thousands more in the later political violence among black South Africans. Hundreds of supporters of the apartheid regime died in bombings and armed attacks by black militant organizations. As whites struggled to maintain their domination and blacks struggled to acquire basic political rights, South Africa's urban communities became unconventional battlefields. It is in such circumstances that civilians inevitably find themselves in the line of fire. That is precisely what happened in South Africa.

⁸ Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report, Volume 1, Chapter 1, Executive Summary.

Country methodology

The findings in this report are based on a consultation carried out by the ICRC in South Africa under the supervision of Greenberg Research and with the help of a local opinion research partner, Markinor, based in Randburg. The aim was to assess the impact of armed conflict on people's lives and to allow people to share their personal experiences and opinions on a range of issues, from the armed conflict itself and the limits of warfare, to the impact of international law, including the Geneva Conventions.

The South African consultation consists of three elements:

- Nine **focus groups** (FG) recruited by the ICRC, the South African Red Cross and Markinor. Moderators were provided by Markinor, working under the supervision of Greenberg Research. The groups were held between 4 and 13 March 1999 in three different regions of the country: KwaZulu Natal, the Cape Town area and Guateng (the main urban centre encompassing Johannesburg and Pretoria and the surrounding townships, including Soweto). Sessions were held with the following groups: medical personnel from Baragwanath Hospital in Soweto township; members of ANC Self Defense Units (SDU) and Inkatha Freedom Party Self Protection Units (SPU) in Thokoza township, Gauteng; widows in Bambaay township near Durban; teachers from Ndalen township near Richmond, KwaZulu Natal; and in the Cape Town area, former members of the South African Defense Force (SADF), displaced coloured persons from District 6, former MK members detained under the apartheid regime on Robben Island, and mothers of youth living in Mannenberg township, which is known for its gang activity.
- Twenty-one **in-depth-interviews** (IDI) conducted mainly by ICRC and South African Red Cross staff between 23 March and 14 June 1999. Interviewees included a farmer from Pietermaritzburg, staff from local NGOs, a religious leader in Pretoria, a teacher and an elder in KwaZulu Natal.
- A **national quantitative survey** conducted among the South African population. A total of 1,500 respondents were surveyed, of at least 18 years of age and stratified geographically according to population. The sub-sample for KwaZulu Natal was boosted to enable an analysis of that region and was weighted down to its correct percentage in the overall sample. The survey was conducted by Markinor, under the supervision of Greenberg Research. The questionnaire was translated from English into five languages: Zulu, Xhosa, Northern Sotho, Southern Sotho and Tswana. The survey took place between 14 April and 21 May 1999. Total percentages reported here are subject to a sampling error of +/- 3.5 percentage points (at a 95 in 100 confidence level). Results in smaller segments, such as the 293 interviews in the KwaZulu Natal area, are subject to an error of +/- 7.1 percentage points.⁹

During the focus groups, research observers listened to the discussions from a separate area with the aid of a simultaneous translator. Discussions were held in English, Afrikaans and Zulu, often a mixture of several languages and their township versions. They were tape-recorded and then translated into English for analytical purposes.

The in-depth interviews were conducted in either English or Zulu. Each interview was tape-recorded and then transcribed and translated into English, when necessary, by the local partner.

⁹ These estimates are based on population values of 50 per cent. Obviously many reported percentages are lower or higher than that; high percentages would have a smaller sampling error. For example, a reported percentage of 90 per cent for the total population would have a sampling error of +/- 2.4 percentage points.

Executive summary

The struggle to create an apartheid order in South Africa and the struggle to topple it is one of this century's defining dramas. During the five decades from the advent of the National Party government in 1948 to the election of Nelson Mandela as President in 1994, a white-dominated regime developed a coercive system to sustain a racially segregated society, while the predominant number of blacks,¹⁰ along with some whites, struggled to create a unitary society.

The human toll was high, especially for blacks. In the imposition of apartheid rule, and in the protests and riots that eventually helped end it, thousands of activists and civilians were killed; tens of thousands were arrested, jailed and – in many cases – tortured; millions of individuals or families were forcibly displaced. Blacks were relocated to distant impoverished communities as a matter of policy.

After the suppression of black protest movements, some black organizations turned to more militant means, including bombings and other armed attacks, which resulted in the death or injury of hundreds of supporters of the white regime, including some civilians. Later, thousands of blacks died in the political violence among black South Africans that erupted as the white regime weakened and withdrew from black urban townships, and as it often incited violence between black factions that were vying for power.

South Africa's conflict bore a number of unique characteristics. First, it was fundamentally political in nature, and revolved around the struggle to eliminate a political system founded on racial segregation. Second, it was a highly asymmetrical conflict, in which the white regime held the preponderance of economic and military power. Third, it was a conflict that affected only portions of the population despite the universal stakes involved: it directly involved only a sliver of the white population, and these were almost entirely men; and while the struggle violently engulfed specific black urban communities, a majority of blacks did not live where the conflict occurred, and did not experience any of its immediate consequences.

The ICRC consultation shows that a majority of both blacks and whites in South Africa believe that there should be limits on the conduct of war and armed conflicts and that these should include protection of civilians, and especially women and children, from harm. Yet it is also evident that the conflict in their country often rode roughshod over those very limits.

The consultation highlights four key reasons for the breakdown of these limits, with differing factors among whites and blacks.

Among whites, those who served in the security forces describe soldiers who lost control when confronted with protests or riots. Over a third of whites, 35 per cent, say that combatants "lose all sense during war". In one focus group, former members of the South African Defense Force (SADF) described how, when confronted with riots, the security forces would narrow their focus to their own survival, explode with anger and open fire on crowds. Some of these former soldiers attribute the worst excesses to the overly aggressive and ultimately dangerous reactions of young and poorly trained members of the force.

White respondents in this consultation also maintain that the security forces were acting under orders to restore order as part of a larger plan. About a third of whites, 34 per cent, cite this as a reason why soldiers and fighters sometimes endanger civilians. Members of the SADF described many of their actions as "doing their duty" to "go in and clean up". Throughout the survey, focus groups and in-depth

¹⁰ For the purposes of this report, the term "blacks" encompasses, as it commonly does in South Africa, three groups – blacks, coloureds (mixed race) and Asians – all of whom were subject to varying degrees of racial discrimination under apartheid. When wishing to refer to the black sub-group alone, the report uses the term "black South Africans". There are 30.7 million black South Africans (76 per cent of the total population); 3.4 million coloured (8 per cent); 1 million Asians (3 per cent) and 5.2 million white South Africans (13 per cent) – Thompson, Leonard, *A History of South Africa*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1995, p. 278.

interviews, white males, who far more than white women manned the apparatus of apartheid, expressed a particularly expansive view of how conflict can be waged.

The stated reasons for the breakdown of limits were somewhat different among blacks. Blacks report a sense of frustration, hopelessness and rage created by the apartheid order, and a sense of exhaustion regarding constrained resistance. Black participants in the focus groups and in-depth interviews described how the early commitment of the ANC to non-violence gave way to a determination to strike back against apartheid, and how the MK's ("Spear of the Nation") disciplined military code at times gave way to more indiscriminate attacks.

The political violence among blacks that surfaced in the late 1980s and early 1990s was characterized by intense fear and desire for revenge, fuelled by atrocities and brutal fighting at close quarters. About one-third of blacks, when asked why combatants sometimes attack civilians, say it is because combatants are "determined to win at any cost" or because they "hate the other side so much". Both of these impulses helped throw fuel on the flames of conflict in the urban townships as the white government withdrew its authority, and as black factions – often aided and manipulated by white security forces – vied for power.

The main findings of this consultation in South Africa are summarized in the points below:

The conflict over the racial state. The fundamental point about the conflict in South Africa is that it was political in nature and revolved around the struggle to eliminate a political system founded on racial segregation.

- Participants in the South African consultation describe the primary cause of the conflict as blacks struggling to gain fundamental political rights against an apartheid regime that was built, enriched and sustained on forcible racial discrimination.
- Participants describe the conflict in terms of a struggle for "domination" rather than a struggle for racial "equality".

The conflict over apartheid. The conflict in South Africa had three dimensions: contained violence with few partisans; the struggle between a black majority and white minority government over race-based political objectives characterized by a deep asymmetry of power; and political violence among black South Africans.

- Only 7 per cent of whites lived in the area where the armed conflict over apartheid occurred, and only 11 per cent in the areas where the political violence was mainly among black South Africans. In contrast, nearly three-quarters of the black population living in urban centres say the conflict over apartheid took place in the area where they were living.
- Both black and white participants in the consultation describe the conflict as a struggle for "domination". Participants in the focus groups mentioned efforts to preserve control of the country's vast resources, as well as an unequal access to firepower during the violence.
- Only 34 per cent of blacks and 37 per cent of whites say they supported a side in the fight against apartheid. On both sides, more men than women took a side in the fight: 43 per cent of white men compared with 31 per cent of white women, and 42 per cent of black men compared with 27 per cent of black women.

- A large number of participants in focus groups said that the political violence which took place among black South Africans was more horrible than the struggle for domination against the whites. They said that political violence included shooting of women and children, rapes, burning or bulldozing buildings with civilians inside, and “necklacing” – placing a tyre filled with gasoline (petrol) around an opponent’s neck and setting it on fire.

Experiencing the conflict: horror and disruption. The reactions to the conflict among blacks are ones of horror and hatefulness, while whites tend to focus on the sense of disruption.

- Nearly half of black participants (44 per cent) say the conflict was “horrible”, and more than one-third (36 per cent) say it was “hateful”. White men also describe the conflict as “horrible” (32 per cent), but nearly the same number (31 per cent) simply say it was “disruptive”. Twenty-five per cent describe the conflict as “hateful”.
- Blacks, who had the most contact with the conflict, and white women, who had the least, are more likely to describe the conflict as “horrible” (36 per cent) or “hateful” (28 per cent).

Limiting the scope of the conflict: protecting civilians. Both blacks and whites believe that civilians, particularly women and children, should be protected during conflict, but the different ways in which blacks and whites experienced the conflict fundamentally shape their views about how violence should be limited.

- Only 3 per cent of both white and black participants say it is acceptable to attack both combatants and civilians in order to weaken the enemy. Nearly two-thirds from each side – 62 per cent among blacks and 66 per cent among whites – believe the protection must be absolute and that combatants should “attack only combatants and leave civilians alone”. Fewer than one-third (31 per cent of blacks and 28 per cent of whites) say that when attacking the enemy, combatants should avoid civilians “as much as possible”.
- A majority of white participants say they could turn to the ICRC/Red Cross for protection during armed conflict, and another 11 per cent feel they can turn to the military. For blacks, the greatest share, 27 per cent, say they don’t know. Only 17 per cent of blacks say they could turn to the ICRC/Red Cross.
- Sixty-three per cent of blacks and 81 per cent of whites who believe there are certain things that combatants should not do when fighting their enemy say it is because these actions are “wrong”, rather than “they just cause too many problems”.
- Of those who responded that certain actions are “wrong”, both whites and blacks cite “human rights” as the main basis for these limits (59 per cent and 48 per cent, respectively). Blacks are much more likely than whites to cite the law as the reason for limits on combatants: 51 per cent, compared with only 19 per cent of whites. Whites, by contrast, are more likely to cite their “personal code”: (50 per cent), compared with only 23 per cent of blacks.
- Less than 15 per cent of whites say that weapons other than landmines and nuclear and biological weapons should be banned, including the ones that were most used in their country’s conflicts, such as bombs (6 per cent), guns (3 per cent) and grenades (3 per cent). More than one in six whites, 17 per cent, say there are no weapons that should be banned. Thirty-eight per cent of blacks say that guns, including machine guns, should be banned;

this is six times the level among whites. Another 22 per cent of blacks say that bombs should not be allowed.

Civilians and prisoners at risk. Participants on both sides of the conflict find it acceptable to target civilians who are actively assisting combatants, civilians who get in the way of the fight, and captive combatants who are wounded or have surrendered.

- Twenty-five per cent of whites say it is acceptable to attack civilians if they are giving food and shelter to enemy combatants, compared with 12 per cent of blacks. Whites are also twice as likely to say it is acceptable to attack civilians if they are transporting ammunition for enemy fighters – 40 per cent, compared with 19 per cent of blacks.
- One-third of whites, 33 per cent, say that it is “part of armed conflict”, and not “wrong”, to attack combatants in populated areas, even knowing that many civilians (or “women and children”) would be killed. This is more than twice the 14 per cent among blacks who express this view.
- Both black and white participants say that captives can be subjected to torture (30 per cent of whites and 32 per cent of blacks).
- Fifty-six per cent of blacks say that they would not help or save a wounded or surrendering soldier or fighter, compared with 48 per cent of whites. Only 33 per cent of blacks and 40 per cent of whites say that they would help or save such a fighter or soldier.
- Fifteen per cent of blacks and 14 per cent of whites approve of the idea of killing prisoners if the other side were doing so, and 14 per cent of blacks and 10 per cent of whites say that captive combatants sometimes deserve to die.

Breakdown of limits. Both blacks and whites acknowledge in general terms the importance of limits in conflicts and situations of violence, yet both blacks and whites crossed those limits, although in different ways and to differing degrees.

- One-third (33 per cent) of blacks say that soldiers or fighters attack civilians because they are “determined to win at any cost”, and the same number say it is because they “hate the other side so much”.
- Thirty-five per cent of whites say that soldiers or fighters harm civilians during conflict because they “lose all sense during war”; 16 per cent of whites volunteer this as a reason in an open-ended question.
- Thirty-four per cent of whites cite “carrying out orders” or “doing their job” as one of the two top reasons why fighters, including soldiers and security forces, sometimes attack civilians.

Geneva Conventions and the rules of armed conflict. There is a relatively low awareness of the rules that govern armed conflict among both whites and blacks in South Africa, but particularly among blacks.

- Only 8 per cent of blacks are aware of the Geneva Conventions and fewer than half of those who have heard of them (41 per cent) have an accurate understanding of what they are about. Two-thirds of blacks (66 per cent) believe that there are no laws against depriving

civilians of food, medicine or water or do not know if such laws exist. Sixty-two per cent say that there are no laws, or they are not sure if there are, to prevent attacks on populated areas.

- Whites are highly aware of the Geneva Conventions (72 per cent) and more than one-third of those aware of them have an accurate understanding of what the Conventions are about. Fifty-nine per cent of whites, however, believe that the Geneva Conventions make no real difference.
- Blacks who say they are aware of the Geneva Conventions are more likely than those who are unaware to save a wounded or surrendering enemy combatant (48 per cent compared with 33 per cent). They are also more likely to believe captured combatants must be allowed to contact relatives (70 per cent compared with 54 per cent) or be visited by a representative of an independent organization (76 per cent compared with 51 per cent).
- Seventy-two per cent of whites say that there are rules during armed conflict so important that the person who breaks them should be punished. The number of blacks who believe that wrongdoers should be punished, however, is less than half the level among whites (32 per cent).
- Among participants who believe that people who break the rules of conflict should be punished, whites are more likely than blacks to base the rules on international law (67 per cent compared with 37 per cent), while blacks are more likely to look to South Africa's laws (34 per cent compared with 8 per cent).
- Whites more than blacks look to an international criminal court as the proper venue for judgment and punishment (65 per cent compared with 27 per cent), while blacks are more likely to turn to the South African government to mete out punishment (38 per cent compared with 8 per cent of whites).

International and non-governmental institutions. When thinking about the role played by different organizations in the protection of civilians, whites are much more familiar with the ICRC/Red Cross, while blacks rely more on the country's churches and religious organizations.

- While blacks see government leaders (27 per cent) and religious leaders (26 per cent) as having played an important role in helping civilians during the conflict, whites see the ICRC/Red Cross as the key organization.

Looking forward. Though the violent conflict in South Africa has ended, the society remains marked by racial divisions.

- Whites are more likely than blacks to see the current violence in the country as different from apartheid (90 per cent compared with 60 per cent).
- Forty-six per cent of blacks (compared with 8 per cent of whites) believe that peace will last, while 59 per cent of whites (compared with 17 per cent of blacks) believe that there will be more armed conflict in the future.

The conflict over apartheid

The 50 years during which the modern Geneva Conventions have existed coincide almost exactly with one of the defining conflicts of the century – the conflict between a black majority and a white minority government that sought to create a racial order in South Africa. Racially based policies had existed in South Africa throughout the century, but when the National Party came to power in 1948, it devised an elaborate system of racial stratification called apartheid. In the quarter century from the Sharpeville shootings in March 1960 to the advent of a non-racial democracy in May 1994, the two sides waged a searing and often deadly conflict. The white government and its supporters used a range of tools to preserve its rule – including repressive laws, security forces, displacement, detention, torture, assassination of black leaders and the violent suppression of protests. Black organizations used protests, school boycotts, strikes and, ultimately, guerrilla attacks and bombings of selected military and non-military targets – in order to bring down the regime and create a more inclusive order.

The conflict over apartheid meant a number of very different things to the people of South Africa. First, it was fundamentally a political challenge to the character of the South African racial state. That is, this was a conflict in which blacks, through various means, sought to topple the apartheid state and whites sought to maintain their privilege and domination through increasingly elaborate repression.

Second, the conflict was marked by a deep asymmetry of forces and resources, which drove blacks to increasingly violent forms of resistance – from township disorders or “riots”, as described by the whites, to armed resistance and guerrilla attacks.¹¹

Third, although the conflict had pervasive consequences for the entire population of South Africa, it directly affected only a relatively narrow portion of the population. The white population, and especially white women, were mostly protected from the conflict, which indeed was a central purpose of the apartheid system. At the same time, while apartheid and the mass resistance against it touched the lives of almost all blacks, the violence it engendered engulfed black communities only in specific urban settings.

Fourth, in its later years, the conflict began to include political violence among black South Africans in areas where the State had lost or ceded control. The white regime partly instigated this intra-racial conflict, but it was also waged by black partisans in an effort to achieve political advantage.

The conflict over the racial state

The fundamental point about the conflict in South Africa is that it was political in nature and revolved around the struggle to eliminate a political system founded on racial segregation.

