



Centre for  
Humanitarian  
Dialogue



# Interpreting Violence

Anti-civilian thinking and practice  
and how to argue against it more effectively

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The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue is an independent and impartial organisation, based in Geneva, Switzerland, dedicated to the promotion of humanitarian principles, the prevention of conflict and the alleviation of its effects through dialogue.

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# 1.0 Introduction

Violence against civilians is a routine part of most armed conflicts and always has been.

More often than not, anti-civilian violence is deliberate. It is agreed, pre-planned and carried out to order.

There are reasons for this. The killing, rape or destitution of civilian populations is designed by government authorities and armed groups who decide that their political, military or economic purposes are well served by such strategies.

Not all civilian suffering is intentional but this guide concentrates mainly on the large proportion of civilian suffering which is deliberate.

International action to protect civilian populations today is aware of the deliberate anti-civilian logic of most wars but prefers to address such logic with the legal norms and moral appeals of international human rights and humanitarian law. Calling people to respect international law is very important. It holds them to account for what they are doing but it does not always uncover why they are doing it or explicitly challenge their political purpose.

When, despite appeals, warring authorities continue to break the law, as they mostly do, it becomes necessary to expose their deeper political thinking and to understand the strategies behind their violence. A deeper understanding of why people are deliberately making civilians suffer is an essential first step in arguing effectively against such strategies and challenging their tactics more precisely on the ground.

## Aim of this Guidance Booklet

The purpose of this short guide is to help anyone concerned with the protection of civilians to think through the anti-civilian ideologies and methods being used in a war so that they can better recognize them and negotiate against them more effectively to limit violence against civilians.

Most humanitarian analysis of civilian protection focuses on the experience and needs of the victims. This booklet concentrates instead on the perspective of the perpetrators of civilian suffering. It examines why they use civilian suffering as an

aim and method of war and how they mobilize others to do so too. It offers a way of interpreting the motives, interests and social conditioning of the perpetrators of violence against civilians.

It is our hope that, with an improved understanding of anti-civilian thinking and practice, pro-civilian movements can develop more astute and constructive dialogues with anti-civilian forces and design more effective measures to protect civilians. The booklet is, therefore, intended to be a useful prompt for diplomats, politicians, military personnel, humanitarian workers, human rights workers, mediators, peacekeepers, peace activists, journalists and anyone else who wants to engage warring parties in a serious dialogue about civilian suffering and design significant strategies to limit such suffering.

### The booklet is in six main parts:

- What is the civilian idea in war?
- How is civilian suffering used as political strategy?
- Why do people decide to hurt civilians?
- What makes an anti-civilian movement?
- How to challenge anti-civilian thinking and practice?
- How to shape up pro-civilian dialogues

The Guide is based on a longer analysis of anti-civilian ideology and strategy produced at the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue entitled *Killing Civilians: Method, Madness and Morality in War*.<sup>1</sup>

“The Arabs and the government forces arrived on both sides of the village, with vehicles, on horseback and on camels, armed with big weapons. They cordoned the village with more than 1000 horses. There was also a helicopter and an Antonov plane. They shelled the town with more than 200 shells. We counted 119 persons who were killed by the shelling. Then the Arabs burnt all our houses, took all the goods from the market. A bulldozer destroyed houses. Cars belonging to the merchants were burnt and generators were stolen. They said they wanted to conquer the whole territory and that the Blacks did not have the right to remain in the region.

Local Chief in the Abu Gamra area of Darfur, cited in Amnesty International Report AFR 54/008/2004

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<sup>1</sup> Hugo Slim, *Killing Civilians: Method, Madness and Morality in War*, Hurst and Co, London, 2007.

## 2.0 What is the civilian idea in war?

The notion of ‘civilian’ populations is commonplace in the history of war.

The idea that there are such people as civilians in war is an ancient and resilient one. Long before the modern term “civilian” was coined and then enshrined in international humanitarian law<sup>2</sup>, the moral idea existed that a certain group of people – most people in fact – should be spared the violence and suffering of war.

This group of people is made up of the unarmed men, women and children who take no direct part in the fighting of war and who should not be the objects of attack. The civilian idea with its ethic of restraint declares that these people's blood should not be shed. They should be given help, protection and safe passage. In short, they are to be shown mercy in war. Today's international humanitarian law is the modern manifestation of this ancient

civilian idea with its emphasis on limits in war. It is an idea which can be found in almost every culture. Although there is no direct, positive definition of civilians in the Geneva Conventions, there is much in these laws which guarantees civilians' safety, protection and assistance in war.<sup>3</sup>

### A Fragile Idea

The idea of the civilian in war is deeply precious to human beings but it is also extremely fragile. In most contemporary and historical wars it has been hard to uphold and sustain this idea for several reasons:

- Some people have found civilian identity meaningless in the light of supremacist or nationalist

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<sup>2</sup> The term only arrived formally in humanitarian discussions of war after World War I when the ICRC began to take an interest in the law around civilians. In previous legal documents, civilians were referred to as unarmed inhabitants, non-combatants, the enemy population or the occupied population.

<sup>3</sup> In the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, civilians are defined negatively by what they are not – so, for example, they are not soldiers and not people taking a direct part in hostilities.



“  
**S**top, O people, that I may give you ten rules to keep by heart! Do not commit treachery, nor depart from the right path. You must not mutilate, neither kill a child or aged man or woman. Do not destroy a palm tree, nor burn it with fire and do not cut any fruitful tree. You must not slay any of the flock or the herds or the camels, save for your subsistence. You are likely to pass by people who have devoted their lives to monastic services; leave them to that which they have devoted their lives”.

Abu Bakr's Address to the first Syrian Expedition, 634.

*In his 13th Century Laws on Truces and Peace, Pope Gregory IX affirmed the protection of eight classes of person in war: clerics; monks, friars and other religious; pilgrims; travelers; merchants; peasants cultivating the land; women, children, widows and orphans. The animals, goods and lands of the peasantry and the weak were also to be protected.*

”

identities and ideologies which leave no room for immunity in enemy groups.

- Others have found that the civilian idea is impractical when fighting a stronger opponent or unfair when the enemy is content to kill your own civilians in large numbers.
- In the difficulty, fury, numbness and pleasure of war, many people have found that it is all too easy to abandon the restraint on which the civilian ethic depends.
- Many people have found civilian identity too ambiguous and believe that civilians are “involved” as part of the war effort.

These lines of anti-civilian logic and feeling have always existed to challenge the civilian idea. Their persistence means that while restraint is innate to human beings, it is certainly not a given. In many situations, people at all levels of a war can decide to abandon the civilian idea for reasons and emotions which they find more urgent and compelling.

**Civilians are “entitled, in all circumstances, to respect for their persons, their honour, their family rights, their religious convictions and practices, their manners and customs. They shall at all times be humanely treated, and shall be protected especially against all acts of violence or threats thereof...”**

Art 27, Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of the Civilian Persons in Time of War

**“In order to ensure respect for and protection of the civilian population and civilian objects, the Parties to the conflict shall at all times distinguish between the civilian population and combatants and between civilian objects and military objectives and accordingly shall direct their operations only against military objectives.”**

Art 48, Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions.

