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REPORTS AND DOCUMENTS

Protecting Civilians against Digital Threats during Armed Conflict: Final report of the ICRC's Global Advisory Board

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In situations of armed conflict, access to digital technology can save lives. However, the digitalization of armed conflict also brings new threats for civilians. Over the past decade, digital technologies have been used in armed conflict to disrupt critical civilian infrastructure and services, to incite violence against civilian populations, and to undermine humanitarian relief efforts. Moreover, in ever-more interdependent digital and physical environments, civilians and civilian infrastructure are not only in the crosshairs of hostile operations but also increasingly drawn upon to support military operations, blurring the lines between what is military and what is civilian.

From 2021 to 2023, the ICRC's President convened a Global Advisory Board of high-level experts from the legal, military, policy, technological and security fields to advise the ICRC on digital threats and identify concrete recommendations to protect civilians against them. The board's final report on

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Protecting Civilians against Digital Threats during Armed Conflict[1] explores worrying trends in an interconnected and evolving digital environment during armed conflict and presents four guiding principles and a set of action-oriented recommendations to belligerents, States, technology companies and humanitarian organizations, designed to inform decisions and encourage concrete actions to prevent or mitigate digital threats to civilian populations. The report mainly addresses four areas: (1) cyber operations, (2) harmful information, (3) the involvement of civilians, hackers and tech companies in armed conflict, and (4) digital threats to humanitarian organizations. With the report, the board hopes to add to the important debate on preserving a human-centred approach to new technologies, and to contribute to the advancement of international law in new contexts.

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1   Available   at: https://shop.icrc.org/protecting-civilians-against-digital-threats-during-armed-conflict-recommendations-to-states-belligerents-tech-companies-and-humanitarian-organizations-pdf-en.html.