It is only possible to understand the intensity of South Africa’s conflict and the reasons it overshot the limits when it is viewed against the backdrop of South Africa’s racially charged history. As the National Party steadily tightened and codified apartheid restrictions, the frustration, humiliation and anger among blacks grew just as steadily. Once the ANC abandoned its position of non-violence after the Sharpeville shootings in 1960, these pent-up feelings were vented in armed attacks by blacks on government and sometimes civilian targets. Blacks, including ANC fighters in Umkhonto we Sizwe (“Spear of the Nation” or “MK”), largely perceived their campaign of carefully targeted attacks as a necessity. They saw it as their only recourse if they were to make headway against those who ran the apartheid regime.

The liberation movement that took up arms – and the liberation movement did not take up arms very lightly – it had a long history of non-violent struggle, but it reached a stage where a non-violent struggle became impossible because it itself

¹¹ For the purposes of this report, the term “blacks” encompasses, as it commonly does in South Africa, three groups – blacks, coloureds (mixed race) and Asians – all of whom were subject to varying degrees of racial discrimination under apartheid. When wishing to refer to the black sub-group alone, the report uses the term “black South Africans”. There are 30.7 million black South Africans (76 per cent of the total population); 3.4 million coloured (8 per cent); 1 million Asians (3 per cent) and 5.2 million white South Africans (13 per cent) – Thompson, Leonard, *A History of South Africa*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1995, p. 278.

was declared illegal and the State continued to use its mind to suppress any form of protest and then it was decided that we should engage in armed [conflict]. (IDI, black man,¹² Pretoria)

There were quite a lot of conflicts because you were oppressed by the apartheid era... You weren't free to do things that you wanted to, unless you sort of stood up and you got shot at and you got killed for your rights. Because you had no rights... You were... treated like a slave. Because you had to accept the wage that the boss gave you, and if you weren't satisfied with it, then you got kicked out, because he could take someone else to do the work. And that's where the uprising started. (FG, former detained MK members, Robben Island)

We were going to fight back, and everybody knew that once we did that we would be going against their ideology, and their will. But the shift took place because there were too many dying, not only physically but also dying of broken hearts, people were literally killed psychologically, many people committed suicide because of the situation in the country. (FG, displaced coloured persons, Cape Town)

It's very sad to witness a type of government for [the] human race that has degenerated to that level. It was as if we were dealing with monsters. (FG, former detained MK members, Robben Island)

Few participants in the consultation described the conflict as a struggle for racial "equality". Rather, both blacks and whites often described the years of conflict in terms of a struggle for "domination". Whites saw blacks as trying to achieve domination over the country's government and economy (and later perceived black South Africans to be in a struggle among themselves for political domination in the emerging post-apartheid era). Blacks, by contrast, perceived the apartheid regime as engaged in an effort to preserve its race-based domination over the black majority, and its dominion over the country's vast resources.

When the Boers came to this country for the first time, there was violence, the blacks were fighting against each other, and the whites fought against each other, the Boers fought against the English. So it has been like that for a long time. There is no explanation for it, because what is it all about? It is all about being in power, domination. (FG, former SADF members, Cape Town)

War is actually about greed and power and there is also the aspect of nationalism where we have various groups that want to establish a position of dominance over another group. (FG, displaced coloured persons, Cape Town)

The decades-long struggle against apartheid was uneven in its intensity, but the period as a whole was defined by violence, fear and often horror. Blacks experienced the terror of seeing colleagues and family arrested, often tortured, sometimes killed, and at times simply disappearing. White civilians worried about becoming victims in bomb attacks by the liberation movement against governmental and non-governmental targets. And young whites in the South African Defense Force (SADF) or South African Police (SAP), although protected by a lopsided advantage of firepower, were called in to face down rioters.

In the 80s they introduced the state of emergency... Many people disappeared, and no one can account for their disappearance. Some of our parents, brothers were arrested because I was in prison or because I was in exile on behalf of the

¹² Several IDI respondents were selected at random to be interviewed during the consultation.

ANC. They'd pick them up, interrogate them and they would disappear. (FG, former detained MK members, Robben Island)

Political violence was the worst thing... Families killed or losing loved ones, Chris Hanu killed, houses burnt down, all those things were very, very sad occurrences. (FG, former detained MK members, Robben Island)

The activities by the guerrillas... like urban terror, like bomb scares and explosions and grenade explosions – this very building where you are sitting – right opposite here a car bomb went off... It was a bus stop and a lady with a child was killed, all those windows were shattered and we picked up the pieces of the lady over there. (IDI, white safety and security civil servant, Durban)

The riot itself, the only riot where I was involved, was the one in Grahamstown, that was bad. There were stones and petrol bombs and bullets flying around. And if you got hit, you got hit, it was one of those things. (FG, former SADF members, Cape Town)

Asymmetry of power and the evolving conflict

The conflict was also characterized by a deep asymmetry. At least until the mid-1990s, the white South African government held a lopsided advantage in the fight. It controlled the levers of government. It possessed the only regular military and police forces. It held the preponderance of firepower. It held a virtual monopoly on the country's vast material resources. Black political parties like the African National Congress (ANC) were banned and many of their leaders jailed. Even as riots erupted in the 1970s, the South African government and its security forces held the upper hand in terms of raw force, as this statement by a former SADF member makes clear:

I know for myself, each guy was carrying at least three hand grenades and 16 magazines so you had more than enough firepower and then you'll have two Caspers [armoured vehicles] rocking up with 500 Brownings on the top. So even if there were 10,000 coming at you, you had enough firepower and there was no way they were going to stampede you and they knew that as well. Somewhere along the line there would be an absolute stalemate when they pushed us back and pushed us back and then the reinforcements would arrive. And normally it was the police. (FG, former SADF members, Cape Town)

As a result of this imbalance, the struggle to end apartheid laws and to topple a regime founded on racial discrimination did not resemble a traditional armed conflict. The white regime maintained effective overall control, even as the resistance was mounting. It lost control unevenly, which produced a range of types of conflict.

In the consultation, many black opponents of the apartheid regime described the resulting tactics as a necessary form of guerrilla fighting; some whites labelled it as terrorism. But both tend to recognize that it differed from a State-against-State clash of regular military forces.

The armed conflict in South Africa was not the conventional one of two armies lining up on opposite sides of a fence or a river. It was a guerrilla type of war and I suppose different tactics had to be adopted, but in doing so one was saddened by it. (IDI, white woman, Pretoria)

They did not recognize that we were fighting a just war. To them we were just a group of terrorists. (FG, former detained MK members, Robben Island)

Actually it was not so much an armed conflict, because there was not so much to resemble a war. It was more a low-level terrorist type of situation. (IDI, white former ambassador, Pretoria)

A far-reaching yet contained conflict

The third characteristic of the South African conflict is the paradoxical quality of its scope. On the one hand, the conflict touched the lives of virtually every resident of the country. It ultimately led to a new constitution and new polity, which fundamentally altered the political and legal rights of every citizen. Within certain large urban areas, such as Gauteng, the vast majority of residents were drawn into the fight.

On the other hand, only pockets of the overall black population, and only a sliver of the white population, were directly and actively involved in the struggle. The low level of direct involvement with the conflict was in part a measure of the efficacy of the State's actions. As a result, there is a certain dissonance between public awareness of the struggle, and the direct contact with the struggle that whites and blacks in South Africa actually experienced.

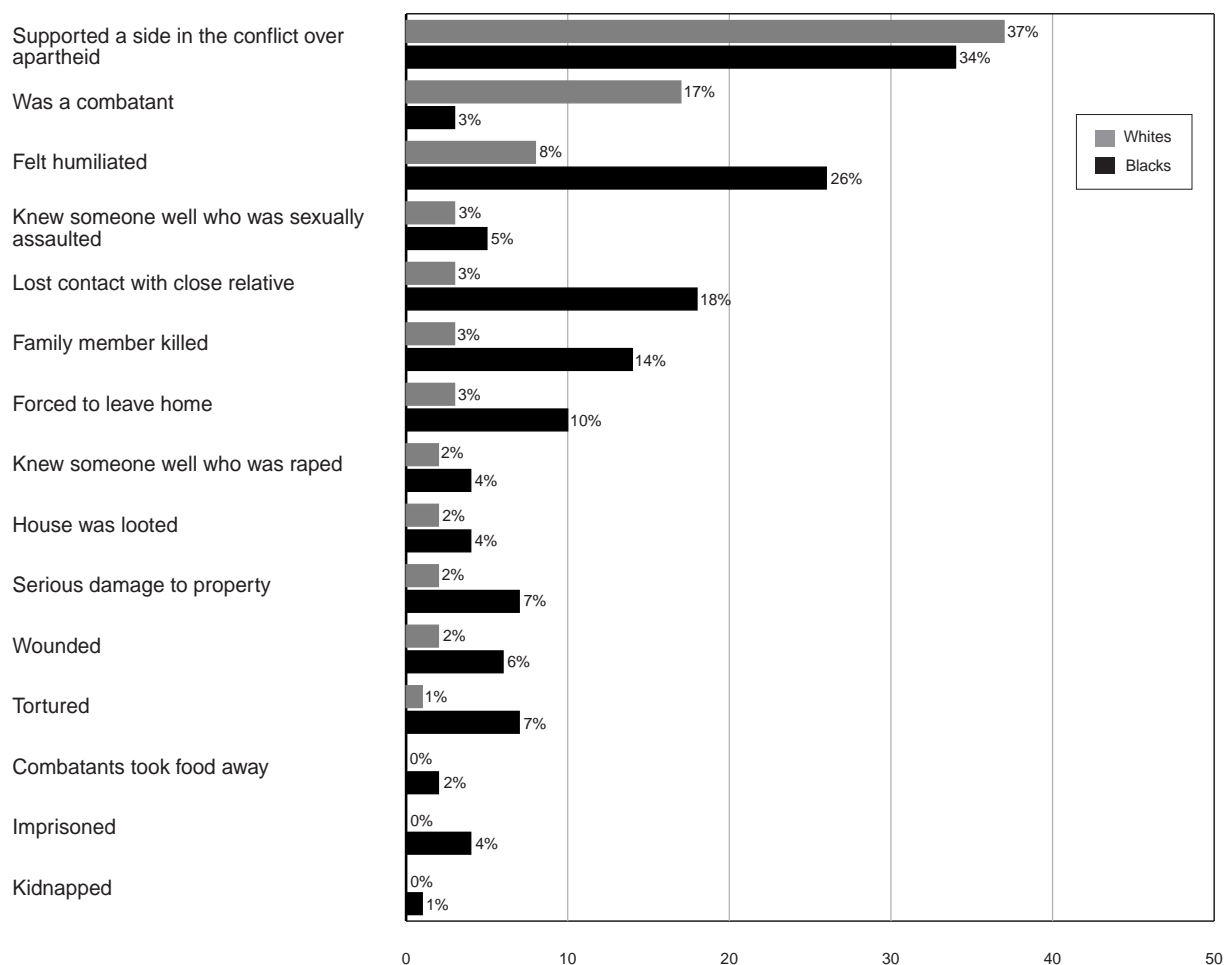
Few whites involved. The protection of the white population was a central motivation of the apartheid regime, and indeed, for most of this half-century of conflict over apartheid, the white population, particularly white women, saw little of it. They benefited from the system of racial privilege; yet, for the most part, they did not have to join the conflict directly.

Only 7 per cent of whites lived in the area where the armed conflict over apartheid occurred, and only 11 per cent in the areas where the fighting was mainly political violence among blacks. When presented with a list of 13 possible negative consequences of the conflict, nearly nine in ten white South Africans – 86 per cent – report experiencing none of them. (See Figure 1.)

The conflict was especially remote for white women. While 35 per cent of white men describe themselves as having been combatants, none of the white women do. White women also report far lower rates of conflict-related experiences. For each of the direct consequences of the conflict, such as property damage, forced displacement or the loss of a family member, the share of white women who report having any such experience is less than 2 per cent. (The only exception is that 4 per cent of white women felt "humiliated" at some point in the conflict.) Fully 93 per cent of white women report *no* conflict-related experiences, compared with 78 per cent of white men.

Pockets of black involvement. Although black, Asian and coloured South Africans had more contact with the conflict, it is remarkable how uneven their direct exposure was. The struggle against apartheid virtually consumed the urban centre of the country, now called Gauteng – an area that accounts for a quarter of the country's black South African population and encompasses: the gold mining areas of the Witwatersrand; Johannesburg, the largest city and commercial centre of manufacture; Pretoria, the administrative capital of the country; and the largest urban townships, including Soweto. In this area, nearly three-quarters of the population say the conflict over apartheid took place in the area where they were living. By contrast, in KwaZulu Natal (which is home to 21 per cent of the black South African population), only about one-third of the residents, 33 per cent, say the conflict took place in their area. And in the rest of the areas populated by black South Africans, less than one-quarter of respondents say that the anti-apartheid struggle occurred where they lived. In Eastern Cape, the figure is only 13 per cent.

FIGURE 1
Race and armed conflict¹³
(per cent of total population responding)



The same uneven pattern holds for the political violence among black South Africans that came later, in the 1980s and 1990s. One-third of the black South African population (33 per cent) report living where the political violence took place. But this figure averages out the experience of residents in Gauteng, 63 per cent of whom report living in an area affected by the political violence, along with 11 per cent in Eastern Cape.

A 58 per cent majority of blacks overall report having none of the 13 possible experiences resulting from the conflict. Yet only one-third of black South African residents in Gauteng (33 per cent) were untouched by such experiences, while nearly three-quarters of black South African residents in Northwest Province and Orange Free State, and more than four in five black South African residents in Eastern Cape (81 per cent) had no direct experiences of the conflict.

Only 3 per cent of blacks, including 6 per cent of black men and 1 per cent of black women, describe themselves as combatants.¹⁴ It may be that some respondents who were combatants did not admit their role, given that such activities were illegal at the time. Yet even if this figure were several times greater, it would still be far below the 17 per cent of whites (35 per cent of the men, none of the women) who say they served as combatants.

¹³ Respondents were given a series of 13 possible experiences and asked to identify any that have happened to them as a consequence of the conflict over apartheid. For example, respondents were asked whether they were forced to leave their home and live elsewhere, and whether they had been imprisoned or tortured. This Figure also indicates the percentage of respondents who say they were combatants and supported a side in the conflict over apartheid.

¹⁴ The combatant category is self-reported, that is, respondents determined for themselves whether they qualified as "combatants".

Low sense of taking sides. On both sides of the racial divide, a relatively small share say they supported a side in the conflict over apartheid. Given the immense political and economic stakes that both blacks and whites had in the outcome, one might expect that a greater share would say they supported a side in the conflict. Yet only a little over one-third of each group describe themselves this way. On the specific question of whether they took a side in the fight over apartheid, 34 per cent of blacks and 37 per cent of whites say they did. On both sides, men took a side in the fight much more than women: 43 per cent of white men compared with 31 per cent of white women, and 42 per cent of black men compared with 27 per cent of black women.

Again, the experience was very uneven among blacks, and particularly black South Africans. In Gauteng, more than half of the black South African population, 55 per cent, took a side in the fight against apartheid, and 45 per cent in Northwest Province and Orange Free State. These high rates of feeling part of the anti-apartheid struggle compare with only 18 per cent of black South Africans who report feeling this way in KwaZulu Natal. The key variable for black South Africans was whether they lived in an area where the anti-apartheid conflict was raging – for those who did, 53 per cent identified with a side in the struggle; for those who did not, the figure was only half as high, 27 per cent.

A higher share of blacks report that they took sides in the fighting that involved the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and ANC than in the struggle against apartheid – 45 per cent. Again, black men were most likely to take a side, with a 50 per cent majority reporting this position (compared with the 40 per cent of black women). The survey reveals the extent to which this violence was concentrated in distinct areas of the country: 50 per cent in Eastern Cape say they supported a side in the political violence among black South Africans, as do 61 per cent in Northwest Province and Orange Free State, and 55 per cent in Gauteng; but only 22 per cent in KwaZulu Natal, where the IFP was strongest and the conflict raged most recently.

Overall, the research suggests that most South Africans, blacks and whites, did not take a side in the struggle and did not have direct contact with the conflict. Comments from the participants in the focus groups and in-depth interviews give a sense of the remoteness of the conflict for many South Africans, especially whites:

[Moderator: You were never involved in conflict?] No, I never had a problem. There were always threats when they came into the white areas, but my father always used to say if they came into the house, give them any food and anything they want. All the poor people want is food and clothing – that is what my father said to me. (IDI, white male businessman, Cape Town)

Whites were just watching us on TV, as if they were in London and were uninvolved in everything that was happening here. (FG, former detained MK members, Robben Island)

The armed conflict at one time was so subtle that some people did not even know it was even happening. (IDI, black NGO worker, Durban)

Political violence among black South Africans

The final phase of South Africa's conflict was the political violence among black South Africans that erupted in the late 1980s in many urban townships. This violence flared as the government withdrew its authority, enabling black factions to wrestle for power.

For a large number of the participants in the consultation, the political violence among black South Africans was even more vividly horrifying than the struggle against the white regime. Participants in

the consultation, many of whom were active in this later stage of the conflict, recall that this violence often included the shooting of women and children, rape, burning or bulldozing of buildings with civilians inside, and the infamous “necklacings” – placing a tyre around the neck of an opponent, filling it with gasoline (petrol), and setting it on fire. The comments of participants in the focus groups and in-depth interviews suggest that in these and other ways the limits broke down in the township clashes in a way that was both horrifying and bewildering.