# 3.0 How is civilian suffering used as political strategy?

Political patterns help to form the shape of civilian suffering within a conflict.

Civilians suffer in a variety of ways in war. Often, the pattern of their suffering is shaped by political intent. The way civilians suffer is designed not accidental. Their murder, movement, impoverishment and distress are the result of a specific political purpose. Form follows function in much civilian suffering.

Certain patterns of civilian suffering are deeply familiar today: another refugee camp; more killing, or yet another rape. We all recognize the various shapes of contemporary civilian suffering. All too easily, we can stop short at seeing this suffering simply as the horrors of war or the inevitable consequences of a fight. In throwing up our hands we can forget to use our heads and to look more deeply at the political patterns behind the shapes of civilian suffering.

Frequently, these familiar forms of suffering are the strategies of war and not just its tragic consequences or its accidents. There is usually purpose in the patterns of civilian suffering.

## Seven Shards of Civilian Suffering

There are seven most obvious types of civilian suffering. These are shown in figure 1.

- The direct personal violence of killing, wounding and torturing
- The particular atrocity of rape, sexual violence and sexual exploitation
- Spatial suffering from forced and restricted movement
- Impoverishment
- Famine and disease
- Emotional suffering
- Post-war suffering

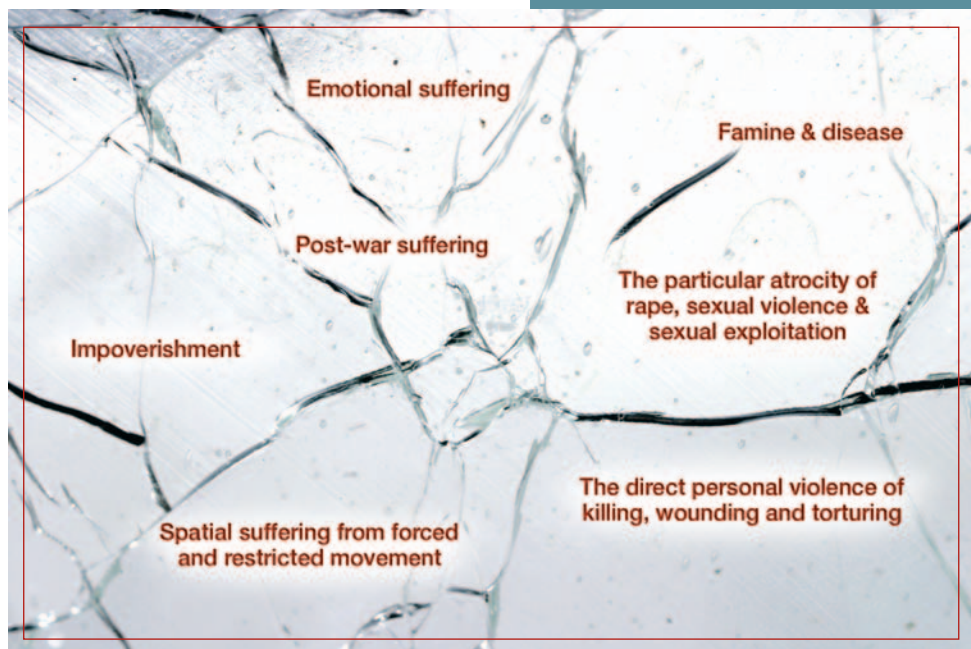


Figure 1: **The seven shards of suffering:** societies crack and splinter in many ways during conflict, with civilians suffering at the hands of oppressors in seven typical scenarios.

## Strategies of Suffering

The purposes behind these patterns of suffering are not usually hard to find.

**Massacre** is used to wipe out a section of the population, frequently its men, to destroy the military power and social fabric of a group or to terrorize and demoralize a people.

**Rape and sexual violence** is never accidental. It is always purposeful as either politics or pleasure. Politically, rape is triumphalist. It humiliates women to show them they are beaten and, in so doing, sends a powerful message of conquest to enemy men. In the extreme politics of race and nationalism, rape can be a supremacist act which sows enemy

“What was once a short journey to a medical appointment in East Jerusalem has become – even for emergency, critically ill and urgent cases – a fraught and time-consuming process to obtain permits and pass checkpoints. Deterred by delays and the frequent refusal of permits for a spouse, parent or escort, many patients are turning to smaller and less well resourced hospitals in other parts of the West Bank. Specialist treatment is no longer an option for many patients from the West Bank who cannot get the correct permit to cross the Barrier into East Jerusalem.”

The Humanitarian Impact of the West Bank Barrier on Palestinian Communities, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, June 2007.

seed within another nation to eradicate a group. Rape is also often done simply for pleasure to satisfy desire or fend off male loneliness.

Spatial suffering can be deeply political in its goals. Forcing people from their land, confining them in their homes or ghettoizing them in quasi-international camps is all about demographic change and social or economic control. The political purpose of refugee and IDP camps is easily (and conveniently) shrouded in a humanitarian vision of them as safe havens. More often than not, however, such camps are an intended demographic victory and an opportunity to make a previously dispersed population weaker and more politically compliant.

**Impoverishment** is also common political strategy in war. Deliberately destroying or looting people's assets and ruining or preventing their livelihoods serves a purpose. Whether it is achieved by aerial bombing or more traditional village raids and scorched earth tactics, making the enemy poorer is often a strategic aim to eradicate the threat and competition which they pose.

**"First the Arabs burnt our houses and took our animals. Then they took our cooking items, our millet in the fields and even our blankets. Their camels ate our crops too. Usually we harvest in September and women cultivate vegetables after the harvest. How are we expected to live now?"**

People from the village of Turlili in Darfur, cited in Amnesty International Report AFF 54/008/2004

**Making the enemy hungry and ill** is the natural next step in the weakening of a group. Conveniently, for proponents of this strategy, famine and disease still have a primal aura which means they are often perceived more like an "act of God" than a deliberate military strategy or useful political spin-off. In human imagination, famine and disease still resonate more as tragedy than atrocity although they are frequently the latter, planned or tolerated by a ruthless opponent.

**Emotional suffering** runs deep in civilian experience of war. It too is often intended and designed. Massacre, rape, abduction, restricted movement, torture, detention and impoverishment are all intended to carry with them wider messages of pain and humiliation to the enemy population. Imposing distress is a key part of any effort to break a people even if, in fact, it may stiffen their resolve and harden their hatred.

**Post-war suffering** arises from the legacy of war or the injustice of a peace. War usually leaves most civilians much poorer than they were, in a different place to where they were and more politically powerless. The opportunity costs of war for civilians are high – an education never had, vaccinations never received, assets gone for ever, families diminished, dispersed or destroyed. These costs, often deliberately imposed, live on. They are not easily compensated in a peace process. Sometimes they are even consolidated by an unfair political deal which ends the war.

# 4.0 Why do people decide to hurt civilians?

The reasons for hurting civilians exists along a spectrum of anti-civilian thinking.

If these are the common strategies behind civilian suffering, what makes people use them? Why do people choose to abandon the civilian idea in war and deliberately decide to hurt civilians?

People do not hurt civilians mindlessly. They find reasons to hurt them. They become convinced by these reasons and then convince others of them too. Most of these reasons are thought up by political leaders who determine that policies of mass killing, destitution, rape and terror are appropriate strategic and tactical responses to the problems they face or the ambitions they have.

