Preventing displacement and protecting displaced persons: key rules for fighters in internal armed conflict

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Do not displace civilians, unless necessary for their own safety or for imperative military reasons.
If you are obliged to displace civilians, ensure their movement takes place in safety and dignity and does not last longer than absolutely necessary.
Never displace civilians for ethnic, political or religious reasons.
Respect the civilian and humanitarian character of sites sheltering displaced persons.

Do not put displaced persons at risk. Do not use displaced persons as human shields.
Do your best to ensure displaced persons have access to aid and care.
Do your best to ensure that children have access to education.
Do not discriminate against displaced persons, or among the displaced.
Consult displaced persons for all decisions that concern them, whether they are in camps or not. Treat all displaced people humanely.
Do not force people to move or return to a place of danger. Warn displaced people of mined areas.
Do not prevent people from returning home but facilitate their return, if safe.
Respect the property of the displaced. Do not loot or steal.
Do not separate families during displacement and endeavor to preserve the family unit during displacement.
Put these rules into practice.
Violations must be investigated and sanctioned in accordance with international standards.
Cooperate with Geneva Call to monitor respect of these rules.
Geneva Call

Geneva Call is a neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian organization working to improve the protection of civilians in armed conflict. The organization strengthens the respect for the law of armed conflict by armed non-State actors and supports local communities in their efforts to improve their own protection.

Note

This booklet serves as guidance to leaders and fighters of armed non-State actors on how to ensure the protection of displaced persons in armed conflict. Their content is based on international law, the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and good practices.

The purpose of this booklet is towards improving understanding of international humanitarian law. The booklet should not be interpreted to promote violent behaviour or the use of force.

The term displaced persons is used in this booklet to cover both internally displaced persons (within their own countries) and refugees (persons who fled and crossed an international border), whether they live in camps or not. The long term character of displacement needs to be taken into account when applying the rules in this booklet.

The Deed of Commitment

Geneva Call has developed a formal document known as the Deed of Commitment that gives armed non-State actors the opportunity to undertake to respect international humanitarian norms. To date, four documents have been developed:

- The Deed of Commitment for Adherence to a Total Ban on Anti-Personnel Mines and for Cooperation in Mine Action
- The Deed of Commitment for the Protection of Children from the Effects of Armed Conflict
- The Deed of Commitment for the Prohibition of Sexual Violence in Situations of Armed Conflict and towards the Elimination of Gender Discrimination
- The Deed of Commitment for the Protection of Health Care in Armed Conflict

Geneva Call supports and monitors the implementation of the Deeds of Commitment by signatory armed non-State actors.

International Humanitarian Law

International Humanitarian Law is a set of rules which seek, for humanitarian reasons, to limit the effects of armed conflict. It protects persons who are not or are no longer participating in the hostilities and restricts the means and methods of warfare.

Geneva Call seeks to build armed non-State actors’ knowledge of broad international humanitarian norms, and their capacities to implement them.

Geneva Call provides training and technical advice to armed non-State actors on how to incorporate these rules into their policies, codes of conduct and other internal regulations.