The black on black violence was the worst. I just don’t understand why if they are fighting the illegitimate government why is he attacking me and my family because I’m not part of that. (FG, medical personnel, Soweto township)

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. (FG, SDU¹⁵ [ANC], Thokoza township)

Riverlets of human blood ran on the streets. I remember waking up one morning to see a truckload of dead bodies that were taken to the mortuaries. When we embarked on a march, people were killed. (FG, SDU [ANC], Thokoza township)

I lived next to the hostel and we would hear screams of women during the night and we would wonder what was happening to them. Five minutes later, you’d hear a man’s scream. They kidnapped people and then killed them inside the hostel. In the morning bodies would be scattered around. (FG, SDU [ANC], Thokoza township)

Certain people who were said to be neutral ended up in jail. There were others who were said to be from Transkei, who were caught travelling in a car and were found with guns, they later confessed that they were sent to go and murder an IFP leader. There wasn’t anybody who was not supposed to die, we were all involved in this. (FG, SPU¹⁶ [IFP], Thokoza township)

When they came to attack, guns would appear everywhere, windows and doors and my own child who was one year, seven months was killed in 1993. My old lady and my little girl. (FG, SPU [IFP], Thokoza township)

This was not parallel violence; rather, it was directly linked to the conflict over apartheid. In fact, it took place in a context in which the State withdrew from its responsibility of maintaining civil order, and indeed – as South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission and other investigators have since established – actively encouraged lawlessness and violence in an effort to divide its black South African opponents. Both black and white participants in the consultation had a strong awareness of the government acting as a “third force” to spur on the political violence among black South Africans.

A lot of these conflicts took place because of the apartheid regime... I have seen mothers and fathers running from their homes. I have seen men being blown to pieces. I have seen police assisting one group and fighting against another.... Black on black violence was created by acts of the former regime. They did this so they could create divisions. (FG, displaced coloured persons, Cape Town)

¹⁵ ANC Self Defense Unit.

¹⁶ Inkatha Freedom Party Self Protection Unit.

It has certainly come out in the recent past that the government of the day at that time was actually fostering violence between the various black groups. There were undercover operations which were undertaken by the army or the police, whereas the average South African knew nothing — certainly I knew nothing about this — which were calculated towards creating a divide and rule situation and to cause suspicions between black groupings in this country. (IDI, white former ambassador, Pretoria)

It was no longer a Xhosa/Zulu war. Now it involved the whole community. It was an ANC/IFP thing. The then government system used dark forces to support Inkatha. If we wanted to defend our parents' properties we came face-to-face with these people who were dropped by government vehicles and then came and attacked residents. They didn't think twice about destroying people's properties because they had policemen as escorts. But when we retaliated we were imprisoned. (FG, SDU [ANC], Thokoza township)

The government brought to us the kicking force and these people would find us just sitting down relaxing and would swear at us saying we were going to shit. I think the government was happy with that. I think the government was making business out of us. (FG, SPU [IFP], Thokoza township)

While the government and its security forces incited township violence, long-standing tensions between rival black South African linguistic and political groups added fuel to the fire. Both blacks and whites in the consultation had a sense that black South African factions used this phase of the conflict in part to pursue their own ambitions and agendas. For some whites, this intra-racial violence helped confirm suspicions that blacks are unable to rise above old tribal hatreds. For some blacks who had been involved in the township violence, however, the internecine warfare left a strong sense of futility and sadness; as one black resident of Thokoza township put it: "We fought for the bone without meat. People died and we gained nothing." (FG, SPU [IFP], Thokoza township)

I hate to say this, but the power play among black political parties was really at the expense of lives. I mean lives of women and children who were by far on the receiving end. We could have saved most of those lives. (FG, former detained MK members, Robben Island)

After apartheid, from 1994 onwards, from my perception, organizations were fighting each other so that those who are not their members should not stay in a certain territory. It was that, fighting for leadership positions, fighting for power, and looking at each other, i.e., trying to make sure that so-and-so is in a leadership position and not so-and-so. (IDI, black female teacher, Ndwedwe)

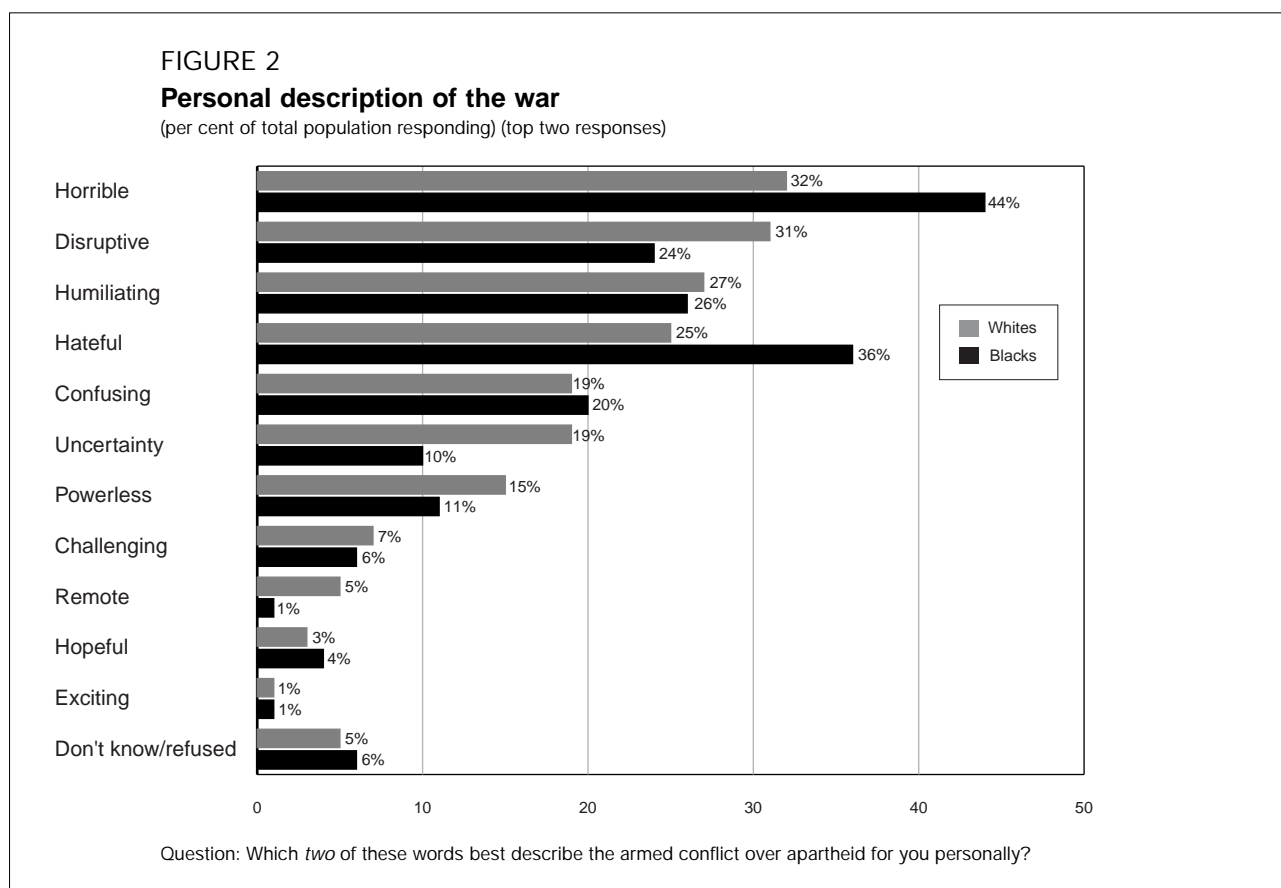
My own view is that once the [political violence among blacks] was unleashed... then it developed its own momentum. And I don't have that patronizing view of black people. As soon as things are happening they have to find a white person to sort it out and I find that insulting to black people. Black people are perfectly competent and capable of killing each other without any white involvement. And the Zulus have been doing it for thousands of years, and they will carry on doing it because it is faction fighting and it has nothing to do with whites, nothing at all. (IDI, white farmer, Pietermaritzburg)

Experiencing the conflict: horror and disruption

All four of these factors – the racial nature of the conflict over apartheid, the asymmetry of power, the relatively limited direct involvement, especially among whites, and the widening gyre of the political violence among black South Africans – produced very different reactions to the conflict among South Africans on each side of the racial divide. The reaction among blacks was one of horror and hatefulness. White women expressed horror as well, but given their very low level of contact with the conflict, it was not the horror of direct witness. White men had a very different reaction, which focused on the sense of disruption.

Horror and hatefulness for blacks

For blacks, the dominant emotional response was one of horror. Nearly half (44 per cent) say the conflict was “horrible”, and more than one-third (36 per cent) say it was “hateful”. The conflict was especially horrible for blacks who had direct contact with the conflict. Among blacks who report at least one experience related to the conflict, 50 per cent describe the conflict as “horrible”. In KwaZulu Natal, where the political fighting among black South Africans was intense, 55 per cent of black South Africans describe the conflict as horrible and 39 per cent as hateful. (See Figure 2.)

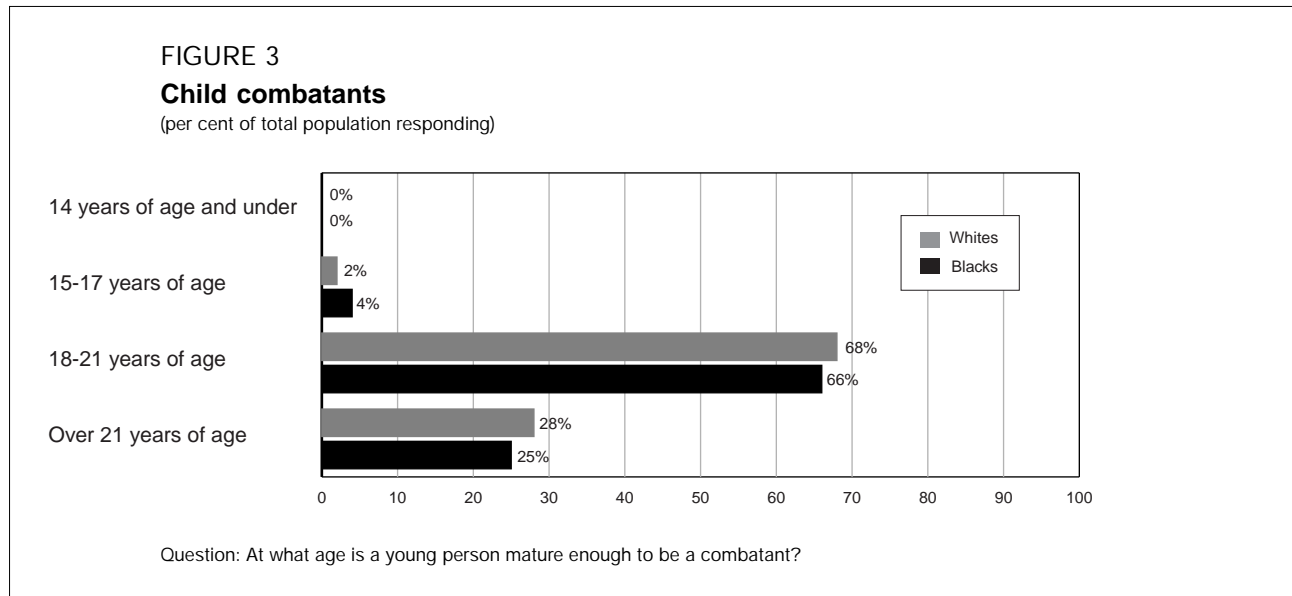


Torture. Seven per cent of blacks report being the victims of torture, which places the number of blacks who were tortured into the hundreds of thousands. The experience was scarring to those who survived it:

The torture was the worst thing, both physically and psychologically. People got so traumatized that some were on the verge of losing their minds. I remember there was a guy called John, who went over the edge. Wherever he is, I think he's still not himself. (FG, former detained MK members, Robben Island)

When I was arrested I was very badly beaten up and then of course when I was sentenced I was badly humiliated and badly treated, starved and tortured. (IDI, black man, Pretoria)

A children's war. Many blacks describe how young children became either combatants or victims, first in the fight against apartheid, and later in the township violence.



During the period of violence, the youths were in the forefront and they brought about change in South Africa... I know for a fact we were at the forefront of the struggle. Some of us even dropped out of school and now it's too late to go back. What we need is help to get our lives bearable, be able to make a living for ourselves. (FG, SDU [ANC], Thokoza township)

And I remember so many children getting shot and killed and hurt for their rights and then things started to change. (FG, former detained MK members, Robben Island)

But mostly it was peaceful demonstrations that were being held and then the Caspers would come round and tell them to disperse the demonstration in two minutes which was impossible and then before they could even disperse the security force members would open fire on the marchers... The same thing would happen at schools, schoolchildren would be demonstrating on the school ground with their placards and the next thing the police would come bursting through the school fences with their Caspers and attack these children. I have seen how people would shoot children in the neck and they would shoot to kill. (FG, displaced coloured persons, Cape Town)

I remember once I went to Tygerburg hospital and the nursing sister there told me that the foyer was covered in school blazers as a result of the children who had been injured by the police during a demonstration. You would see the Caspers standing everywhere with policemen on the ground with their guns firing at the schoolchildren and they would not even think about firing, they would simply fire. (FG, displaced coloured persons, Cape Town)

Blacks and whites in South Africa, not surprisingly, are united in their opposition to children becoming combatants. Almost three-quarters (66 per cent of blacks and 68 per cent of whites) do not believe children under the age of 18 should carry weapons and one in four (25 per cent of blacks and 28 per cent of whites) believe children should be over 21 before they become combatants.

Forced displacement. One historian estimates that over 3.5 million blacks were displaced between 1960 and 1983 alone, owing to the creation of "homelands", forced displacement of squatters, the creation of urban group areas, and forced single-sex migration for labour purposes.¹⁷ Accordingly, the 10 per cent of blacks who report in the survey that they were forced to leave their homes may well be a low estimate. (See Figure 1.) Many report that their homes were bulldozed, torched or wrecked by the tanks of the government security forces.

The apartheid era was bad and it also had its good points, but the worst part of it was the uprooting. The uprooting and changing family values. It changed a lot of people's family values. (FG, former detained MK members, Robben Island)

Burning down of homes because by doing that, innocent people get affected. (FG, teachers, Ndaleni township)

It is an aspect of healing and connection with the past which is difficult because that is what has got to do with our identity and the hardest part was when the bulldozers came and bulldozed the houses which I knew and the mosques and other structures, they bulldozed everything and obliterated our history. (FG, displaced coloured persons, Cape Town)

The government would go into places like KTC and Kahelitcha and just bulldoze the areas and destroy shacks and it would also be in winter when the elements were at their worst and then people were rendered homeless. (FG, displaced coloured persons, Cape Town)

Disruption among whites

Although some whites recall the conflict with a sense of horror, that feeling is mostly expressed by white women, who had little direct contact with the conflict. Among white men, who had far more contact as they held the front-line positions, the dominant recollection is one of disruption – a far more pragmatic and less emotional response. (See Figure 2.)

A system to protect white women and families. The pattern of reactions among whites underscores one of the central aims of the entire system of apartheid: to insulate and protect the white population, and particularly white women and children.

The difference in reactions to the conflict between white women and white men is striking. The dominant reaction among white women, as with blacks, is that the conflict was "horrible" (36 per cent) and "hateful" (28 per cent). They identify with these feelings much more strongly than do white men (28 per cent who describe the conflict as "horrible" and 23 per cent "hateful"), although not as strongly as do blacks (44 per cent who say it was "horrible" and 36 per cent "hateful"). Yet these two terms almost certainly mean something different for these white women to what they do for blacks. After all, as noted earlier, these white women had almost no direct contact with any aspect of the conflict. Thus, while the sense of horror and hatefulness increases for blacks with the *most* contact with the conflict, it is highest for those whites – women – who had the *least* contact. For white women, the sense of horror and hatefulness is almost certainly the considered reaction of sympathetic spectators rather than the gut-level terror of direct participants.

¹⁷ Thompson, Leonard, *A History of South Africa*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, p. 194.

By contrast, white men – who had far more direct involvement in the conflict than white women – describe the conflict in much more muted terms. As noted above, only 28 per cent see it as “horrible”, and 23 per cent as “hateful”. The dominant reaction among white South African men, rather, is that it was simply “disruptive”, with 39 per cent giving this response.

Even among those white men who had the most direct involvement – the members of the South African Defence Force – the consultation suggests that they viewed the conflict with a certain sense of detachment. SADF members who took part in a focus group suggested that their efforts against the anti-apartheid riots were relatively boring, especially compared with the warfare they had experienced in nearby States, such as Angola. Indeed, the sense of boredom made some of them eager for the “excitement” of violence.

You thought about your girlfriend, you thought about where you were going to get the next beer from. How long is this patrol going to last? Because you are sitting there in the heat, you’ve got to wear the full kit... You were sitting there in the middle of Crossroads or Motherwell or wherever, everyone was at the back of a Buffel, nothing invariably happened, you sat for hours and absolutely hours on end, you would get so bored. (FG, former SADF members, Cape Town)

You waited for someone to pick up a stone and throw [it at] someone, for then at least there was some excitement. (FG, former SADF members, Cape Town)

The townships were a holiday... To go to a township was an absolute “jol” [fun]. Sure, a couple of guys might get hurt, get a rock on their head, one or two guys might get shot, but 10 to 1, the chances of you getting actual damage were far less than if you were in Lohatla. (FG, former SADF members, Cape Town)

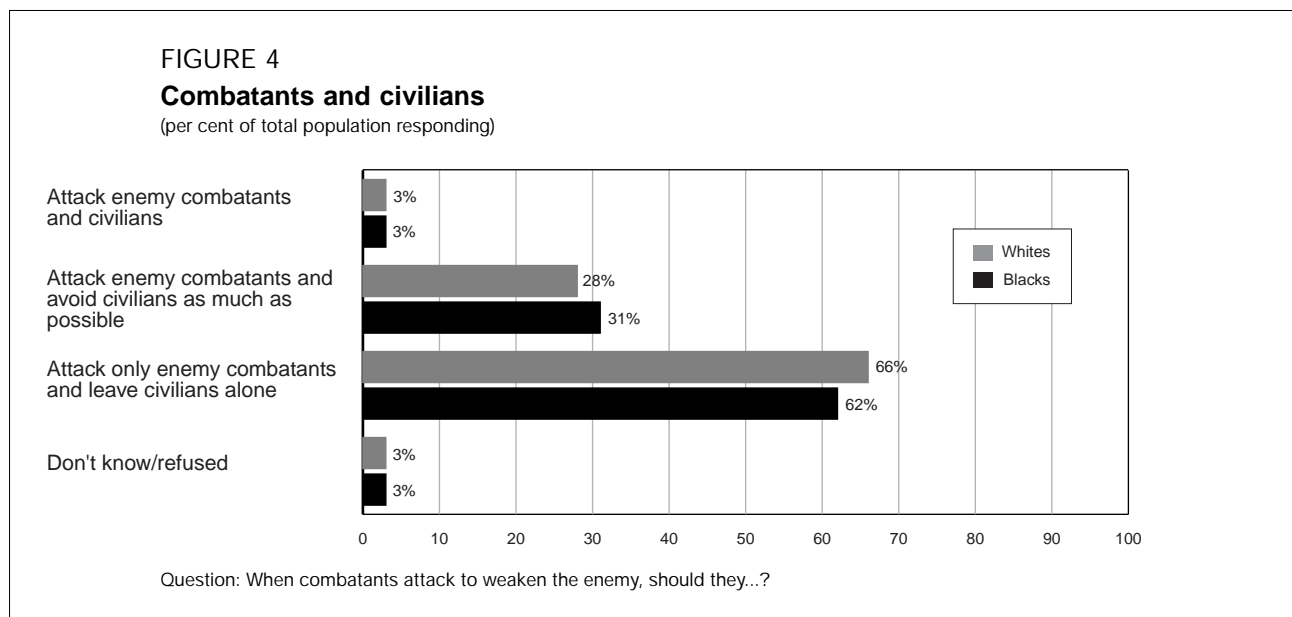
Limiting the scope of the conflict

Protecting civilians

The divergent ways in which blacks and whites experienced the conflict fundamentally shape their views about how violence should be limited, and how non-combatants can seek protection from it. Both blacks and whites share a conviction that civilians, and particularly women and children, should be protected from harm. But for whites, this view is grounded more in a sense that weak women and children must be protected while their men wage the fight, while blacks are more likely to place women and children off-limits because they are the source of the community's future strength. Moreover, whites believe they can turn to formal institutions in the face of conflict – especially the ICRC/Red Cross – whereas blacks, having faced the conflict cut off from governmental or institutional protection, tend to believe there is nowhere to turn in a conflict, and that the only refuge lies in taking flight.