These reasons for hurting civilians exist along a spectrum of anti-civilian thinking which rejects or compromises pro-civilian thinking. At one end of the spectrum, the civilian idea is essentially an ideology of restraint and limited war. At the other end, anti-civilian ideologies adopt a philosophy of limitless war.

## Anti-civilian ideologies

The spectrum in Figure 2 shows the range of anti-civilian ideologies that tend to operate in wars.

At one end, there is an extreme, even celebratory, genocidal logic which unequivocally rejects the civilian idea and requires the eradication of a whole group.

In the middle of the spectrum, anti-civilian thinking turns more on principles of necessity and extreme emergency which tend to make exceptional arguments for breaking the civilian ideal. Sometimes, these ideologies are adopted or expressed reluctantly, arguing that hurting civilians is an unfortunate but necessary compromise.

At the other end of the spectrum, the most pro-civilian end, there are ideologies of coincidence or accident which people use regretfully to justify the hurting of civilians as unintentional and tragic.

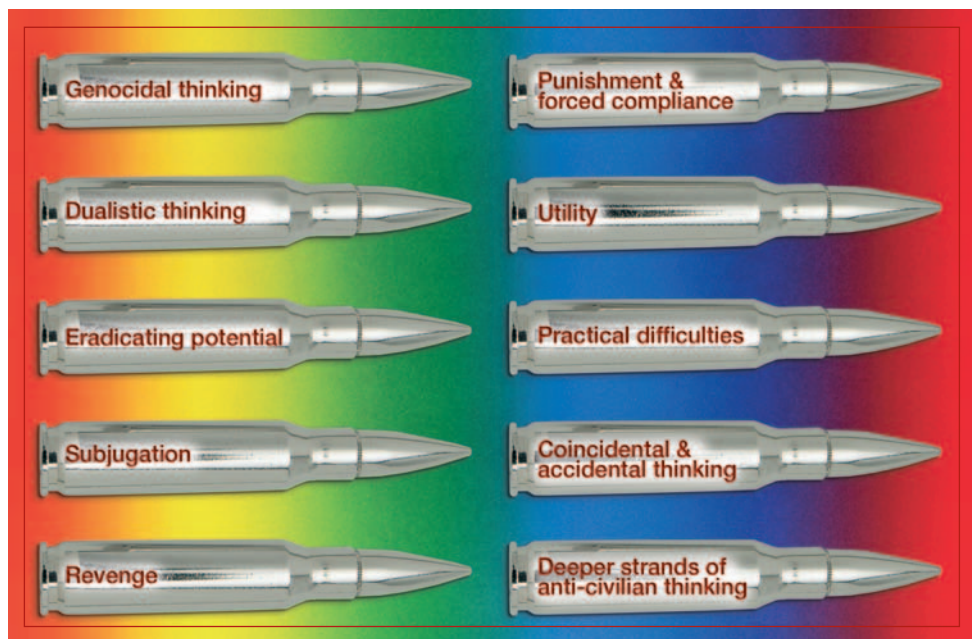


Figure 2: *The spectrum of anti-civilian ideologies: each ideology takes careful aim at undermining the stability of the civilian population, from genocide at one end to deeper strands of anti-civilian thinking at the other.*

There are ten main types of anti-civilian ideologies that surface as explicit political thinking to justify civilian suffering in most wars:

**Genocidal thinking**, often based in notions of racial or political purity, is the most extreme and involves an absolute rejection of the civilian idea. Ideologies of extreme nationalism like Nazism or Hutu extremism consider civilian distinction utterly meaningless in their construction of the absolute enmity of a particular group.

**Dualistic thinking** underlies genocidal thought but also shapes a much wider range of ideologies which reject the civilian idea but may not call for genocide. Dualistic thinking divides society into good people and evil people, worthy people and

worthless people. Such thinking splits the world leaving little room for overlapping categories of people like civilians. Dualism can be especially strong in religious thought and imagination. Medieval Christian crusaders were damning of “the infidel” just as many contemporary Islamists share the concept of “Jahiliyyah” which deems large sections of the world and its people unclean and morally corrupt. Extreme political ideologies have been similarly and violently dualistic in their definitions of “the enemies of the people”.

**Eradicating potential** – in many of the most vicious wars there is a strong pattern of near genocidal thinking which uses killing as a means of enemy prevention. Men and boys are often the particular target of such thinking and its deliberate

“Infants and young children who had survived or been saved in the first weeks were also slaughtered in mid-May. Killers sought to justify their slaughter by repeating a phrase about Kigame or Rwigema, the RPF commander who had led the 1990 invasion, having once been a baby too.”

Human Rights Watch, *Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda*.

and pre-emptive destruction of human potential in the enemy population. In such thinking, women can also be attacked on the basis of the reproductive function. They can be abducted and raped to compromise their fertility or killed to prevent it. Infanticide has also been commonly argued for because children who have seen horrors will grow up with grievances which make them even worse enemies.

**Subjugation** is a pure ideology of power in which certain leaders simply affirm their right to absolute power and domination of a society. This lust for power seldom has an elaborate and committed political programme but is a form of extreme greed and self aggrandizement which insists on absolute deference. This is the ideology of Gengis Khan and his extreme violence or the ruthless and indiscriminate oppression of a more modern African dictator who gradually devours his country.

Europe is to be combed through from West to East in the course of the practical implementation of the final solution...the evacuated Jews will first be taken, group by group, to so-called transit ghettos, in order to be transported further east from there...Under appropriate direction the Jews are to be utilized for work in the East in an expedient manner in the course of the final solution. In large (labour) columns, with the sexes separated, Jews capable of work will be moved into these areas as they build roads, during which a large proportion will no doubt drop out through natural reduction. The remnant that eventually remains will require suitable treatment; because it will without doubt represent the most resistant part, it consists of a natural selection that could, on its release, become the germ-cell of a new Jewish revival.”

Protocol of the Wannsee Conference to Plan the Final Solution of the Jewish Question, Berlin, January 1942.

**“This is payback time”**

Liberian armed groups

**“I don’t give a fuck. It’s now the time for our soldiers to issue their own justice.”**

Soviet Marshal Vasilevsky on the rape and looting by Russian troops during the invasion of Germany in 1944, quoted in Anthony Beevor, *Berlin*.

**Revenge** is an extremely powerful form of anti-civilian thinking which can run deep in societies at war. Sometimes ideologies of revenge operate on a supposedly reciprocal “tit for tat” basis, meeting massacre with massacre in rough proportion. But, in other forms, revenge can justify a tenfold or one hundredfold return and can spiral fast. Very often, when revenge is in play, the civilian ethic is totally rejected as irrelevant because the actions of the enemy have now completely changed the rules and set a new extreme tone to the violence of the war.

**Punishment and forced compliance** is a more cold and calculated ideology of violence which uses civilian suffering of many kinds to shape the behaviour of the enemy group into line. Collective punishments whether by killings, restrictions, detentions, torture or destitution can serve to eradicate key members of the enemy but also to deter the group as a whole and give it drastic new incentives to conform.