Limits on behaviour in conflict

The starting point for a desire for limits is the strong belief among both blacks and whites that civilians must be protected during armed conflict. Only 3 per cent from each side say it is acceptable to attack both combatants and civilians in order to weaken the enemy. Nearly two-thirds from each side – 62 per cent among blacks and 66 per cent among whites – believe the protection must be absolute, and say that combatants should “attack only combatants and leave civilians alone”. Fewer than one-third (31 per cent of blacks and 28 per cent of whites) take a more relativistic position, and say that when attacking the enemy, combatants should “avoid civilians as much as possible”.



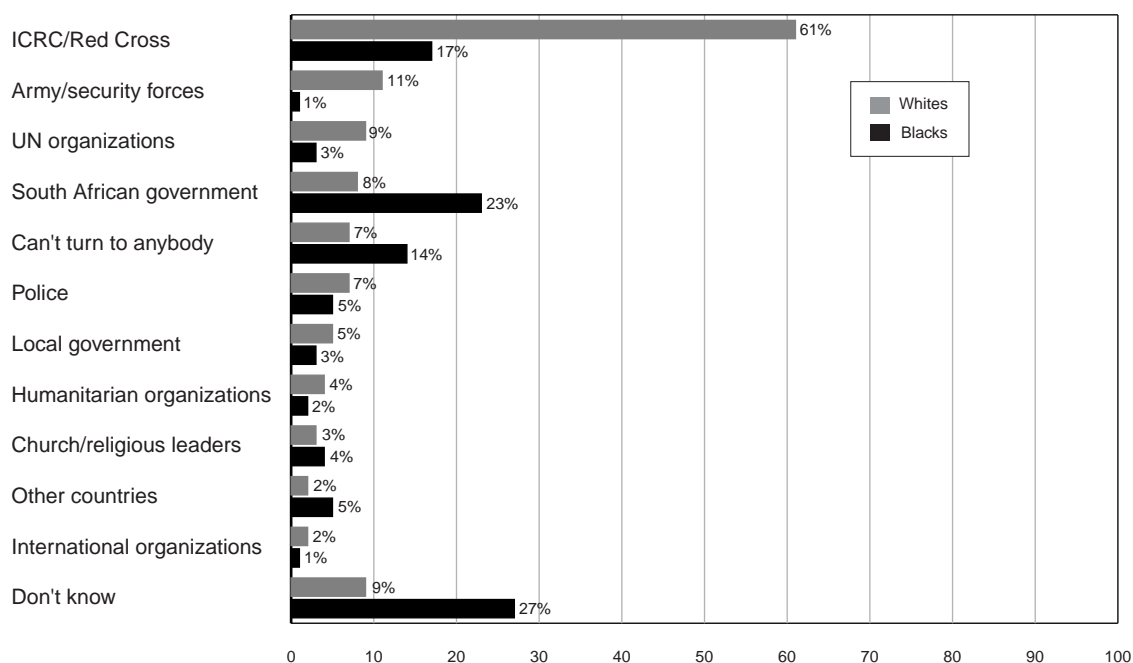
This belief in protecting civilians also emerges when South Africans are asked in an open-ended question if there is anything that “fighters, soldiers and members of the security forces should not be allowed to do in fighting the enemy”. The most common responses for both blacks and whites involve the protection of civilians and non-combatants. Forty-six per cent of black respondents provide answers that touch on this idea, saying either that combatants should not kill or harm civilians or non-combatants, or women and children. The same is true for 48 per cent of whites. (See Figure 6.) This notion also emerges strongly in the focus groups and interviews.

A civilian knows nothing, just like a child who knows nothing. They are innocent hence do not deserve to be attacked. (FG, widows, Bambaay township)

[If civilians are endangered in a fight] a section leader will send two troops to go and pull the guy, or the male or female or the kids, normally kids down to the ground and cover them with their own bodies. Whites, black or whatever because you know they've been caught in something... (FG, former SADF members, Cape Town)

Nowhere to turn for protection. There is a consensus that civilians deserve to be sheltered from armed violence, yet there are few places if any they can turn for protection. A majority of white South Africans feel they could turn to the ICRC/Red Cross for protection during armed conflict, and another 11 per cent feel they could turn to the military. For blacks, however, there is no clear place to turn. The greatest share, 27 per cent, say they don't know. Twenty-three per cent say they would turn to the government, but that is clearly a new feeling since 1994. Only 17 per cent of blacks say they could turn to the ICRC/Red Cross. Fully one-seventh, 14 per cent, bluntly say there is nowhere to turn.

FIGURE 5
Turn to for help
(per cent of total population responding)



Question: Let me ask what can be done if during the war civilian areas are attacked, 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?

The feeling among blacks that civilians often have no place to flee emerges clearly from the focus groups and interviews.

They run away leaving the safety of their houses and get to the safe places like the halls, hospital, schools and churches. (FG, SPU [IFP], Thokoza township)

You just run away not knowing where you are going. (FG, widows, Bambaay township)

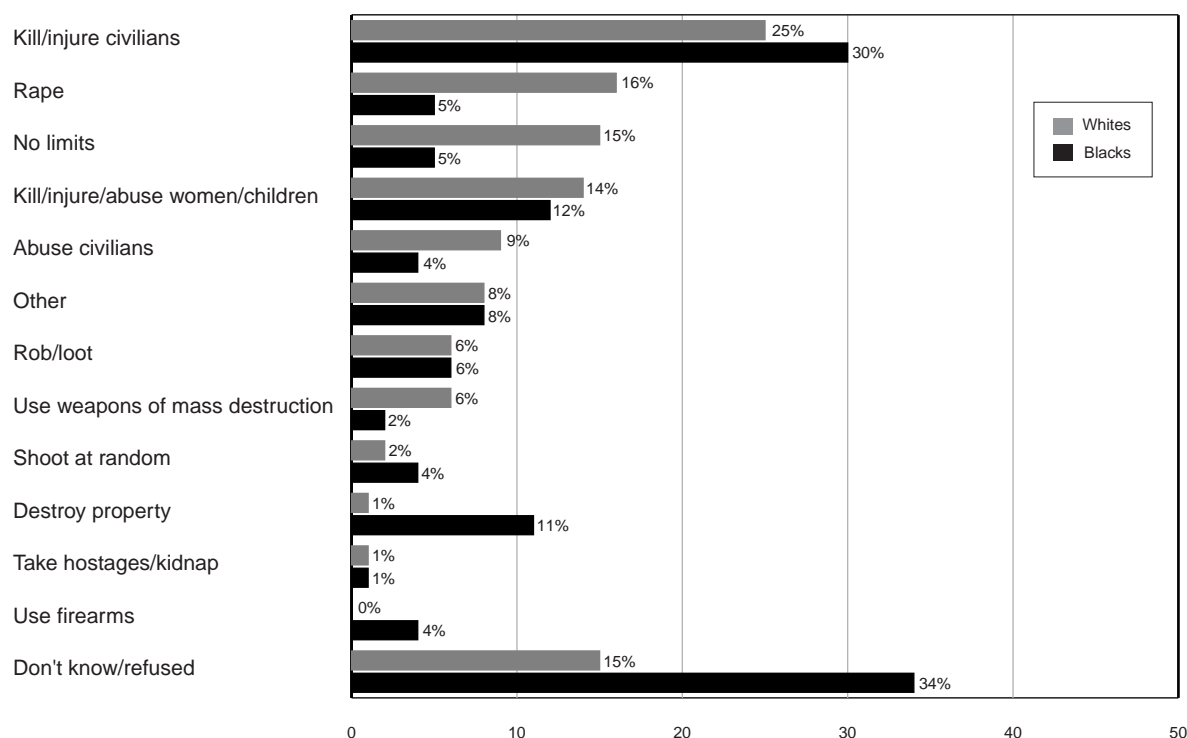
They're just going to flee. Grab the children and flee now, for their lives. (FG, mothers, Mannenberg township)

Special protection for women and children. Both sides place special emphasis on the protection of women and children. In an open-ended question, 12 per cent of blacks say that combatants specifically should not kill (8 per cent), injure (2 per cent) or abuse (2 per cent) women and children. The figure is 14 per cent among whites, with 4 per cent saying combatants should not kill women and children, and 5 per cent each saying that they should not injure or abuse women and children. (See Figure 6.)

FIGURE 6

What combatants should not do

(per cent of total population responding) (open question)



Question: Is there anything that fighters, soldiers and members of the security forces should not be allowed to do when fighting their enemy?

Blacks and whites provide slightly different reasons for the emphasis on women and children. Among whites, the dominant theme is that women and children are weak and know nothing about the nature of the conflict.

I think they [women and children] are too weak to protect themselves... Civilians are unarmed — they are the aged and women and children. The men are away fighting; let the men fight. But the aged and the women and the children are the ones who are the remaining civilians and one takes pity on them on both sides of the conflict. (IDI, white woman, Pretoria)

Blacks, by contrast, place a much greater emphasis on the role of women and children in ensuring the survival of the nation. They more frequently emphasize four points: that women know little about the ways of violence; that all members of the community were borne by women; that women are the source of future population growth, especially to replace the losses in the fighting; and that children represent the future of the community.

The last point is the killing of kids, women, old people was the worst. Some were burned alive inside their homes. You can kick me, I'm a man, a fighter, but killing children and women seems inhuman. That's the worst anyone could do. (FG, SDU [ANC], Thokoza township)

Women breed children and children are our future. They need to be protected. If it were for me, women would get involved in the war too. (FG, SDU [ANC], Thokoza township)

Men are the ones who go to fight. After the fight is over, these women are the ones who are going to bring other men or the new generation into this world. We should not kill the seed. It is better to kill the old tree than to destroy the seeds from it. (FG, SPU [IFP], Thokoza township)

Women are not involved in the fighting. They... know nothing about violence. Hence women and children should get special protection. Only men were involved in the violence. That was not happening because as soon as the fighting started you'd be trapped in the house by bullets fired from all angles. Women did not have guns. (FG, widows, Bambaay township)

Although [men] do suffer, they are more capable of bouncing back and looking for new wives. Men are no strangers to hardship, so it's not so bad. A man whose wife dies will be miserable for only a short while. After about two weeks, he starts looking around for a replacement. (FG, teachers, Ndaleni township)

Ambivalence regarding women. Despite the general consensus that women and children deserve special protection from armed conflict, both blacks and whites expressed ambivalence about the role of women. For several white participants, in particular, there was a sense that at least some women now want to be considered equal to men in all ways, and that some women actively participated as fighters in the South African conflict.

Children who are defenceless... Women are rather less defenceless because I see more and more that women are becoming combatants (IDI, white former ambassador, Pretoria)

No, women today want to be men, they want equal rights. You say a woman can't do this or that and they prove to you that they can. There are women in the army and I hate to say it but they are not as physically powerful as men but they can fight in a jet plane better. But yes, the women who are civilians deserve to be protected. (IDI, white male businessman, Cape Town)

I think one does try to protect children. I am not sure in this feminist world if one should protect women any more, because if they want to be feminists, they must take their chances. I myself am not a feminist and I believe women should be protected as far as possible. (IDI, white farmer, Pietermaritzburg)

The desire to cordon off civilians from the fight. The concern for protecting civilians leads some South Africans to feel that special areas should be designated for combat. This feeling is intensified by the awareness, noted earlier, that the conflict was often waged in a guerrilla fashion, with attacks often carried out in areas populated by civilians. This awareness fuels a desire for a return to the days in which armies of combatants faced each other on the plain of battle, far removed from civilian populations.

It's difficult to say, but there should be demarcated zones where people who want to fight would have to go there and leave the poor people alone or even evacuate the civilians first. (FG, medical personnel, Soweto township)

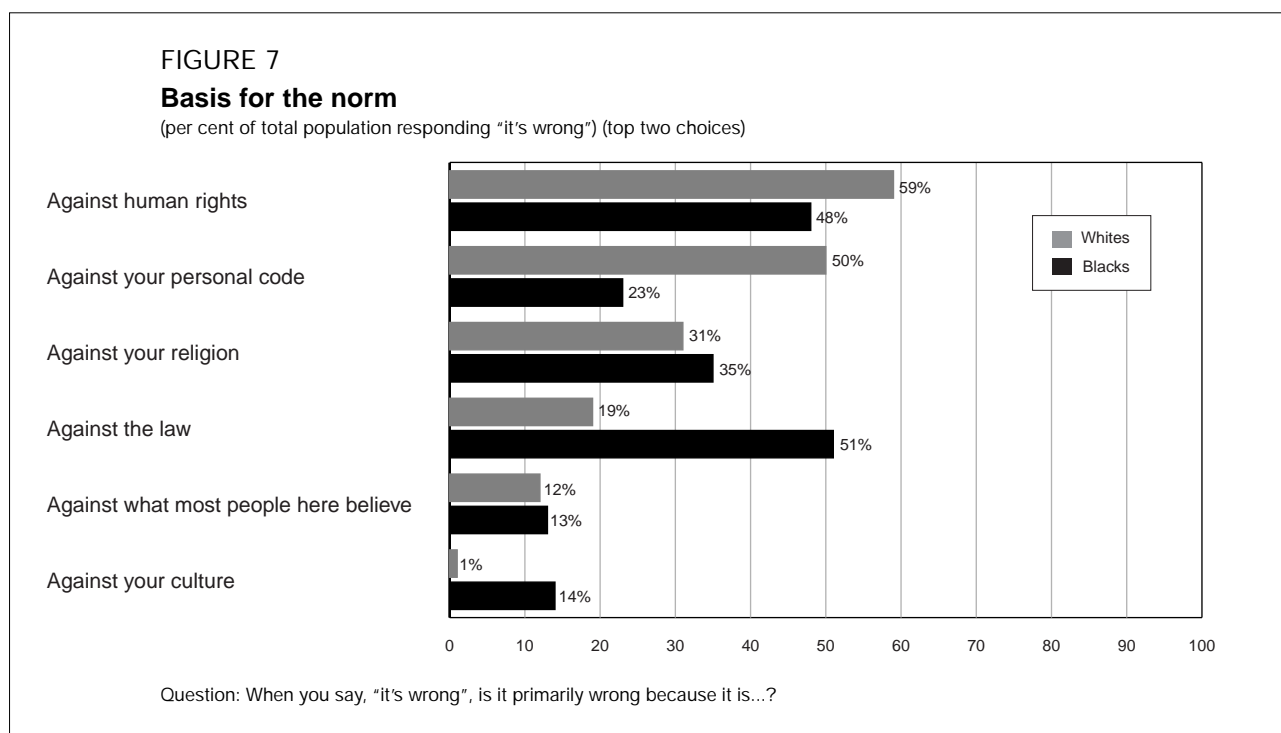
Maybe we should do it the way it was done in the old days where if we had two areas that were conflicting there would be a designated piece of land upon which they would fight it out. But the situation is different, the whole situation regarding war has changed. (FG, displaced coloured persons, Cape Town)

Although the feeling is widespread among whites and blacks in the consultation that combatants must spare civilians in a conflict, it is not universal. A significant minority, especially among whites, say there is nothing combatants should not do in a conflict. Fifteen per cent of all whites say this and the figure is even higher – 19 per cent – among white men.¹⁸

Constraints on conflict grounded in principle. The majority of blacks and whites who feel there should be constraints on the behaviour of combatants see these limits as grounded in principle more than practicality. Strong majorities of those who say that combatants should be barred from certain actions see these actions as “wrong”, as opposed to simply causing too many problems. Sixty-three per cent of blacks and 81 per cent of whites who suggest there should be limits in conflict cite this reason.

Whites and blacks have some common reasons for believing that certain actions in warfare are wrong. Both see “human rights” as a dominant reason. This is the most frequent response from whites (59 per cent), and the second most frequent from blacks (48 per cent).

Religion is also an important source of such convictions for both groups, with 35 per cent of blacks and 31 per cent of whites citing it as the reason that fighters should not do certain things. The importance of religious beliefs in South Africa is discussed more extensively below.



¹⁸ The corresponding number among blacks overall and among black men is 5 per cent.

Black faith in law versus the whites' personal code. There are differences, however, in the principles that both blacks and whites in South Africa draw on as the basis for limits in conflict. Blacks are much more likely than whites to look to the law; 51 per cent say this is the reason why certain actions in conflict are wrong, compared with only 19 per cent of whites. This divergence likely reflects the legitimacy in the eyes of blacks of the current government, not in the former regime and its apartheid laws. It may also reflect a belief among blacks that they *should have had* legal protection, even under the apartheid regime. Blacks are also more likely to cite their culture as the source for such mores, with 14 per cent of blacks choosing this option, compared with only 1 per cent of whites.

Whites, by contrast, are far more likely to cite their "personal code" as the reason that certain actions should be out of bounds for combatants: 50 per cent, compared with only 23 per cent of blacks. It may be that whites, who have seen both their government and their Church change positions on basic issues of right and wrong such as apartheid, are increasingly turning for guidance to their own personal codes.

Limits on weapons

Most South Africans also believe that there should be limits on the use of weapons in conflict. Yet the divergent experiences of conflict between blacks and whites produce differing views about whether any kinds of weapons should be disallowed, and if so, what kinds.

Whites express strong disapproval for the use of weapons of mass destruction. Fifty-two per cent say chemical and biological weapons should never be used, and 50 per cent say this about nuclear weapons. Yet these were not weapons used in the South African conflict. Apart from landmines, discussed below, fewer than 15 per cent of whites cite any other weapon that should be banned, including the ones that were most used in their country's conflicts, such as bombs (6 per cent), guns (3 per cent), and grenades (3 per cent). More than one in six whites, 17 per cent, say there are no weapons that should be banned.

Blacks, by contrast, tend to focus more on banning the weapons that were most used in their country's violence, and this is most true for those blacks who had the most contact with the conflict. There is little focus on weapons of mass destruction: only 4 per cent cite nuclear arms, and only 3 per cent cite chemical and biological weapons. Rather, the concern among blacks is with guns. Thirty-eight per cent of blacks say that guns, including machine guns, should be banned; this is 12 times the level among whites. Another 22 per cent say that bombs should not be allowed. Nine per cent say that "traditional" weapons should never be used such as knives and spears – a response that white respondents do not provide at all. In addition, several black focus group participants expressed disapproval of sending tanks and armoured vehicles into civilian areas, such as the townships.

The view that guns were responsible for the spiral of violence and atrocities in South Africa is a common theme in focus groups and in-depth interviews with blacks. They feel strongly that the availability of guns led to an escalation of the violence that otherwise would not have occurred. Several stressed that the black South African combatants should have used only traditional African weapons, as this would have produced fewer deaths and left more room for reconciliation.

Fight, but not use guns. Many people died because of the usage of guns. (FG, widows, Bambaay township)

In my home we used a spear. It was our gun but it was used in a way that the chiefs had agreed it should be used. Not today where people use guns. [Are you saying guns should not be used?] Guns are not local weapons, they are weapons

from overseas. Local people are taken overseas to be taught how to use a gun. (IDI, black elder of community, KwaZulu Natal)

We should not have guns. When we grew up there were fights but people used to hit each other with sticks and spears. Now it's guns. If we can get rid of guns I believe we will get everything right. We will go back to men fighting with sticks, just to discipline each other, then it will be over. Thereafter the guys would shake hands. That is no longer done. (IDI, black widow, Ndwedwe)

Guns and bombs [should be banned]. And I think that with being Zulu, our traditional wars we fight with sticks and spears — you see in the township we used to fight with knives but with a knife your life is not so at risk, because I can stab you but you will never die, because the knife will never reach the heart, but with a gun you are shot. (IDI, black artist, South Africa)

Landmines. There is more consensus between whites and blacks about whether the use of landmines is acceptable. These weapons saw limited use in the South African conflict itself, although they were widely used in the related conflicts in nearby States, such as Angola, and so they are fairly salient to the South African public. Nearly one-third of whites volunteer that landmines should never be used, but only 8 per cent of blacks do so.

Yet there is broad agreement across racial lines that use of these weapons should not be permitted. Over two-thirds in both groups – 87 per cent of blacks and 77 per cent of whites – say that it is not acceptable to use mines to stop the movement of enemy combatants. Participants in the focus groups and in-depth interviews had strong feelings on this issue. Although not everyone agreed that mines should be banned, most saw these weapons as inhumane, militarily ineffective or harmful to the land that is necessary to support the country.

It is never okay because landmines kill the people and kill the soil as well, because we need our soil. People had to plough to get something to eat and so you are ploughing and when it blows it kills the richness of the soil, so we should not spoil the earth that God gave us. (IDI, black artist, South Africa)

I think we could very well do without landmines, and the tremendous suffering and mutilation which these things cost and the huge amount of damage that they do, not only to people, but also the country in which they are buried. So I think it is a very good thing to ban. (IDI, white former ambassador, Pretoria)

If you are into the business of killing, then the only thing one could really say not to ever use is landmines. (IDI, white farmer, Pietermaritzburg)

No, they are nasty weapons, landmines. At the time they had a great utility and they were very effective... guerrilla organizations now even still use them, but those are the [weapons] of the weak. (IDI, white former MK fighter and current SADF member, Pretoria)

Civilians and prisoners at risk

Blurring the lines between combatants and civilians

Despite the widespread view among whites and blacks in South Africa that civilians should be left unharmed during armed conflict, the consultation suggests that in reality the distinction between civilians and combatants often became badly blurred. To a significant degree, both black and white participants find it acceptable to target civilians who are actively assisting combatants, civilians who get in the way of the fighting and even captured combatants who are wounded or have surrendered.

There are major variations among different sub-populations in their tolerance of overstepping the limits in conflict, however, and these differences are closely tied to race, gender and the individual's role in the conflict. White women, in their protected status, retain a fairly judicious sense of limits in conflict. By contrast, white men – responsible for manning the apparatus of security and apartheid – hold a far more expansive view of how conflict can be waged. White members of the country's security forces, in particular, frequently saw civilians as an indistinguishable part of the violence they were ordered to restrain – by force, if necessary. Blacks have a more restricted view of the proper limits in conflict; yet, they too began to include civilians as targets, particularly during the country's political violence among black South Africans. Both sides – although whites much more so than blacks – continue to see circumstances in which it is acceptable to harm civilians as part of broader military aims.

Civilians assisting combatants. The erosion of protection for civilians begins when civilians are actively assisting enemy combatants. To a significant share of South Africans, such civilians then become valid, if unfortunate, military targets.

The line erodes far more quickly, however, for white South Africans than for blacks. Whites are twice as likely to say it is acceptable to attack civilians if they are giving food and shelter to enemy combatants – 25 per cent, compared with 12 per cent of blacks. Whites are also twice as likely to approve of attacking civilians if they are transporting ammunition for enemy combatants – 40 per cent, compared with 19 per cent of blacks.

For blacks and whites, the distinction between being forced to assist enemy fighters and doing so voluntarily matters. Only 14 per cent of blacks say it is acceptable to attack civilians if they are *forced* to transport ammunition, but one in four (25 per cent) say it is acceptable to attack civilians if they *voluntarily* transport ammunition. This pattern is also evident among whites. Only 17 per cent of whites say it is acceptable to attack civilians if they are *forced* to provide food and shelter, but nearly twice as many, 32 per cent, say it is acceptable if the civilians are providing food and shelter *voluntarily*. Similarly, fully half of whites (51 per cent) say it is acceptable to attack civilians who voluntarily transport ammunition, whereas the share who say this is acceptable drops by nearly half, to 28 per cent, if the civilians are being forced to transport the ammunition. (See Figure 8.) This distinction may trace back to the emphasis that whites place on a "personal code" as the basis for limits in conflict.

White South African men once again emerge as the driving force behind the view that it is acceptable to attack civilians in some circumstances – another sign of a "frontier" attitude, which obligates men to protect white women, in part by enforcement of racial domination. The share of white men who say it is acceptable to attack civilians who provide food and shelter to enemy combatants is 37 per cent – nearly three times the 13 per cent of white women who say this. Similarly, more than half of white men (53 per cent) say attacking civilians who transport ammunition for enemy combatants is allowed, compared with just over a quarter (27 per cent) of white women who hold this view. These views emerge even more clearly from some of the in-depth interviews with white men.

I suppose if one has got to stop the transport of ammunition and there is no other way to end that, then you have got to unfortunately attack those private civilians. (IDI, white male senior civil servant, Pretoria)

I would think it depends on the situation, but I would think yes, because if you have a military force in the army transporting the food and transporting your weapons and everything the army has done, then, as far as my understanding goes, they are entitled to attack those and kill them... Once you lift a hand to assist an army, you become part of the army, so those civilians would obviously become part of the conflict. (IDI, white male businessman, Cape Town)

White men are not alone, however, in believing that it is sometimes acceptable to harm civilians in the course of conflict if they are assisting combatants. Some black men in the focus groups and in-depth interviews also expressed this view.

The civilians who give food to the enemies, you see when it goes to that in fighting wars, we have to weaken the enemy and if they are giving food and shelter to the enemy, that means they are also our enemies, so he is an enemy as well, no question about that. (IDI, black artist, South Africa)

I think it depends on the involvement. I mean if there is a poor driver who does not know any better, I think then you should stop the truck and send the guy back to town and then blow the truck up. But you do get civilians who actively support the war and I think in that case the line between a civilian and the soldier is quite blurred because the one is wearing a uniform and the other isn't - so it depends on the level of involvement. (IDI, white former MK fighter, and current SADF, Pretoria)

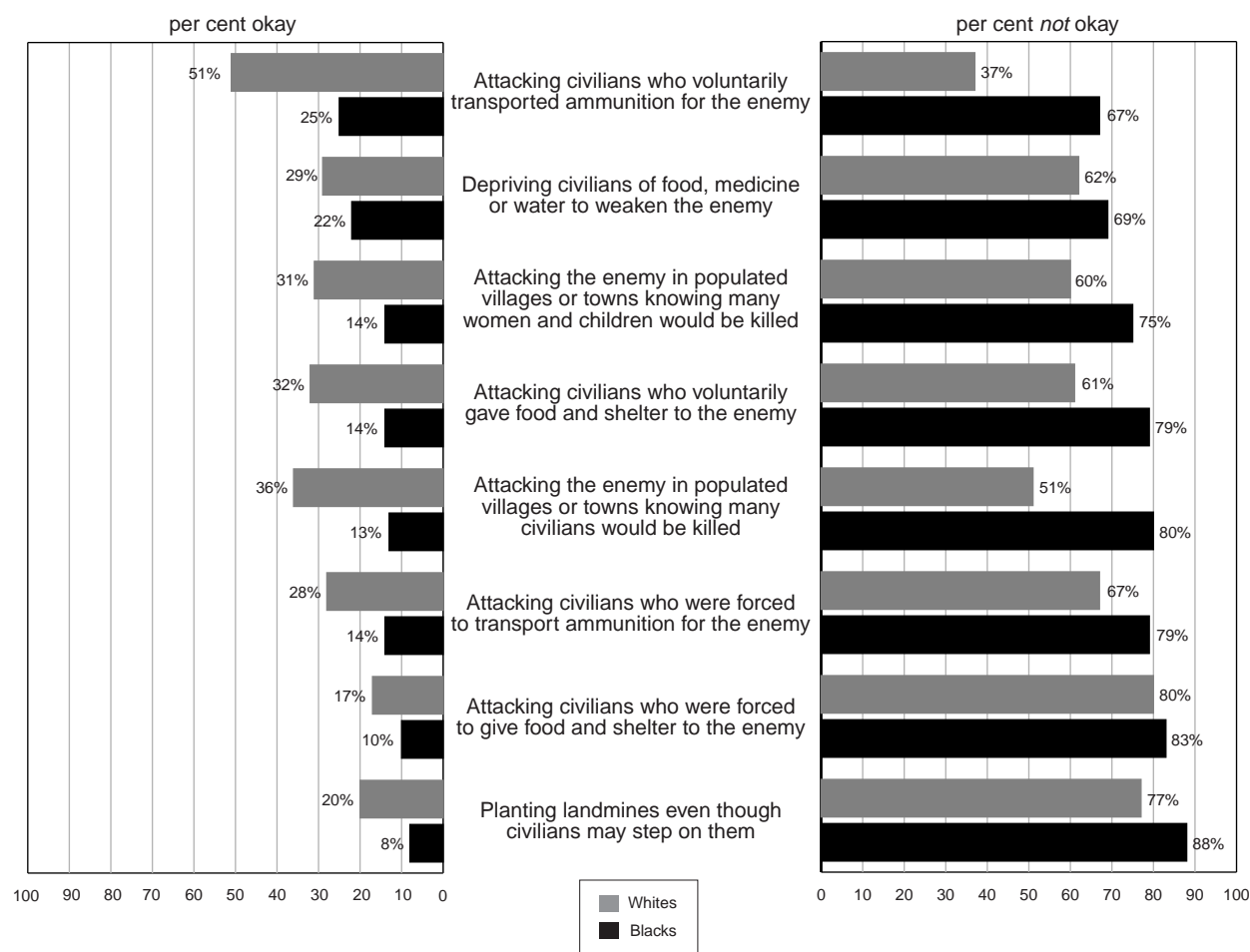
Well, if the civilians engage in assisting in any form of transporting of arms then they do not become civilians, they become part of the enemy fighting machinery. (IDI, black man, Pretoria)

Civilians in the way of combatants. A similar pattern holds even when civilians are not actively helping enemy combatants. Whites, and again particularly white men, are much more likely than blacks to believe that it is acceptable to endanger or even kill civilians if they get in the way of the fight. Fully one-third of whites, 33 per cent, say that it is just "part of armed conflict", and not "wrong", to attack combatants in populated villages or towns, even knowing that many civilians (or "women and children") would be killed. This is more than twice the 14 per cent among blacks who express this view. (See Figure 8.)

Again, it is white men – who were on the front lines of enforcing apartheid – who hold this opinion most strongly. Nearly half of all white men, 46 per cent, say it is acceptable to attack populated areas in this way, compared with less than half that amount, 22 per cent, among white women. White men are more willing to accept attacking populated villages or towns, knowing that civilians are likely to be killed (46 per cent), than they are to deprive civilians of food, medicine or water in order to weaken the enemy (38 per cent).

There is somewhat less divergence between the views of whites and blacks, and between white men and women, on this last question of depriving civilians of food, medicine or water. Yet the same basic pattern applies. Whites are more likely than blacks to see this practice as just "part of armed conflict" (29 per cent compared with 22 per cent) and more likely than white women (38 per cent compared with 22 per cent).

FIGURE 8
Acceptance of war practices
(per cent of total population responding)



The acceptance among white males of targeting civilians – especially attacking populated villages or towns – emerges clearly in the consultation, especially from comments in the focus group with white former SADF members. These former military men place the blame for civilian deaths in such settings on combatants who would open fire on the security forces while standing near civilians. While it would be wrong to assume that SADF members are representative of all white South Africans, or even white South African men, their views on these issues do show a striking willingness to entertain the notion of targeting areas where civilians are likely to be caught in the crossfire.

If something happens, say there is a house and they are firing from that house, you don't consider the other people, because [of] that guy sitting inside, shooting. He is also not considering the people in the house, because why is he shooting at you? ... He wants to shoot at you but now because there were civilians in the house, you killed them, and now they want to blame the army. They can't do that. (FG, former SADF members, Cape Town)

Unfortunately those people also used the civilians and children as cover, thinking because there are children present you won't shoot back. But at that stage, the moment that guy starts shooting at you he does not consider his own people. (FG, former SADF members, Cape Town)

[Moderator: What about attacking enemy combatants in populated villages or towns in order to weaken the enemy, knowing that many civilians would be killed? Is that wrong or just part of armed conflict?]

It is part of the conflict. [So combatants can attack populated areas?] Well you may not be able to help it. (IDI, white farmer, Pietermaritzburg)

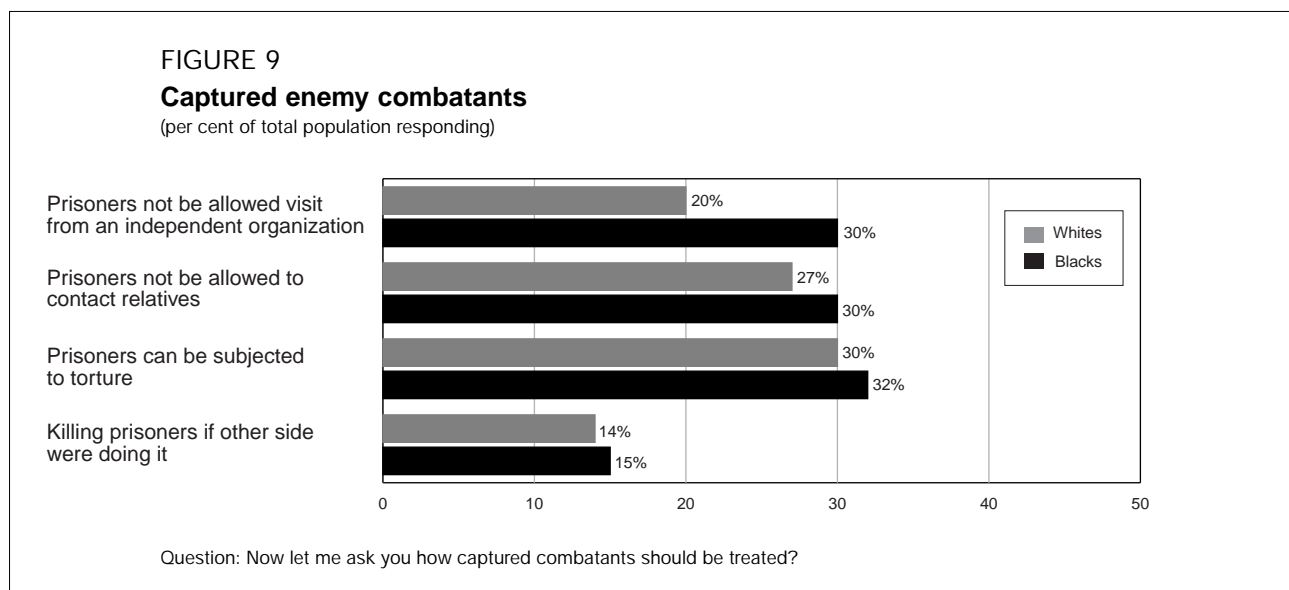
Captives at risk

Given the form the conflict took in South Africa, the taking and holding of captives was one-sided. Tens of thousands of black and coloured South African fighters, activists and just plain civilians were detained by the white government during the 1960s through the early 1990s.¹⁹ But black fighters did not take members of the South African security forces captive to any significant degree. Nor, for quite different reasons, was there extensive captive-taking in the political violence among black South Africans that erupted in the townships. In this asymmetrical situation, abuses nonetheless occurred on both sides, and the consultation makes clear that both sides harbour a high willingness to mistreat captives under certain conditions.