**Necessity** – many people argue the necessity of extreme anti-civilian tactics as a means of winning their wars because there is no other way. Some adopt such “necessary” killing of civilians more reluctantly than others, making it clear that their adoption of such ruthless pragmatism is exceptional. Others claim that “by using harsh tactics now, the war will be won sooner, therefore saving more civilian lives in the long run.”

**“We have a right, indeed are bound in duty, to abrogate for a space some of the conventions of the very laws we seek to consolidate and reaffirm.”**

Winston Churchill, 1939

**“The [Tel Aviv] suicide bombing is an act of self-defense...[it is] a natural result of the continued Israeli crimes against our people.”**

Sami Abu Zuhri, Hamas Spokesman,  
17 April 2006

**Utility** – people also decide to kill and hurt civilians simply because it works. Territory is cleared by terror. Enemy societies are ruined by looting and destruction. Using violence as a business method makes warlords rich. Violence pays. So it does in politics too. Violent people do take power and get to the top. Hurting civilians is indeed a means of winning.

**“It is necessary to spread an atmosphere of terror. We have to create an impression of mastery.”**

General Mola during the Spanish Civil War

**Recklessness** – carelessness of a kind similar to criminal negligence is common in war. In the heat and hatred of war, cultures of indiscriminate fire and “overkill” can emerge fast and easily remain unchallenged as a norm for self-protection as they did in US military culture in the Vietnam War. Behind



this recklessness, there often lies a profound anti-civilian attitude which feels that “one of our lives is worth ten of theirs”.

**A few days ago, I spoke with a friend of mine who was fired at. He told me they returned massive fire in the direction of the shooting without identifying it precisely. When I told him he could easily have hit bystanders, he said he didn't care.**

Israeli Soldier, cited in *Trigger Happy*, a report by B'Tselem, March 2002.

### Pro-Civilian Ideologies

Not all civilian suffering is deliberate. On the far end of the spectrum, there is an important area of political and military thinking which deeply values the civilian idea but still recognizes that its operations will sometimes kill and hurt civilians. This is, essentially, the ideology behind international humanitarian law.

People who hold this ideology are regretful killers of civilians. They do not want to hurt civilians. They try not to hurt them. But they know that they will probably do so on occasion. Sometimes they decide that they must hurt some. They explain and justify such killings with ideas of difficulty, coincidence, accident and context.

**Practical difficulties** – the so-called fog of war presents very serious and often insurmountable difficulties which make pro-civilian judgements

extremely hard. Soldiers pinned down by fire cannot see. The noise, fear and shock of war disorientate. Things happen extremely fast and require instantaneous decisions and immediate action. All this makes for an understandable ideology of the difficulty of war. Its pressure and complexity can make it genuinely hard to protect civilians.

**“ISAF takes extraordinary measures to prevent any type of collateral damage and operates on the principal of avoiding any and all civilian casualties during operations.”**

ISAF statement, 29 March 2007

**“We are deeply saddened by the news of the loss of innocent civilians during this engagement and our thoughts are with the bereaved families”**

ISAF Spokesman after two civilians were killed during a fire fight at Garmsir, 26 February 2007

**Coincidental and accidental thinking** – amongst those who essentially value the civilian ideal is an ideology of the unintentional killing and hurting of civilians. This view is held with much conviction by those who are pro-civilian in their ideologies of war but who do not deny that they also hurt civilians. For them, civilian suffering is never their primary intention but usually a terrible coincidence or a tragic accident which they try to avoid but which is part of the inevitable difficulty of war.




**T**he deliberate placement of missile launchers and stockpiles of weapons in the heart of civilian centres, frequently inside and beneath populated apartment blocks, means that the risk of (of collateral injury to civilians) is tragically high. This dilemma posed by the violation of the fundamental humanitarian principle of distinction between combatants and civilians has been exceptionally acute in densely populated areas in south Beirut, where Hizballah has deliberately located its headquarters and terrorist strongholds.

Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs,  
1 September 2006

We are concerned about reports that some civilians may have lost their lives during this attack. However, it must be noted that it was the insurgents who initiated this attack, and in choosing to conduct such attacks in this location and at this time, the risk to civilians was probably deliberate. It is this irresponsible action that may have led to casualties.

ISAF statement on a military engagement near Gereshk, 22 June 2007.



**Context** - civilian suffering is not always the responsibility of one side but is also determined by the way in which the enemy fights. If enemy tactics expose civilians to excessive risk from your fire, then some responsibility for their suffering passes from you to the enemy. This is especially argued in so-called "mixed settings" where fighting takes place within largely civilian areas.

In this way, it may be claimed that the context of a fight can place responsibility for civilian suffering more on one's enemy than on oneself.

### **Deeper strands of anti-civilian thinking**

Beneath these operational ideologies, there are three deeper ways of thinking which drive and justify anti-civilian ideologies. They are:

- collective thinking
- sacrificial thinking
- ambiguous thinking

These three strands of human thought are more structural forms of thinking which reside implicitly but powerfully within the explicit anti-civilian ideologies described above. Each one lends itself to the construction of anti-civilian reasoning.

### **Collective thinking**

Collectivist thinking allows us to develop a notion of the group in which the individual can conveniently become obscure. Having lost the individual from moral view, group thinking then allows people in a war to think in blocks. The enemy is then conceived of simply as "them". The individual reality of "him"

or “her” as a boy, a grandmother, a teacher or a husband is overlooked and left unfelt.

The depersonalization of collective thinking, frequently accompanied by the idea of the enemy’s “collective guilt”, makes ideologies of killing easier to build. It allows people to stop thinking about the enemy and to stop seeing the enemy as individual civilians. They can be disregarded.

### Sacrificial thinking

The idea of sacrifice and its beneficial effect runs deep in human imagination and morality. Sacrifice speaks a deep but unpalatable truth that for heaven to be moved, for the future to be freed up and for life to move on, innocent blood must be shed. Sacrificial thinking is deeply powerful and convincing to many people and often operates unconsciously or heavily disguised as reasonable politics.

Sacrifice is a large part of the way humans think and work in war. Many politicians, their fighters and supporters can only ever see a way of making something right at someone else’s expense. Blood changes things and civilians are frequently dragged into war as its sacrificial victims.

### Ambiguous thinking

The human ability to perceive the ambiguity of things is the last strand of deep thinking which can be a critical ingredient in anti-civilian reasoning.

To many people inside a war, civilian identity is not as simple as it looks to outside observers. Most people who humanitarian agencies easily describe as civilians are seen in a more nuanced light by their enemies. Civilians have roles, relationships and views in a war which can make their identity more complex than that described in simple aid appeals.

The ambiguity of individual civilians frequently gives rise to a profound scepticism about civilians in many wars. People from one warring party will often say that individuals in the enemy group are “not only civilians” or “not just civilians” but that they are also play a part in the war and are a threat of some kind.

### **This scepticism emerges around four main aspects of civilian ambiguity:**

#### • Economic ambiguity

The economic role of many civilians in war is one of the main areas of ambiguity which is constantly argued as undermining of their civilian status by those attacking them. Throughout history, most war efforts have relied voluntarily or forcibly on what Geoffrey Best described as “an army of indispensable civilian supporters”.<sup>4</sup>

How civilians contribute economically to the war effort (whether by taxes, labour or donation) and how they benefit economically from the war (by profit, land, loot or the former jobs of their enemies)

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<sup>4</sup> Geoffrey Best, *Humanity in Warfare*, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London, 1980, p223.

persistently and understandably changes the way their enemies feel about the purity of their identity as civilians.