Treatment of black captives. According to various estimates, over 80,000 anti-apartheid activists were detained without trial from the early 1960s to the mid-1990s. Some, such as Nelson Mandela, were held for decades. A large number were tortured, and some, such as Steve Biko, died from abuse in detention.

The survey shows a significant tolerance of such treatment of prisoners. More than one-quarter of whites say that captured combatants do not have to be allowed to contact their relatives (27 per cent). One-fifth (20 per cent) say they do not have to be allowed a visit by a representative from an independent organization.

Nearly one-third of whites, 30 per cent, say that captured combatants can be subjected to torture in order to obtain important military information. The figure is somewhat higher (35 per cent) for white men. And significantly more whites see it as acceptable to torture captured combatants than to prevent such prisoners from contacting their relatives. (See Figure 9.)



¹⁹ Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report, Volume 1, Chapter 1, Executive Summary, p. 12.

None of the white participants in the focus groups or in-depth interviews apparently had direct experience with treatment of anti-apartheid prisoners. Yet the comments of at least two white participants showed some openness to varying degrees of mistreatment of captives, although not necessarily in the setting of the anti-apartheid struggle:

In Angola, it was a different story, yes we used to tie them in front of the Buffels and drove them through the bushes to extract as much information. If there were landmines in the area, we would put them in front of the Casper and use them as landmine protectors... (FG, former SADF members, Cape Town)

Well, I certainly think that there should be certain limits in one's view. It is very difficult to set a limit because if one can, by administering a few klaps to a guy to extract information, then it might be acceptable. Then, on the other hand, people who believe that they could save two or three hundred of their colleagues' lives by attaching electricity to a guy's genitals might say, "Well his genitals will be okay in a few weeks' time and if we can get the information and save lives then that is okay". That is always the debate, but in my view that sort of thing should be unacceptable, torture in general. (IDI, white businessman, Pretoria)

Black treatment of captives. Tolerance of the mistreatment of captive combatants is equally high among blacks, although black combatants had little means to hold prisoners. Given the mismatch of force in the anti-apartheid struggle, there were also few opportunities to capture combatants from the white security forces.

Nonetheless, black tolerance of the mistreatment of captives is high. Almost one-third believe that captive combatants need not be allowed to contact relatives (30 per cent) or to be visited by a representative of an independent organization (30 per cent). These figures are even higher than the comparable figures for whites, 27 and 20 per cent, respectively. Thirty-two per cent of blacks say captives can be subjected to torture, about the same as the figure for whites (30 per cent). Among Tswana respondents, an even higher share, 41 per cent, believe that torture is permissible. (See Figure 9.)

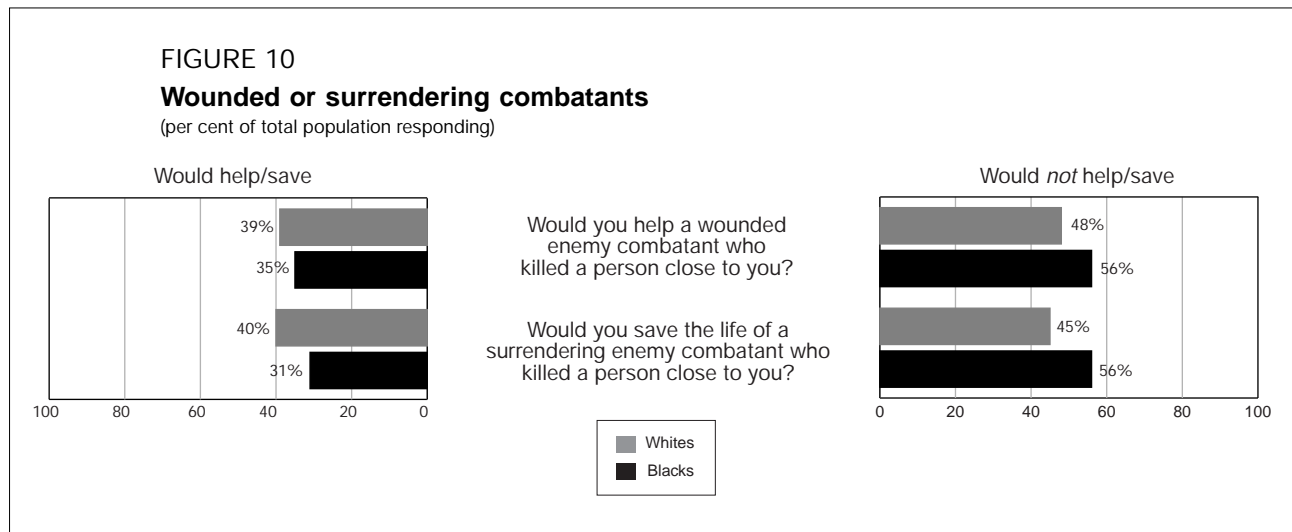
Comments from the focus groups show that such torture was tolerated by some blacks in the political violence among black South Africans:

This is mainly done by trained soldiers like the MPs [MILITARY POLICE]. They may catch you being fine and release one of you and the rest they kill. This they do in order to show or send back the message to their opponents, so they know how much of torture they can give. (FG, SPU [IFP], Thokoza township)

I would only torture because I need information from the captive. Say I caught Nathi and I want him to show me their hiding place for their weapons and for their members and he doesn't want to show me, then I would enjoy punishing him even if on him it will be painful, but on my side it won't be painful. (FG, SPU [IFP], Thokoza township)

Widespread indifference to wounded or surrendering combatants. These attitudes towards the treatment of captives are also present in the treatment of wounded or surrendering enemy combatants. Among both whites and blacks in South Africa, most people say they would not help a wounded enemy combatant or save the life of a surrendering enemy combatant, if he or she had killed someone close to them. Among whites, 46 per cent say they would not help or save the wounded or

surrendering combatant, compared with 40 per cent who would. An even higher level of blacks – a solid majority of 56 per cent – say they wouldn't help such a combatant, compared with only 33 per cent who would.



Young black South Africans show the most indifference to a wounded or surrendering combatant, with 63 per cent of 18- to 29-year-olds saying they would not help or save such a person. Among those who had the most exposure to conflict (four or more negative experiences), about two-thirds (65 per cent) of blacks would not help or save a wounded or surrendering enemy combatant. Even in Gauteng, the black area where people show the greatest inclination to aid a wounded or surrendering enemy combatant, fully half of all black South Africans say they would not help or save such a person.

The comments in the focus groups and in-depth interviews reveal different reasons for these striking levels of indifference. Among blacks, four motivations emerge. First is the desire for revenge. Second is the sense that such a combatant is not “our” responsibility, but rather the responsibility of friends and relatives on his or her own side. The third reason is that there is likely to be a lack of facilities for treating or holding such a person. Fourth is the fear that a captive may attack his captor. Both the third and fourth motivations are only expressed by blacks.

Say, you have a unit in the bush and they get ambushed and your friends get killed, naturally you'd want to avenge those deaths. And then sometimes you'd bump upon possible suspects. The circumstances were always different, you know. It's human nature, I guess. You've lost a next of kin or a friend. You'd therefore react in an emotional manner. Some of these things happened in the heat of the moment. (FG, former detained MK members, Robben Island)

I would not help, say Mazibuko has killed my member and he, Mazibuko, is injured. I would also kill him because if I don't he will kill me instead. This is a situation of war. (FG, SPU [IFP], Thokoza township)

[Why?] He's killed my family member. How can I help him when he's grieved me? I will take my family member and leave him. His family/friends will come to his rescue. (FG, widows, Bambaay township)

If you captured an enemy who had killed somebody, the first question I ask is, “Now what do we do with the person? Do we have the capacity to capture him

and take him into a prisoner of war camp?" But if that capacity does not exist then I suppose then I would not encourage that he, I mean if you treat him, what do you do with him after he has been treated? What do you do with an enemy that has been captured, or do you leave him to die? (IDI, black man, Pretoria)

Among whites, the motivations for not helping or saving a wounded or surrendering combatant are somewhat different. Some white respondents, like some blacks, say that a desire for revenge would prevent them from helping such a person. A second reason, cited by members of the military, is that it was not their duty to care for wounded combatants – that this was a function carried out by civil officials. Third, some of the white SADF veterans suggest that they saw their mission as killing black fighters, even if they were injured; these former soldiers volunteer that not only would they not help such an individual, but that they would intentionally run them over with their military vehicles.

I don't think I would have the ability to help him, if I know he has just killed a loved one, I don't know if I could help him, I don't know if my Christianity would go that far, I really don't know. (IDI, white religious leader, Pretoria)

I don't think so, because there is still the old maxim of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth and despite the huge advances in civilized countries over the centuries, the feeling of revenge is still a very deeply-rooted thing in most people's minds. If my mother or wife or child were killed by a combatant on the other side, I don't think I would lift a finger to save him. (IDI, white former ambassador, Pretoria)

Look, if it was in the township, and someone was wounded, then the whole riot would almost be over anyway. If people were wounded, it was not our task to pick up people or anything like that. That was not your duty... The police went in and picked up the wounded and the ambulances came and removed them. (FG, former SADF members, Cape Town)

No, in Angola if the guy survived then you picked him up and treated him like a human being. [Was that in Angola? But here in the townships?] There it was a different story, it was only killing [What do you think?] No, I drive over him. He just shot at me. (FG, former SADF members, Cape Town)

If it is the enemy lying there, there is no other option, I have to drive over him. I cannot stop to help him. He is the enemy anyway. He is lying on the ground. (FG, former SADF members, Cape Town)

Small share would support killing captives. Finally, there is a small share on each side who say that it is acceptable to kill enemy combatants who have already been taken prisoner. Fifteen per cent of blacks and 14 per cent of whites approve of the idea of killing captured combatants if the other side were doing so. In addition, only a slightly smaller share – 14 per cent of blacks and 10 per cent of whites – say that captured enemy combatants sometimes deserve to die. In both of these cases, tolerance of such actions is much higher among white men than women. Among blacks, tolerance is highest among those who had the most contact with the fighting: 23 per cent of all blacks with two or more conflict experiences say they would approve of killing prisoners. There is also a significant share of black South Africans from Eastern Cape – 33 per cent – who say that captured combatants sometimes deserve to die.

To be sure, most South Africans – black and white alike – find the notion of killing captives abhorrent. This view is forcefully expressed by a number of participants in the focus groups and in-depth interviews.

You must not harm the other people. You must capture their weapons and end the war. If you kill the prisoners you become evil as the system itself... Yes, even if they are killing our people. They will remain with their own sins. We don't have to become devils because they have killed our people. (FG, medical personnel, Soweto township)

[What if the other side in armed conflict is killing prisoners — would you approve the killing of prisoners by your side?] It is not correct to do wrong because somebody else has done you wrong. If we fight we must fight just like a music record when it's finished playing, it becomes quiet, with us also if the fight is over we must just stop fighting. (FG, SPU [IFP], Thokoza township)

I think once you start doing that, once that is allowed, then you are going to lose judgement. Then eventually you won't be able to, even on small issues, you won't be able to differentiate right from wrong. (IDI, white safety and security civil servant, Durban)

Yet the comments in the focus groups and interviews also reveal that some whites and blacks, particularly the soldiers and fighters on both sides, find the killing of captives an acceptable practice.

You see it goes in two ways. If prisoners were civilians they must not be killed. But if they are soldiers then they are enemies and then they can be killed. A war is between the two enemies and they are soldiers of the country and they are prepared to lose their life in war, and anyway they have probably killed some of our civilians. So why must they be kept alive? A Zulu says you don't trust a human being as long as he lives. Trust him when he is dead. So even if he does sleep he might be dreaming of killing you. So the better way is to kill him if he is your enemy. (IDI, black artist, South Africa)

I think another problem is lack of planning because whenever a prisoner is captured you don't know what to do with him. As a result, forces or soldiers killed prisoners. The military just didn't have constraints governing them. I mean now that you've captured a prisoner, are you going to send him back? (FG, former detained MK members, Robben Island)

It is [a] stupid thing, most of the time when people got killed it was for extracting information... I can't even say it wasn't necessary [because] sometimes it was necessary for your own survival. Because if you could extract information out of that guy, telling you that tomorrow, there is going to be a hundred and fifty guys coming over the border, raiding the place there, and you could extract that information out of him beforehand, then you could be prepared for the next day. (FG, former SADF members, Cape Town)

Breakdown of limits

The conflict in South Africa thus presents a setting in which both blacks and whites acknowledge in general terms the importance of limits in conflict and violence, and yet in which both blacks and whites transgressed those limits, although in different ways and to differing degrees. After decades of struggle grounded in legal and non-violent protest, frustration and hopelessness led black leaders to change course and to opt for more aggressive and violent tactics. In this newly militaristic campaign, rage and revenge at times pushed activists and fighters beyond the sense of limits inculcated by the ANC and other groups. Later, in the political violence among black South Africans, the fear and turmoil of an internecine fight at close quarters helped push the violence upwards into an escalating spiral.

Whites, by contrast, especially those in the security forces and police, often let the violent enforcement of apartheid restrictions spiral out of control for somewhat different reasons. At times, white members of the security forces reacted explosively to provocation from protesters and rioters – a reaction at times driven by young or poorly trained members of the forces. In addition, some of these young men exhibited a willingness to carry out their “duty” and their “orders” with little sense of restraint or consideration for the civilians who took part in the protests they had been ordered to “clean up”.

Breakdown of limits among blacks

The erosion of the limits in conflict among blacks had various causes. One among these, however, lies at the root of most of the others: the steady accretion of hopelessness, frustration and anger during decades of apartheid rule, which eventually spilled over into armed violence.

Frustration with apartheid and exhaustion with constrained resistance. In the minds of a large number of blacks, the objective of toppling apartheid made their struggle a just one. Not only do many blacks state that the cause was just, as noted earlier, but there is also a strong sense that blacks had exhausted all the avenues of redress that stopped short of violence. Several blacks in the consultation noted that the ANC had been founded on principles of non-violence, and that after breaking with a strategy of non-violence after the Sharpeville massacre, it formulated rules to guide its armed attacks, partly in order to limit harm to civilians. Several also remarked that the ANC was the first liberation movement to become party to the Protocols additional to the Geneva Conventions.

All of these observations speak of the feeling among many blacks that violence against apartheid was a last resort, to be exercised within a moral framework. For this reason, the breakdown of limits was both surprising and anguishing for many of the early participants in the anti-apartheid struggle, and was a measure of the frustration that fuelled the violence. In addition, some ultimately felt it was untenable for blacks to observe humane rules of conflict while their adversaries did not.

In 1976, when you saw your relatives, your friends are being mowed down. That was the worst thing. Even if you were a non-violent, you ended up saying that [the] best thing to do was to fight back. And that cornerstone has changed the lifestyle of young people who are prepared to learn to make things better. (FG, former detained MK members, Robben Island)

As units we were trying by all means to restrain ourselves because in our training, in our preparation we were made aware of our limitations. We were aware of the fact that we had to protect our brothers and we had to try by all means to avoid hitting civilians... It was part and parcel of the training, your discipline and so forth. (FG, former detained MK members, Robben Island)

In as much as other governments extended the application of those [Geneva Convention] protocols to soldiers of the South African government, to me it was never extended. And it seemed as if the world was quiet about it. Now, these are still concerns. I do not say we fought a war in a very clean manner. But what were we left with? (FG, former detained MK members, Robben Island)

Fear and spiralling violence in political fighting among blacks. Another reason for the breakdown of limits among blacks was intense fear coupled with an escalating spiral of violence within the particular context of the political violence among black South Africans. Atrocities, such as necklacing, were answered with more atrocities. Residents in each armed camp in the townships talked of seeing women and children carrying arms, or male fighters disguised as women, and it led some to begin attacking indiscriminately. A great number saw or suspected the hand of the white government in instigating the violence, and felt they had nowhere to turn for protection.

When asked why combatants sometimes attack civilians, the leading answers among blacks reflect this sense of an unstoppable escalation. One-third (33 per cent) say it is because combatants are “determined to win at any cost”, and the same number say it is because they “hate the other side so much”. Comments from many participants in the township violence further portray how, in this setting of fear and increasing hatred, the sense of limits quickly fell away.

My younger brother was killed by the IFP. I was so obsessed with revenge that I never wanted to cease fire. I wanted to make them pay. (FG, SDU [ANC], Thokoza township)

Yes, they had monkey tricks, didn't they? They'd put men disguised as women in the forefront of a march, and we'd think they were women. Then they'd hit us. (FG, SDU [ANC], Thokoza township)

And what drove us into burning people was what these people were doing to us. The taxis we boarded from town to the township were hijacked into the hostel where we would be butchered in cold blood. Body parts of dead people were displayed on the entrance to the hostel. After being shot, dead bodies were piled up in a place just outside the hostel yard. That made us even more determined to fight these barbarians. (FG, SDU [ANC], Thokoza township)

Damn, I hate talking about this but we ended up attacking whole families. What drove us into doing this was that they were doing likewise to our people, killing babies as young as three months. (FG, SDU [ANC], Thokoza township)

The raping was not supposed to have happened. The necklacing was not supposed to have happened. In the army you are not taught to put a tyre around the neck and pour petrol to burn a human body. (FG, SPU [IFP], Thokoza township)

Breakdown of limits among whites

The breakdown of limits among South African whites appears to have different roots to those it had for blacks. Again, multiple factors contributed to the increasing disregard for boundaries on the use of force.

An explosive loss of control. The first of these was a loss of control in the face of protesters, rioters or fighters. This is the top reason cited by whites in general when they are asked why combatants,

30 including members of the security forces, sometimes harm civilians. More than one-third, 35 per cent, say that the soldiers and fighters “lose all sense during war”. It is also the most frequent response when this question is posed in an open-ended manner, with 16 per cent of whites saying that soldiers or fighters lose control.