### • Military ambiguity

A sense of military ambiguity in the civilian identity of some people and some places is central to most wars.

**“People who work in factories live close to them. Therefore, we will hit your houses too.”**

Leaflet dropped on German Cities by Britain’s Royal Airforce in World War II

So called “revolving-door civilians” who farm their fields by day and then patrol with armed groups or local self-defense militias at night are the most obvious examples of militarily ambiguous civilians. What about the unarmed driver of the military supply truck carrying tank fuel to the front or the civilian computer operator sub-contracted to provide satellite imagery for use in planning attacks?

Places like power stations, roads, bridges and airports, which have come to be known as possible “dual-use facilities” and can simultaneously serve a civilian and a military purpose, also contribute to a strong sense of civilian ambiguity.



**Figure 3: The four faces of ambiguity:** There are four areas of ambiguity surrounding individual civilians, which frequently give rise to a profound scepticism about civilians in many wars.

**“One moment civilians will ask you for water. The next they bomb you.”**

British Soldier in Basra, quoted in *The Times*,  
5 June 2006

### • Social ambiguity

Close relationships between civilians and active fighting members of the enemy can create significant ambiguity in people's minds. Many people instinctively discount the civilian identity of someone if they are known to be the mother, brother, father, sister, friend or lover of a leading politician, military man, policeman, suspected guerrilla or terrorist.

Social connections via clans, tribes and family ties are also deliberately targeted as a way of hurting the enemy and destroying its support base and morale. Ruthless politicians know that warriors are fed by affection as well as food. For such politicians, it makes sense to attack and disrupt their enemy's lines of affection as well as their lines of supply.

***Leftist Colombian guerrillas of the Domingo Lain Front had a policy of torturing and then “executing” young women who flirted with or dated local soldiers and police officers.***

Human Rights Watch

**T**he American people are the ones who choose their government through their own free will... Thus the American people have chosen, consented to and affirmed their support for Israel's oppression of the Palestinians, the occupation and usurpation of their land, and its continuous killing, torture, punishment and expulsion of the Palestinians. The American people have the ability and choice to refuse the policies of their government, and even to change it if they want.

Osama Bin Laden on why American citizens are legitimate targets.

### • Political ambiguity

Many of the most extreme pro-war members of an enemy group may not be armed at all. They may be people of ideas who actively incite violence and hatred or groom young men for the fight.

The most ideologically belligerent people in a society at war can be unarmed men who are extremist newspaper editors or the old and bitter veterans from the last great national humiliation. Women too can be perceived as playing this role - mothers who sing their sons to sleep with songs which encourage a noble fight against their enemies and romanticize male martyrdom.

Each of these four aspects of civilian ambiguity has the potential to generate significant scepticism about civilian identity in war. Many political and military leaders explicitly emphasize civilian ambiguity in order to erode the civilian idea in people's minds. They then deliberately mobilize the scepticism of their supporters to make them feel that their enemies are not really civilians at all.

# 5.0 What makes an anti-civilian movement?

It only takes a small percentage of the population to create an anti-civilian strategy.

Violent ideologies and skepticism about the civilian idea do not kill people on their own. They are, of course, merely ideas and perceptions. To become destructive, such views and ideas need to be applied. They have to move from theory to practice, from talking about the blood of the civilian enemy to actually spilling it. People do not only need to be persuaded that it is right or acceptable to hurt civilians, they need to be made to do it or to support such policies.

Most people are not actively violent in war but it only needs a small percentage of the population to become violent for an anti-civilian policy to take effect. To become brutal, this minority (usually of ordinary men in armed forces, armed groups, militias, criminal gangs or terrorist cells) needs to be conditioned. People need to be emotionally, socially and psychologically prepared to inflict civilian suffering as well as intellectually convinced by an anti-civilian ideology. Tragically, but reliably, evidence shows that under the right

conditions 80% of us will become excessively and uncharacteristically violent on command.

The conditions required for actually harming civilians or supporting such policies all hinge on our passions as human beings. Something has to happen which either inflames or numbs our emotions so that we can actually kill, hurt or uncomplainingly observe. Our normal inhibitions have to be overcome. We can enrage or dull our senses, or we can use a mixture of the two by which we enrage them in key moments and then dull them afterwards, or vice versa.

So, what are the conditions required to make and shape an active anti-civilian movement of highly motivated people? There seems to be a certain **cycle of conditioning** in the creation of any anti-civilian movement. This involves several forms of conditioning which are commonly used to activate civilian suffering in anti-civilian wars and which can be recognized as early warning signals of an anti-civilian movement.

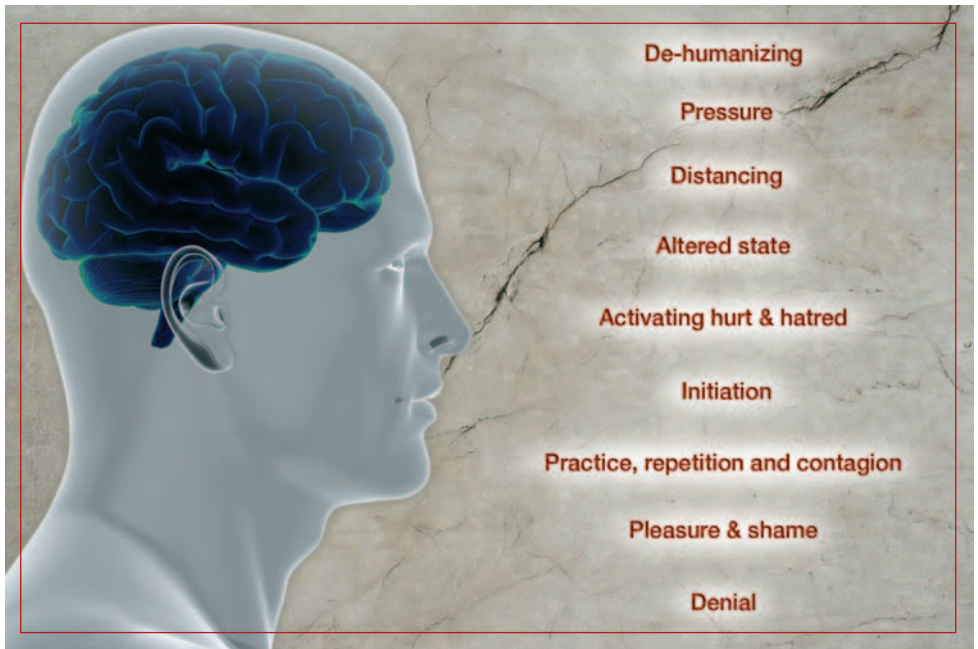


Figure 4: **Anti-civilian mentalities:** anti-civilian activities do not come about spontaneously or through the mayhem of conflict, but are often considered as an integral part of fighting a war.

Figure 4 shows how this cycle of conditioning creates an uninhibited anti-civilian mentality:

**The main steps in the cycle are as follows:**

**De-humanizing** - an extreme construction of enmity that de-humanizes the civilians of the enemy group and lets people see them instead as vermin, cockroaches, gangrene or bacilli to be killed or eradicated. The net effect of such a mentality is to help people believe that they are not really killing human beings at all.

**“Perhaps when we were raping her, we looked at her as a woman, but when we killed her, we just thought of her as something like a pig.”**

Perpetrator of the massacres in Nanking, quoted in Iris Chang, *The Rape of Nanking*.

**Pressure** - powerful forms of coercive authority, obedience and conformity can take hold of people relatively easily and make them do things out of fear of punishment or peer pressure. Under these conditions, individual will can fast become submerged into the will of an institution in a process which sociologists call “submission”. People then routinely do what they would not normally do.

**"The battalion had orders to kill Jews, but each individual did not. Yet 80-90% of the men proceeded to kill, although almost all of them – at least initially – were horrified and disgusted by what they were doing. To break ranks and step out, to adopt overtly non-conformist behaviour, was simply beyond most of the men. It was easier for them to shoot."**

Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men*

**Distancing** – anti-civilian killing machines often use techniques of bureaucratic and euphemistic distancing to enable people to avoid direct responsibility for what they are doing. Anti-civilian operations of killing and destitution may euphemistically be called "special treatment" or "de-housing" and "clearance". Rape may be called "a bit of fun". Tasks may be bureaucratically divided so that one group need never know what another group is doing or what happens after their part of an anti-civilian operation is over. "I just draw up these lists of names. I don't know what they are for."

**"I am Crazy One, this is Small Soldier, he is Rocket, that is Devil and he is Dead Body Bone."**

A Young Liberian rebel soldier introducing his friends by their fighting names.

**Altered state** – an almost mystical entry into an "altered state" and the adoption of a different war persona is often essential if people are to become changed enough to kill and hurt en masse. People need rites, masks, sunglasses, uniforms, charms, alcohol, drugs, nicknames or *nommes de guerre* to become their violent alter ego. Male youth is itself a particularly malleable phase of life when young men eagerly look around for extreme identities, simple goals or hard experiences to endure as a rite of passage into adulthood. Often, simply picking up a gun transforms a sense of self.

**Activating hurt and hatred** - mobilizing heart-felt hurt and hatred from feelings of personal injury, grievance and humiliation is another important way of making people violent. The sustained agony of injustice, the pain of murdered relatives, the death of comrades, the thirst for revenge, the burning of humiliation can all drive us to kill and be glad that others are killing for us. In its most extreme form, hatred is a visceral emotion which people feel in their throat, their head, their guts and their limbs. The physiology of hatred is easily socially engineered by extremist leaders to make people actively violent.

**Tradition** - acceptance of certain traditions of violence as normal and a part of "how we do things here" is a common feature of anti-civilian violence. Many societies develop habitual ways of killing and punishing which become powerful and compelling



traditions. Russian society has a terrible tradition of purge, pogrom, deportation and exile. Some African societies have a tradition of indiscriminate raid and abduction. British and American militarism has developed a tradition of aerial bombardment. Many groups are currently embracing a tradition of suicide bombing which itself draws on an ancient Middle Eastern tradition in the Assassins and a more modern tradition in Russian anarchism. The Israeli military has a tradition of house demolition which has antecedents in similar British punitive practice in Palestine during the Mandate years. These local traditions of violence often remain strangely inured to reflection and self-criticism. They become norms which people inherit and adopt relatively easily.

**Initiation and induction** - involvement in some form of active induction to killing and violence which serves to “blood” people in some way is a common part of anti-civilian conditioning. Working on the assumption that the first time is the worst

time, many groups are keen to force some kind of murderous induction upon their recruits.

**“Finish her off”, he ordered coldly. They were told to grab wooden logs and beat her. The commander made them line up and beat the girl one by one. Those who didn’t beat hard enough were slapped and forced to repeat. When the last one passed, the little girl seemed dead but was still shaking. One of the commanders came forward and hit her a last time to make sure she was dead.”**

Account of an induction killing in the Lords Resistance Army, from *Els de Temmerman, Aboke Girls*, p44.

### **Practice, repetition and contagion**

– deliberately rehearsing and repeating acts of violence is then an important part of building on an initiation or induction. It ensures that such violence becomes normal and habit-forming. We practice

**H**e watched another rebel, dressed in a woman’s wig, skirt and stockings, walk along a line of refugees pleading with them, in mock supplication, to allow him to kill them. To one terrified queue he announced “I like the number twenty”. He began counting from the back and killed the twentieth person in line.

Stephen Ellis, *The Mask of Anarchy: The Destruction of Liberia and the Religious Dimension of an African Civil War*

things so that we can then do them without thinking. It is the same with the extreme violence of war. Many people have noticed how violence is also contagious. Once you do it, have it done to you or see others doing it, violence can spread. People can catch it and "pick it up" like a disease.

**Pleasure** - pleasure is also a common driver of anti-civilian violence. People enjoy it. A social bond around the killing, the thrill of power and excitement or the cool satisfaction from a job well done is frequently a factor which encourages or enables anti-civilian violence. Men, in particular, can find great warmth and satisfaction in a group of other fired-up men regardless of what they are doing. Crossing moral lines around sex and violence can be exciting, even addictive. More bureaucratically, many massacres have been talked about with pride by their perpetrators as a well accomplished mission.

**Shame** - shame can also be a driver of anti-civilian behaviour. People who feel humiliated by the enemy can be extremely vicious. Others, who are disgusted at what they themselves have become as violent individuals, can vent their self-disgust by killing again as if to blame their victims for what they have become.

**Denial** - mechanisms of denial for individuals and groups are an essential part of enabling and accepting widespread atrocities. Outright denial can serve to deny that one's actions ever really happened or were not as bad as people claim. More subtly, denial may reframe atrocity as necessary suffering, so denying that it was bad.

All these different forms of conditioning can be observed. Once underway they are obvious. Their emergence, therefore, should be scrutinized and acted upon as important early warning signals of the development of a potentially brutal anti-civilian movement.

# 6.0 How to challenge anti-civilian thinking and practice?

Changing minds is the key to changing anti-civilian behaviour.

Anti-civilian thinking and feeling are extremely powerful. To challenge them, it is necessary to confront ideologies and to reverse the conditioning that makes people act on them. This means understanding people's politics and then changing people's minds or, at least, their behaviour.<sup>5</sup>

An effective pro-civilian strategy needs to undermine the reasons why people hurt civilians. This can be done in three main ways:

- **By conviction** – changing what people actually believe about civilians.

- **By coercion** – forcing people to recognize that it is too risky, and so now irrational, for them to start or continue to hurt civilians.

- **By incentive** – offering people significant positive reasons and rewards for protecting civilians.

In other words, to create a culture which protects civilians, it is necessary to mirror anti-civilian ideology and practice by shaping precise pro-civilian ideologies, significant pro-civilian interests and powerful pro-civilian conditioning. This is best done by deterring, inhibiting and dissuading them from violations or attracting them to pro-civilian conduct.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The following section draws in part on the psychological model of mind changing in Howard Gardner, *Changing Minds*, Harvard Business School Press, Boston, 2006.

<sup>6</sup> For more detailed guidance on deterring and inhibiting violence against civilians see Liam Mahony, *Proactive Presence: Field Strategies for Civilian Protection*, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Geneva, 2006.