The comments of security force members suggest that such out-of-control behaviour was sometimes exacerbated by the disproportionate responses of young and poorly trained recruits or individual soldiers prone to violence. Their comments suggest that at least some better-trained soldiers saw the behaviour of such “roofs” as a dangerous liability.

Unless you haven't been in that situation, you don't understand but, I've been there, I've seen a human being been ripped apart by a crowd... I do not know what he did to that crowd, I still to this day have absolutely no idea but if that was me standing there, and I had an R4 rifle in my hand, I start pulling the trigger. I don't care about the Geneva Convention or about anything else, I'll put that oke up against the wall and shoot him. The worst thing is the anger after the conflict. When one of your pals have been hit with a brick against the head or a pick axe handle... Yes, they shouldn't go out and revenge. But that happens. (FG, former SADF members, Cape Town)

And he killed the oke. But again, you've got to take those circumstances into consideration. Sure, he did kill an innocent person but you've also got to understand the stress that that guy has just come out of, that he just exploded. (FG, former SADF members, Cape Town)

I think at that point in time, no rules apply. You don't think about rules, it's a case of survival. If you are in a conflict situation, it's you or them. (FG, former SADF members, Cape Town)

Sometimes it's inexperienced guys, younger guys, they see not like there is a couple of guys running, they are making trouble, they see the whole crowd as troublemakers then they go and they sort out the whole crowd. There is nothing worse than having three “roofs” in the section. He is inexperienced, they actually cause more shit. They either shit in their pants when they see the crowd or they start shooting and there wasn't even an order to shoot. (FG, former SADF members, Cape Town)

Doing one's duty of “clean-up” through force. A second reason for the breakdown of limits among whites was a sense that their security forces were simply carrying out orders and doing their job. This is one of the top two reasons cited by whites for why soldiers or fighters, including security forces, sometimes attack civilians. About one-third of whites, 34 per cent, choose this option.

Comments from SADF members offer insights on this kind of reasoning. These soldiers show little sign of having questioned their orders to “clean up”.

There was nothing bad about it, because you were under orders, you did what you were told. (FG, former SADF members, Cape Town)

The same happens... if you have a gun for the first time in your hands and you go hunting for the first time in your life. Once you have shot the buck... you are so shocked about what you have done, but that has nothing to do with right or

wrong. The same thing happens in a riot... You see the petrol bombs and the stones coming at you and the bullets flying and you pick someone doing these things. You pick him and then you shoot him... You cannot help yourself for what you are doing. It is either you or him. You have orders from higher ranks than you to go in there and clean up. (FG, former SADF members, Cape Town)

[...] Battalion was our infantry and no one who went in was afraid. You went in and you cleaned up. Kill what ever comes in your way. That's because he is a danger to you and he is also walking around with an AK47. If you don't shoot him, he shoots you. That's how it worked. (FG, former SADF members, Cape Town)

We drove into Grahamstown in '78 when they had riots there, the whole [...] Battalion went in there, we cleaned up, we shot a few hundred of them and they injured a few hundred of us with stones and petrol bombs and removed some of our vehicles from the road, but it wasn't something you actually thought about, you were simply in the situation. (FG, former SADF members, Cape Town)

Usually it was at night. One night I drove a Casper through a shack, personally, and I did not even think whether there were children or anything. My troops were in trouble. We also had a Buffel in the back streets, like Motherwell. Those shacks there. There were no streets. (FG, former SADF members, Cape Town)

Without question, a large number of white South Africans cleave to a stronger sense of the limits in the midst of violent conflict, and suggest in more absolute terms that such limits must be observed. For these whites, violence against civilians cannot be written off as a momentary loss of control or following orders. It is for them, rather, a fundamental departure from the norms that should govern human life – a departure into a broken world:

My own feeling is that as a Christian I am not a pacifist but a war is a broken world... War to me is a state of broken mankind. It is a departure from God's ideal and therefore, while retaining those ideals, we have got to retain reality. (IDI, white farmer, Pietermaritzburg)

Geneva Conventions and the rules of armed conflict

Awareness of the Geneva Conventions and rules of armed conflict

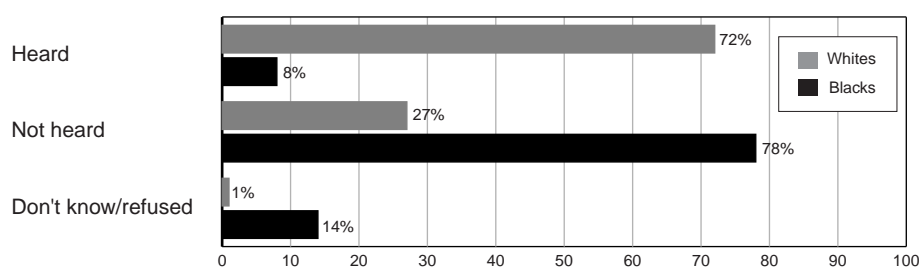
In South Africa, there is relatively low awareness of the rules that govern conflict. Among blacks, in particular, there is little sense that the Geneva Conventions even exist for them. In a sense, they are correct. The brutal efficiency of the apartheid state gave whites effective control over the black majority for most of the quarter-century prior to the advent of a non-racial democracy. By precluding civil war or even widespread civic disorder, the apartheid regime had seemed, at least for long periods during this era, to put itself outside the reach of the Geneva Conventions. The low level of awareness among blacks of the Conventions is perhaps additional evidence of apartheid's effectiveness.

Black awareness. Among blacks in South Africa there is extremely limited consciousness of the Geneva Conventions. Only 8 per cent, including only 6 per cent of black South Africans, are aware of the Conventions. Moreover, among the blacks, fewer than half of those who have heard of the Conventions have an accurate understanding of what they are intended to do (41 per cent).

FIGURE 11

Geneva Conventions

(per cent of total population responding)



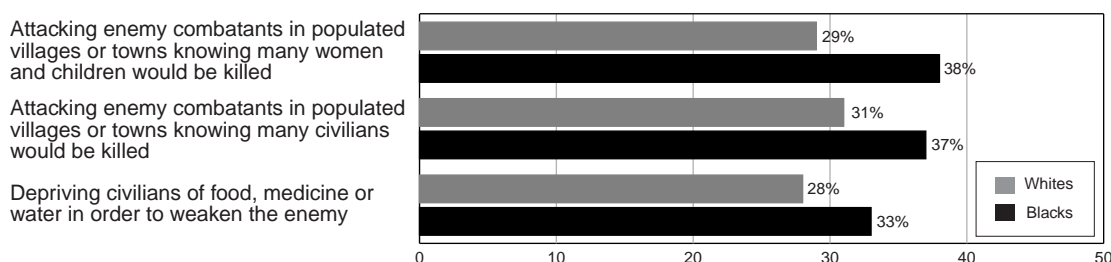
Question: Have you ever heard of the Geneva Conventions?

In all, about two-thirds of blacks (66 per cent) either say there are no laws against depriving civilians of food, medicine or water, or do not know if there are such laws. Almost the same level (62 per cent) believe there are no laws, or are not sure, concerning attacks on populated villages or towns. On both issues, the number who are aware of such rules is lower in some of the areas that saw the worst political violence among black South Africans, such as KwaZulu Natal (75 per cent of black South Africans are unaware of rules on denying food, medicine or water; 72 per cent on attacking populated areas). The figures in Gauteng, however, are much lower – 56 and 44 per cent, respectively.

FIGURE 12

Knowledge of laws

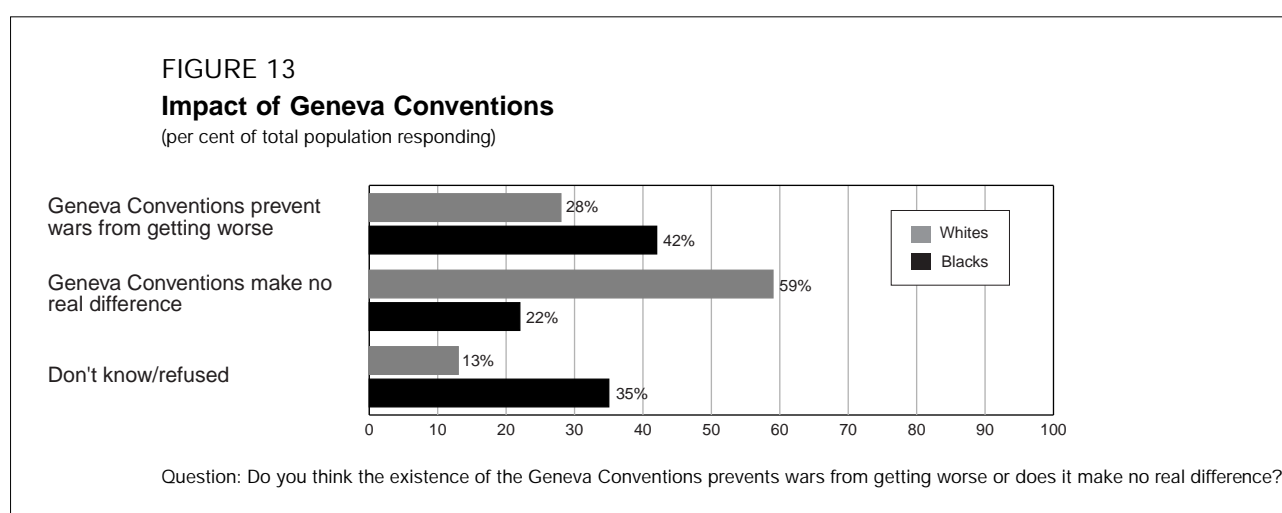
(per cent of total population responding "yes")



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

In effect, the apartheid system so effectively repressed the opposition that the Geneva Conventions for long periods likely did not apply to the South African situation for whites or blacks. In addition, the existence of the apartheid system itself created a sense for many blacks that there must not be any laws to protect against the kinds of abuses they were experiencing. The world of laws that would constrain state-sponsored violence simply did not exist for them. As a black NGO worker noted, "I have not made a study of these laws to find out if these laws exist. 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 feeling I knew there were no laws." (IDI, black NGO worker, Durban) Or, as a coloured woman taking part in a focus group put it: "People talk about law; but here in South Africa we did not have any recourse to any law." (FG, displaced coloured persons, Cape Town)

White awareness. In contrast to blacks, South African whites have a very high level of awareness of the Geneva Conventions. Nearly three-quarters (72 per cent) have heard of the Conventions, and more than half of these (56 per cent) – or more than one-third of the total white population – have an accurate understanding of what they are about. (See Figure 13.) Whites are less likely than blacks, however, to believe that the Geneva Conventions have much impact. After hearing a description of them, whites, by more than a 2-to-1 margin (59 to 22 per cent), believe they make no real difference.



While whites are more aware of the Geneva Conventions than blacks, they also see them as having limited applicability to their country's conflict. Only about a third, 34 per cent, say that captured ANC/MK fighters should have been treated as prisoners of war, while 37 per cent say they should have been treated as political detainees, and 21 per cent say they should have been treated as criminals. Blacks are even less likely to say that ANC/MK fighters should have been viewed as prisoners of war, with only 11 per cent expressing this view. This is only about half the 23 per cent of blacks who believe that government security force members captured during the anti-apartheid conflict should be treated as prisoners of war. (See Figure 14.)

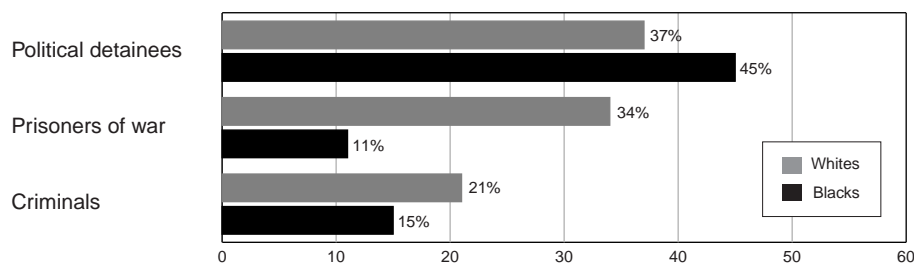
Some links between awareness of rules and attitudes towards actions. An awareness of the Geneva Conventions and specific rules of conflict appears to make a modest difference in tolerance of harming captive combatants. Blacks who are aware of the Conventions are more likely than those who are unaware of them to say they would help or save a wounded or surrendering enemy combatant (48 per cent compared with 33 per cent). They are also more likely to believe captive combatants must be allowed to contact relatives (70 per cent compared with 54 per cent), and to be visited by a representative of an independent organization (76 per cent compared with 51 per cent). Yet awareness of the Geneva Conventions fails to correlate with stronger beliefs that captive combatants may not be tortured.²⁰

²⁰ The number of whites in the survey is too small to enable a reliable comparison of the attitudes of those who have and have not heard of the Geneva Conventions.

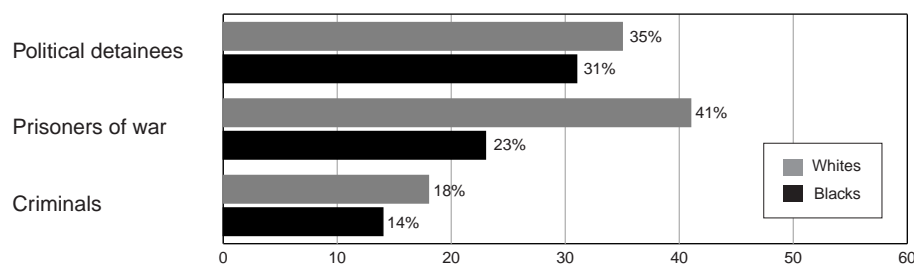
FIGURE 14

Status of detainees

(per cent of total population responding)



Question: During the armed conflict over apartheid, how should captured ANC/MK fighters have been treated?



Question: During the armed conflict over apartheid, how should captured soldiers and members of the security forces have been treated?

Several participants in the focus groups and in-depth interviews opined that a stronger sense of rules and more understanding of the limits that govern conflict might have tempered South Africa's worst excesses. Some whites rationalize that the behaviour of the apartheid government led them to think there were no laws against the abuse of their adversaries. Others, both whites and blacks, suggest that time and education will be necessary for the South African public at large to internalize such rules.

You must remember we are a Third World country and the human rights were developed in a First World country over a long period of time, so it is a learning and adaptation process for us to go through this, and I think we will. (IDI, white safety and security civil servant, Durban)

Most areas in KwaZulu Natal are rural. People who live in these areas are mostly uneducated and therefore can be easily used. Basic education would solve a lot of problems. (FG, teachers, Ndaleni township)

Punishment of violations of the rules

Despite a relatively low awareness of the Geneva Conventions among blacks, and of the rules of armed conflict among South Africans overall, a large share of South Africans believe it is essential for certain actions during a conflict to be punished. Blacks have a stronger faith in the South African government as the institution responsible for meting out punishing – perhaps a sign of their new confidence in the government and laws they helped to forge. The question of punishment also arises against the highly charged issue of the TRC. At the time of the consultation in South Africa, the country was still very much engaged in the debate about whether punishment or confession-plus-amnesty constitutes the best method for exposing and healing the country's most traumatic events.

Whites come to this debate with a much stronger belief in the need for punishment when certain rules of conflict are broken. Nearly three-quarters, 72 per cent, say that some rules are so

important that a person who breaks them during an armed conflict should be punished. The figure is even higher among white men – 78 per cent.

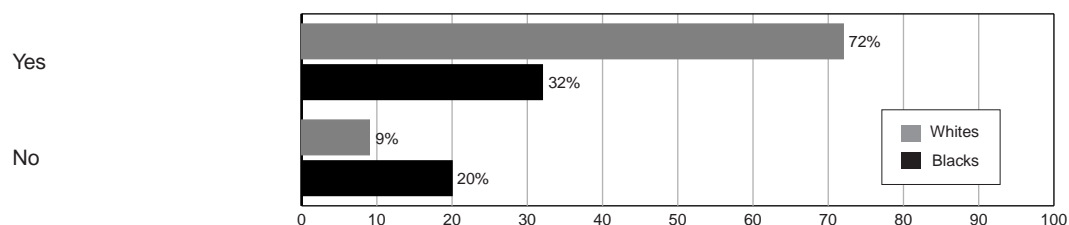
The number of blacks who believe certain actions must be punished is less than half the level among whites, 32 per cent. A very large share of blacks – nearly half, 47 per cent – say they do not know whether certain actions should be punished or not. Among blacks, as with whites, men are far more likely to see the need for punishment – 39 per cent compared with only 26 per cent of women.

Among blacks, belief in the need for punishment also rises with education and with the amount of direct contact the individual has had with the conflict. Nearly half of blacks (46 per cent) who had at least one conflict-related experience say they believe certain violations of the rules must be punished, compared with only 22 per cent of those who had no such experiences. In Gauteng, where fully two-thirds of the population had at least one conflict-related experience, over half the black population (55 per cent) see punishment as essential.

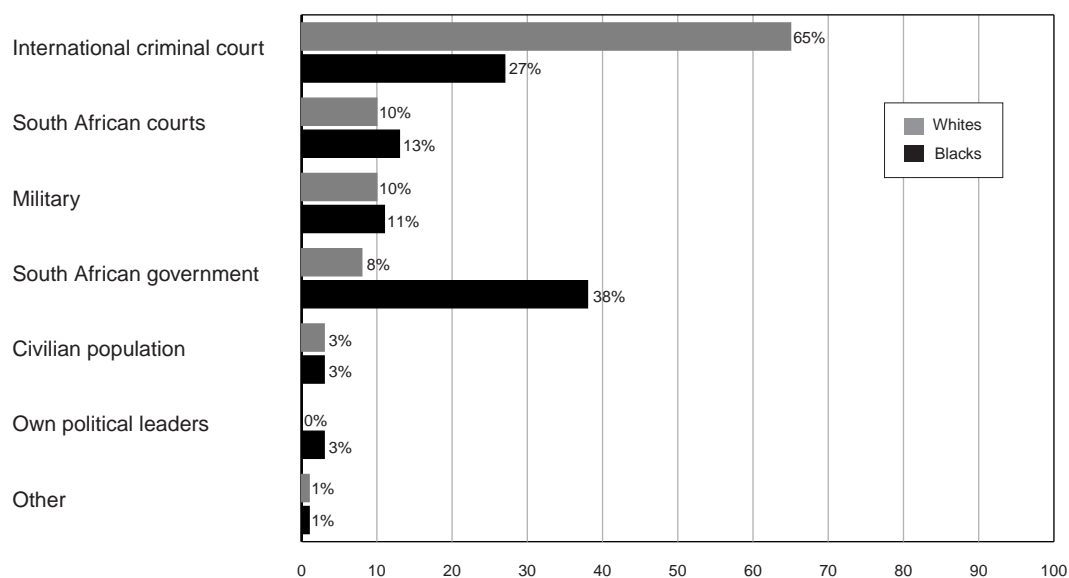
FIGURE 15

Who should punish wrongdoers?