**Figure 5: Signs of change:** An effective pro-civilian strategy needs to undermine the reasons why people hurt civilians. This can be done via conviction, coercion, or incentive.

Any dialogue about civilian protection will need to draw on these three ways of changing people's minds, albeit to different degrees depending on the resistance of the other party in the dialogue.

### Conviction: Pro-civilian arguments

Good reasons - whether they follow an altruistic or self-serving logic – can influence the way people think and behave. Any effort to change people's convictions about the civilian idea must be based on good reasons and be precise and coherent.

In a dialogue about civilians, it is not enough to repeat over and over again the standard chant that "killing civilians is wrong because it is against the law and it is against the law because it is

wrong". This circular reasoning – which sums up the intellectual basis of most popular pro-civilian reasoning today - is obviously not enough of an argument to challenge and convince committed anti-civilian ideologues.

Instead, as a first step, people working for the protection of civilians need to be sure of the reasons why they think that civilian identity is a valid one and why civilians should be protected. These reasons must be at the heart of any dialogue about civilians. People pursuing pro-civilian arguments need to be sure of their own reasons for protecting civilians before challenging those who have decided to attack civilians.

Faced with anti-civilian ideologies, pro-civilian reasoning has to beat off the logic and passions of genocide, dualism, revenge, collective punishment, necessity, difficulty and coincidence as described above. It has to find good reasons why such thinking is wrong. This can be a grim dialogue but few minds are changed by monologues which tell you simply that you are wrong.

### **So, what are the moral arguments for designating people as civilians and protecting them as such?**

- **The preciousness and vulnerability of human life** – at its deepest point, the civilian idea is built on the value of every human life and the most ancient moral injunction that “thou shalt not murder”. It believes that every human being’s life is precious to themselves, to those who love them and, if you are religious, to God as well. This preciousness, which we recognize also from our own lives, demands respect. As well as being precious, every human life is also vulnerable. No person is in complete control of their surroundings, their affiliations and their choices. This essential vulnerability means that every human person should be met with understanding - about how they have become your enemy - as well as respect for the unique tissue of their life. The value and fragility which the civilian idea sees in every human life means it argues for “limited killing” in human affairs – a deliberate caution and restraint

in the face of something valuable. This restraint is traditionally called mercy. Killing in self-defense may be legitimate but the great majority of civilian killing and suffering is wrongful killing and suffering. It shows neither respect, nor understanding, nor mercy for human life.

- **A fair fight** – also deep down, the civilian idea is about the natural justice and honour of a fair fight. It is about being reasonable and judicious in the exercise of violence and power. Behind this sense of fairness is the argument of proportionality which states that violence - because it is so dreadful - should always be used in direct proportion to the threat one faces. Above all, this states that it is wrong to attack those who cannot harm you or who are not harming you. Such conduct marks out attackers as immoral, dishonourable and cowardly – epithets which can carry weight in many cultures.

- **Innocence** – the original meaning of the Latin word *innocens* is not-harming. Despite the problems around the ambiguity of civilian identity and roles, there are usually still many profoundly harmless people within an enemy population whose innocence is deeply valued by the civilian idea. Small children and other people genuinely too weak, disinterested and powerless to make any kind of harm within the war often make up large and obvious numbers in a civilian population.

• **Tolerating civilian ambiguity** – a realistic pro-civilian argument cannot rely on innocence alone in its definition of a civilian population. It has to recognize the common charges of profound ambiguity in civilian identity and the reality of many people's practical, emotional or ideological involvement in war or support for it. Pro-civilian arguments have to deal with skepticism about civilian identity head on. This is best done by admitting civilian ambiguity rather than whitewashing it. A mature civilian argument has, therefore, to argue for the toleration of people's ambiguous roles and relationships. Pro-civilian reasoning has to make the case that most civilian ambiguity is inevitable, understandable and tolerable. It exists on both sides and should not be fatal to civilians.

• **Respecting civilian obligations** – most of the burden of morality and good conduct for civilian protection falls on those who might attack or defend them. But reason also dictates that civilians have moral duties too and have obligations they need to meet if they are to sustain their right to claim civilian identity. Civilians cannot exploit the tolerance of the enemy and continually claim civilian status if they also obviously violate it. Pro-civilian argument needs to demand that civilians keep to the bargain. It must recognize a genuine distinction between tolerable ambiguity in civilian status and deliberate abuse of civilian status. This abuse might involve using civilian cover to pursue military operations or deliberately and willingly hiding weapons in your home. This takes inevitable and understandable

civilian engagement with a war one step further to become militarily operational which is neither harmless nor ambiguous.

• **Self-preservation** – more so than most violence, killing and hurting unarmed and harmless civilians is bad for the soul. Despite the bravado and apparent fulfillment of the warrior, most people eventually feel less themselves when they have killed civilians, not more. There are strong reasons which suggest that a violation of this kind against others is, ultimately, also a violation of oneself. It is an act of self harm, the violence and confusion of which is then often handed on (often literally in domestic violence) to one's immediate family and passed down to the second generation.

The most convincing reasons for doing things are those which also resonate with our own experience. The best way to communicate these reasons is, therefore, with a powerful image or a personal story which means that the logic of these arguments finds resonance in heart and mind.

### Coercion: pro-civilian pressure

Pro-civilian moral arguments can be persuasive and convincing with some individuals but seldom find a purchase on realist or ruthless strategists who design, carry out and even enjoy anti-civilian campaigns. Persuasion by coercion rather than conviction is more likely to change these people.

Coercion works to change behaviour on the principle of pressure and negative consequences. This is the way of the stick rather than the carrot in the famous fable about the stubborn donkey.

### Pro-civilian coercion can take six main forms:

- **Military retaliation** - where possible, military force can be used to counter anti-civilian attacks by identifying and destroying the forces responsible.

- **Political pressure** – political peer pressure can be brought to bear to isolate and stigmatize authorities who use anti-civilian methods or massive non-violent political pressure can be encouraged and supported on the ground which actively seeks to expose and block anti-civilian campaigns. Social pressure within an armed force or community can also effect anti-civilian actors.

- **Monitoring pressure** – the presence of local or international monitors on the ground or by satellite can be used to watch, warn off and report anti-civilian activity.

- **Economic pressure** – trade relations and other economic sanctions can be used to pressurize and weaken an anti-civilian authority.

- **Legal accountability** – domestic and international law is an increasing resource at the disposal of pro-civilian efforts. Those responsible for crimes committed against civilians can be investigated, charged, tried and sentenced.

- **Pro-civilian authority** – authority, obedience and conformity can be enforced within anti-civilian military units to impose pro-civilian conduct on military activities. This often requires “moderates” winning out over hardliners.

All these different forms of coercion can be applied proactively to prevent anti-civilian activities and campaigns, or reactively to respond to civilian suffering. Their discussion can form an important part of any dialogue with authorities who are resistant to the principle of civilian protection. Their aim is always to inhibit and deter anti-civilian strategies.

### Incentives: pro-civilian rewards

Incentives work on the principle of inducements and positive results. They focus on resources which can reward a certain form of behaviour. Incentives are represented positively by the carrot in the fable of the donkey.

Various incentives have an important place in dialogues about civilian protection.

In any war, there may be a number of military, political and personal interests which may overlap with pro-civilian objectives and be shaped into positive incentives for pro-civilian conduct.

The following examples are particularly common:

- **Military self interest** – the risk of reciprocal anti-civilian strategies from an opponent may be enough to drive a campaign of military restraint towards enemy civilians. One side's restraint may then be rewarded by the restraint of the other.

- **Political self-interest** – a warlord may realize that if he continues to kill and displace civilians he will soon be the master of nothing but a deserted and untaxable wilderness. An invader or insurgent may be encouraged to adopt pro-civilian tactics so as not to alienate the population in a protracted war. A government or armed group may halt atrocities when it sees there may be more to gain from talks. A leader's desire for international legitimacy and a good reputation may persuade him to be merciful.

- **Intimate self interest** – many military people report that there are positive personal rewards to be found in pro-civilian behaviour in war. Being kind to civilians can make soldiers feel good amidst some of the de-humanizing effects of war. Fighters often like being merciful and caring because it reminds them of who they really are and of their other life beyond the fight. Showing kindness can make them feel human again.

- **Rewarding good conduct** – military authorities can also deliberately and obviously reward pro-civilian behaviour. Fighters can be singled out, praised, decorated and promoted for protective behaviour. Peer and family pressure can work in favour of civilian protection to make people conform to pro-civilian attitudes and conduct.

- **The rewards of peace** – restraint in war can also be good for peace. A cleaner war – which is fought humanely and in line with the Geneva Conventions - usually leads to an easier peace. With less pain, grievance and resentment left over from the experience of a vicious and humiliating war, a peace agreement can be easier to make and to keep. With less economic devastation, businesses are often quicker to rebuild and new money can be made.

Incentive-based dialogue, based on the interests above, has the advantage of allowing anti-civilian authorities to change their position and behaviour without losing face because they can still be seen to act in their own interests rather than at someone else's insistence.



# 7.0 How to shape a pro-civilian dialogue

Communication on many different levels can overturn ant-civilian thinking.

To achieve a powerful dialogue on civilian protection, well judged arguments, threats and incentives in favour of pro-civilian behaviour need to be made in a number of different arenas within any warring society. This requires a series of dialogues ranging from discussions at a very general public level within society as a whole to the most intimate arena of an individual mind.

Designing such layered dialogues needs a highly targeted communications strategy and which includes subtle support for any pro-civilian movements inside a war. The following key steps may help to shape up such a strategy.

Setting the goals and objectives of a dialogue

**Any pro-civilian dialogue is likely to have short and long term goals:**

- The **short term goal** will be to reduce any immediate risks to civilians in the war as it is being fought. This will demand highly tactical dialogues with the warring parties to defend civilians from immanent danger, to deter anti-civilian forces and prevent civilian suffering. These tactical dialogues are likely to focus on particular urgent objectives around people and places, specific aspects of military conduct and critical incidents as they unfold.

- The **long term strategic goal** for pro-civilian dialogues will be to encourage warring leaders, social activists and civilians themselves to engage in a hard struggle for a new contract around the use of violence in their society, one that respects the civilian principle. This is likely to be a much deeper and longer political process involving a range of specific change objectives across all sections of society.

Having set particular goals and objectives, it is vital to identify a range of indicators which can gauge if the objectives of the dialogue are being met in practical benefits for civilians on the ground.<sup>7</sup>

## Targeting different arenas of dialogue

Figure 6 shows the various different mind-changing arenas in any society which will need to be challenged and transformed by pro-civilian ideas in any dialogue on civilian protection.<sup>8</sup>

Individuals and organizations concerned with the protection of civilians in war need to promote pro-civilian reasoning in each of these arenas.

## Recognizing different anti-civilian positions

The anti-civilian ideologies in figure 2 clearly show that not every anti-civilian position is the same. There are different shades of anti-civilian thinking and practice. These include absolute "rejectionists" of the civilian principle, "exceptionalists" who temporarily suspend the principle and "pro-civilian" upholders of the principle who are struggling with hard issues of operational difficulty and context.

These differences of opinion need to be recognized in any dialogue about civilian protection. Each position on the spectrum will be best served by tailoring appropriate kinds of dialogue which use the right mix of arguments, pressure and incentives for the position they are confronting.

For example, castigating essentially pro-civilian authorities as if they were absolute rejectionists would be profoundly counter-productive. Much more appropriate, would be to have a discussion with them about the hard questions of context and the specific standards of the Geneva Conventions. Or, discussions could be had with moderates about how best to boost their influence.

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<sup>7</sup> For more details of setting protection objectives and monitoring protection indicators and outcomes, see Hugo Slim and Andrew Bonwick, *Protection: A Guide for Humanitarian Agencies*, ALNAP, 2005, sections 6 and 8.

<sup>8</sup> Much of the discussion on mind-changing in this section draws on the model developed by Harvard Professor Howard Gardner in *Changing Minds: The Art and Science of Our Own and Other People's Minds*, Boston, Harvard Business School Press, 2006



Figure 6: *The arena of changing minds: societies need to be challenged and transformed by pro-civilian ideas in any dialogue on civilian protection.*

Likewise, it would be foolish to focus one's talks with completely rejectionist authorities on the problem of authority and lax discipline in their armed forces when their forces are extremely well disciplined in the deliberate killing of civilians and it is ideology not authority which is the problem.

## Building a global movement for civilians

Perhaps the best means to achieve a profound pro-civilian consciousness throughout local and global society is by encouraging a global movement of civilians for civilians.

This could actively link civilians around the world – empowering civilians inside a war with support from civilians outside it or even linking enemy civilians across the divide of their own war and mobilizing them around a mutual concern for a limited pro-civilian war.

# Final Thoughts

The more we talk of the need for civilian protection, the more likely it is to come about.

This booklet has attempted to help those interested in protecting civilians in war to think through the range of anti-civilian policy and practice which they may confront. In doing so, it has analysed a number of anti-civilian ideologies and strategies that are integral to many wars and offered a range of possible counter arguments and incentives which may be useful in formulating strong pro-civilian dialogues with warring parties.

There is a sad history of failed talks with governments and groups intent on violence against civilians. However, the current international climate lends itself to positive discussions of civilian protection. The continuing need to keep talking in favour of the principle of civilian protection in many wars also

makes it a particular responsibility for diplomats, humanitarians, military personnel, human rights activists, peace workers and citizens. It is essential for such people and professions, who are intent on the pursuit of dialogue rather than violence, to find the best ways to discuss and persuade people of this vital humanitarian ethic.

# Appendix

## Further reading on Civilian Protection from the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

Hugo Slim, *Killing Civilians: Method, Madness and Morality in War*, Hurst and Co, London 2007.

Liam Mahony, *Proactive Presence: Field Strategies for Civilian Protection*, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Geneva, 2006.

Hugo Slim and Andrew Bonwick, *Protection: A Guide for Humanitarian Agencies*, ALNAP, London, 2005.

Deborah Mancini-Griffoli and André Picot, *Humanitarian Negotiation: A Handbook for Securing Access, Assistance and Protection to Civilians in Armed Conflict*, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Geneva, 2004.

# Notes