(per cent of total population responding)



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



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

Among those who think there must be punishment for people who break the rules of armed conflict, whites are more likely than blacks to think the rules are based on international law (67 per cent compared with 37 per cent). Blacks are more likely to look to South Africa's laws as the source of such rules (34 per cent of blacks compared with 8 per cent of whites). As noted earlier, given the distrust of many blacks in the apartheid-era government, these opinions likely refer to the *current* South African

36 government, not the one that ruled before 1994. It is significant that, with the formation of a legitimate State, blacks now look to the law and the government to put teeth into the limits in conflict by imposing punishment on those who break them.

There is a similar divergence regarding the question of *who* should punish those who break the rules of conflict. Among those who think punishment is important, whites are more than twice as likely as blacks to see an international criminal court as the proper venue for punishing offences (65 per cent of whites compared with 27 per cent of blacks). By contrast, blacks are more likely to turn to the South African government (38 per cent compared with 8 per cent for whites) – yet another sign of their new confidence in the new governmental authority. Only about one in ten in each group – 11 per cent of blacks, 10 per cent of whites – say the military should take responsibility for punishing violations.

In the focus groups and in-depth interviews, however, the differences of opinion among whites and blacks are less clear. Many on both sides looked to the military and the international community as the right authorities to punish transgressions, while relatively few looked to the South African government. When they did, it was mostly out of a sentiment that the international community had been too intrusive in South Africa's affairs.

Say if somebody has raped or harmed a civilian then the prisoner must be tried. He must first be tried by the military but then ideally he must be tried in a civil court, for any of those major crimes, like murder and rape — I think you have to be very severe in that sort of instance. (IDI, white former MK fighter, and current SADF, Pretoria)

Perhaps they [the international community] will be more effective, as the combatants are not familiar with them. The soldiers and combatants are too familiar with the South African government hence when the South African government talks they aren't effective any more. They will respect the international community therefore will listen to them. (FG, widows, Bambaay township)

I also think it should be handled by the South African community. Because the people who do those deeds are South Africans, so the South African community will understand the situation better. If the South African community is failing them they can appeal to the international community for help. (FG, teachers, Ndalen township)

Look, if innocent people are shot dead, the person who did that should be punished. I wouldn't say internationally... we do have a law in this country, this law should punish him. The other countries have nothing to do with our business, and our situation. If you kill someone today, you should be punished by the law. (FG, former SADF members, Cape Town)

There is, finally, the essential trade-off between exposure and punishment raised by the TRC, which issued its five-volume report on South Africa's conflicts on 29 October 1998. Although the question was not raised with specific mention of the TRC itself, both whites and blacks express views that challenge the implicit choice represented by the TRC. That is, they prefer justice in the courts to justice through confession. Among those who think certain actions must be punished, 79 per cent of whites and 66 per cent of blacks opt for putting offenders on trial. Only 12 per cent of whites and 27 per cent of blacks opt for amnesty or exposing wrongdoers to the public while not putting them on trial. While support for amnesty and public exposure might have been stronger in the survey had they been linked explicitly to the TRC, there is clearly real ambivalence about pursuing through confession and forgiveness what might be punished under the law.

International and non-governmental institutions

A further asymmetry in the South African conflict involved the extent to which whites and blacks felt they could turn to formal institutions for help and protection. Whites, far more than blacks, are familiar with the Red Cross, and see it as having played a leading role in alleviating the effects of the conflict in their country. Blacks are somewhat more likely than whites to turn instead to the country's churches and religious organizations. Both blacks and whites strongly welcome the involvement of the international community in the years ahead.

The role of the ICRC/Red Cross

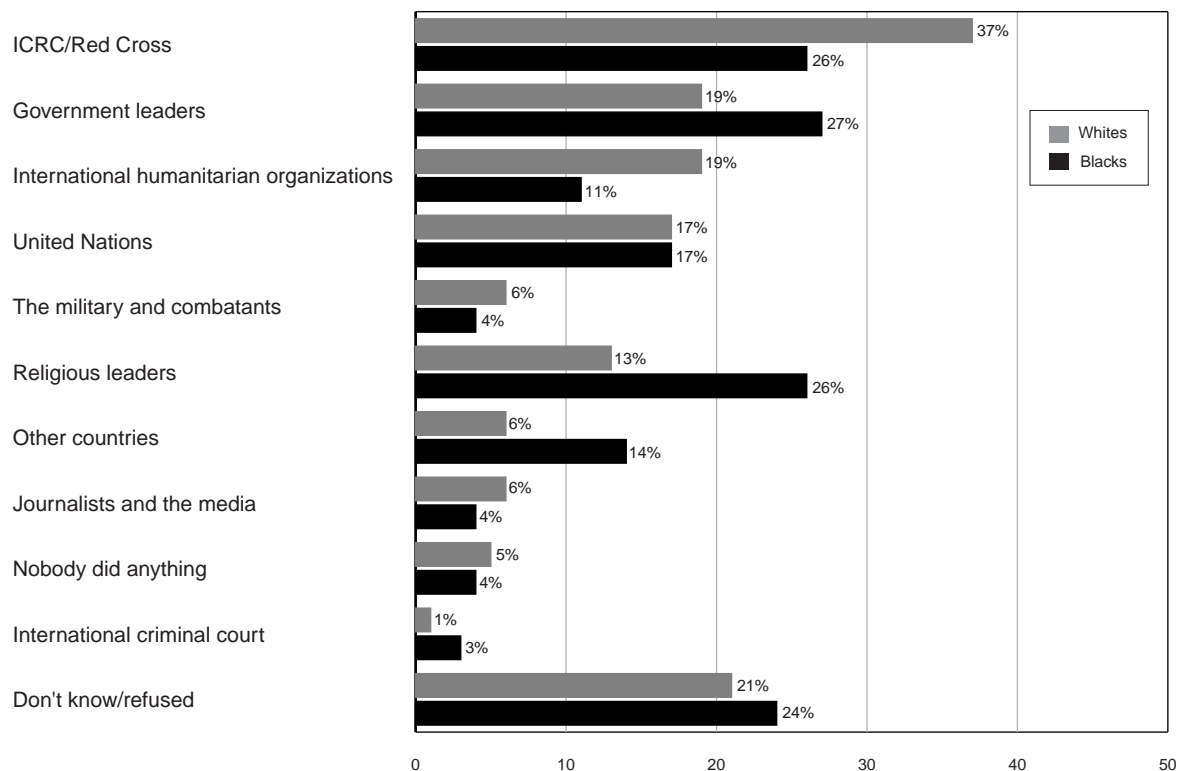
The ICRC/Red Cross is well known and respected among whites in South Africa. It is less so among blacks. Nearly nine in ten whites, 85 per cent, recognize the red cross emblem. Moreover, whites see the ICRC/Red Cross as having done more than any other outside organization to help civilians during the conflict over apartheid, with 37 per cent of whites stating this opinion. As noted earlier, white South Africans see the ICRC/Red Cross as the chief organization to turn to for protection during armed conflict, with 58 per cent expressing this view.

Blacks are less familiar with the ICRC/Red Cross, with less than half, 48 per cent, able to identify the red cross emblem. They are also less likely than whites to see the ICRC/Red Cross as having played the biggest role in helping civilians during the anti-apartheid struggle, with only 26 per cent citing the organization as having been one of two key organizations during the period. Instead, they are slightly more likely to see government leaders (27 per cent) or religious leaders (26 per cent) as having played this role. (See Figure 16.)

FIGURE 16

Biggest role

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



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

Participants in the focus groups and in-depth interviews did not dwell heavily on the role of the ICRC. Most references were favourable, although the Red Cross's position of neutrality raised concerns.

First of all it improved our conditions of incarceration, and of course the Red Cross was not concerned about our reasons for incarceration and they made strong representations to improve conditions and to get better and warmer clothing and blankets and bedding and even slightly improved our food and also medical treatment, but I must say the Red Cross had to fight for many years for us to get some improvement, but we welcomed the Red Cross. (IDI, black man, Pretoria)

Yes, I think foremost the people assisting the wounded should be protected, so we can talk about the Red Cross and organizations like that. (IDI, white safety and security civil servant, Durban)

We should be careful of people like the Red Cross who help any enemy as well as yourself but if these were helping on one side it would mean they are biased and thus are my enemies, unless they are Red Cross or the ambulance. (FG, SPU [IFP], Thokoza township)

Other institutions

Religious organizations, which occupy a central place in South African society, played a particularly important role in the anti-apartheid era. Several participants in the consultation raised the role of religious leaders, such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu, in providing moral leadership in the search for a solution to the conflict. As noted earlier, blacks see religious leaders as having played one of the biggest roles in helping civilians during the anti-apartheid struggle.

I think the Churches played a big role and also the leadership of the political parties. The NGOs played a role and also the CDOs, the community-based ones, they played a role in getting people to talk. (IDI, black NGO worker, Durban)

I would say the religious leaders played an important role, the international community played a very important role, some courageous leaders in the various organizations played an important role and I think then that a lot of other ordinary South Africans. (IDI, white farmer, Pietermaritzburg)

With the ANC — it is a Bishop Tutu type organization — it is basically Christian and it is quite conservative. It is one of the main reasons that we ended up with negotiations because it was a party like that, with the moral visions, so that was a major player. I think once again you can't underestimate the moral convictions of the Afrikaner or the conscripts in the SA Defense Force who were actually family men. A lot of them would act in quite a moral way, and that was through Church beliefs. That Calvinistic morality certainly played a role. (IDI, white former MK fighter and current SADF, Pretoria)

There is an equal desire among blacks and whites in South Africa for outside groups to intervene even more on behalf of besieged civilians in their country in the future or to deal with potential violations of international humanitarian law. Sixty-five per cent of blacks, but also 60 per cent of whites share this view. There is an ironic twist here. Blacks have come to see great legitimacy in the government they helped found – even though they came of age in a South Africa that had a government they could not trust. At the same time, white South Africans have come to look to the international community for assurance – the same international community many of them once condemned for meddling in their country's sovereign affairs during the era of apartheid.

Looking forward

South Africa has emerged from the worst years of conflict, but remains a society still marked by racial divisions. One of the most striking sets of divisions relates to the outlook of South Africans towards their country's current problems and its future, as well.

The persistence of divergent views is clearly rooted in the recent past. There is a strong sense among blacks that ultimately there was no other choice than to resort to violence. There is a related feeling that the enormity of the violence was ultimately worth it, since it resulted in the overthrow of apartheid. Unlike many of the other conflicts examined, there was less a feeling that the conflict was pointless or avoidable, and far more a sense that it was necessary and productive.

The determination of the people to free themselves... who also engaged in conflict to respond to the conflict of apartheid and to the atrocities of the apartheid machinery finally delivered the honourable thing to this nation which is the restoration of our pride and dignity. It's our birthright really. (FG, former detained MK members, Robben Island)

I don't have any regrets because the conflict wasn't of my choosing. If apartheid wasn't in existence, there would have been no conflict, but because apartheid happened, we had to fight it. It was a natural thing to do. (FG, former detained MK members, Robben Island)

I think a very positive thing did come out of it, which is the negotiations, which led to the democratic elections of 1994. (IDI, black Red Cross volunteer, Pretoria)

This feeling of necessary conflict leads South Africa's blacks to have a far more optimistic assessment than among whites of the country's prospects for peace. By an almost 6-to-1 margin, 46 to 8 per cent, black South Africans believe that peace will last. In stark contrast, whites believe by more than a 3-to-1 margin, 59 to 17 per cent, that there will be more armed conflict. Many blacks acknowledge that the country still has problems, but say they are far more tractable than the problems of apartheid. Whites are more likely to focus less on the end of apartheid, and more on the rise of various social problems.

The core issue is crime. Both whites and blacks cite it as one of the country's chief problems, if not *the* chief problem. Yet the two sides have strongly divergent views of the origins, extent and implications of the country's crime epidemic.

Whites are inclined to view the country's crime problem as a wholly new phenomenon – a consequence of the political change brought about by the end of apartheid. They are much more likely than blacks to see current criminal activity as different from the armed conflict over apartheid – 90 per cent of whites express this view, compared with 60 per cent of blacks. More importantly, whites reject the notion that the current crime problem is rooted in the country's apartheid past. By nearly a 3-to-1 margin, 65 to 23 per cent, whites say that today's crime is not rooted in the apartheid period. In contrast, a strong plurality of blacks, 47 to 23 per cent, disagree.

The focus groups and in-depth interviews suggest that whites see a more general breakdown of social order that has permitted crime to invade their lives. Several whites suggest that types of crime occur today that did not occur in the past. One introduced this point with the remarkable assertion that, unlike today's crime wave, the problems during the apartheid era "had nothing to do with civilians".

We had problems in those times, but it had nothing to do with the civilians. It was contained with the blacks, but now, today it has spread out in violence. We had crime in those times, but it is more noticeable now and it is more killing of farmers and that type of thing. (IDI, white businessman, Cape Town)

The armed conflict over apartheid had a clearly defined goal to end the awful regime of apartheid. The crime now and the violence has nothing to do with that, and it started off as a group of people professing to come in under the banner of protesters, but honestly it is a bunch of hoodlums and thugs and gangsters who are out on the street. (IDI, white woman, Pretoria)

Yesterday morning, two guys walked up to him, shot him three times in the head, for his cell phone. I'm sorry, that didn't happen prior to '94. I don't care how much the press want to say that nothing was reported and nothing else. That type of shit just didn't happen. (FG, former SADF members, Cape Town)

Blacks, along with some whites, tend to see a very different picture. They see at least four linkages between yesterday's apartheid and today's robberies and murders. First, and most immediately, apartheid left economic craters and pockets of poverty that created the material want and lack of education that contribute to crime. Second, many blacks believe that the country's police forces for too long were trained to combat terrorism – that is, to crack down on anti-apartheid protesters – and were too little trained in combating street crime. Third, the struggle over apartheid brought a flood of guns into the country, which now make street crime particularly deadly. Finally, blacks see the increase in crime as more of a diffusion to whites of a problem that long existed – but was cordoned off – within the country's segregated black communities.

And the police force is not adequately trained to deal with crime. Even some of the police are involved in criminal activities. All they were trained to deal with were what they called terrorists. (FG, former detained MK members, Robben Island)

I think the whole criminal justice system during the apartheid years was geared toward fighting, and the freedom fighters and people, like the security police, when they were disbanded they became criminal police and criminal intelligence and they were not trained for fighting crimes but above that the armed conflict led to a lot of weapons coming into the country and a lot of weapons got in the hands of the wrong people, particularly the criminals, and the armed conflicts somehow affected the morality of people generally. It created a situation where the moral values of society had disappeared. (IDI, black man, Pretoria)

The people sitting in the white suburbs read about it in the newspapers and the people in the townships, they suffer. The people in the white communities did not feel it, they did not have the crime that the townships had, and the white communities are only starting to feel the crime today. (IDI, white safety and security civil servant, Durban)

Partly because blacks see today's crime as a vestige of South Africa's old problems rather than as a harbinger of a new problem, they tend to have greater faith in the country's future. Many of them suggest that it will take time for South Africa to heal and rebuild, but that at least now their country – long divided and "sick for peace" — is headed in the right direction.

I think things are slightly better. The first reason for that is that during the apartheid years we did not have much freedom. At least now we can live wherever we want to, before we could not do that. We still have problems but I believe it will take time, I don't think changes can take place overnight, it might take 5-10 years but I am hopeful things will improve. (FG, displaced coloured persons, Cape Town)

Personally, I think things are getting better. With the coming election, there are more better things to come. Precisely because there is a difference between where we come from and where we are now. Like people have houses, sewerage, water. Things that they were not provided with before by the previous government. And there are still better changes to come. (FG, former detained MK members, Robben Island)

I believe there will be peace in South Africa. The people are sick for peace. (IDI, black artist, South Africa)

Annex 1: General methodology

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

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

The consultation was based on three principal research methods:

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

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

Opinion survey

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In-depth research

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Annex 2: Questionnaire*

Introduction

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

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

1. What is your age? _____

[Don't know/refused]

2. How many years of school have you had? _____ years

[Don't know/refused]

3. What is your current family situation?

Married (have a husband or wife)

Single

Live together with someone (in a permanent relationship)

Divorced (or separated)

Spouse of missing person

Widow(er)

[Don't know/refused]

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

No children

Yes ___ children

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

Farmer

Manual worker

Skilled worker

Self-employed

Housewife/home care

Soldier (combatant)

Government employee

Private sector employee

Teacher/professor/intellectual

Pensioner/retired

Unemployed (but looking for work)

Unemployed (not looking for work)

Student

Other **[SPECIFY]**

[Don't know/refused]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[IF NO RESPONSE, GO TO Q11]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Is that wrong or just part of war?

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

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

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

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

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

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

Is that wrong or just part of war?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- Landmines
 - Laser weapons
 - Napalm
 - Nuclear weapons
 - Chemical weapons
 - Cluster bombs
-

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

52 27b. **Version A:** Is it true that a captured enemy combatant cannot be subjected to torture to obtain important military information, or can captured combatants be subjected to torture?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Imprisoned by enemy combatants	→ 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	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
You were physically injured	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
You were treated correctly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
[READ LAST] You had a contact with a representative from an independent organization to check on your well-being	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The ICRC's mission

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