Protection of civilians in armed conflicts

Credits	2 credits ECTS
Dates	1 – 12 September 2025
Format	Online (combination of self-study time and live sessions). Live sessions are mandatory and take place 2-3 times a week, usually in early afternoon CET. *Online course requires 20-25 hours of dedicated work per week. We recommend that participants allow at least 50% of their time for the course and adapt their professional activity accordingly.*
Language	English
Fees	• **Full price:** CHF 1'700 • **Partner rate (ICRC, MSF):** CHF 1'360 (20% discount) • **Special Rate for Government and NGO/CBO Staff:** CHF 850. Available exclusively to staff from local and national NGOs, CBOs, and government employees in low/middle-income countries. Proof of local employment and salary required.
Course director	Baptiste Martin – baptiste.martin@unige.ch

Course overview

Short description

This course provides a general introduction to the protection of civilians in armed conflicts. The first part sheds light on the multiplicity of operational contexts and threats found in complex conflict environments - from community-based or politically induced violence to violations by international or state security forces, or human rights abuses inflicted on civilian populations by non-state armed groups. It also explores the legal or

normative frameworks applicable to the situation(s) at hand and the various mandates, roles and responsibilities of actors involved in the conflict. The second part provides a practical insight into humanitarian protection mainstreaming, risk assessments, programming and operations, and unveils inter-linkages between specialized protection mandates, including sexual and gender-based violence, child protection or the protection of IDPs and refugees. Overall, this protection course applies comparative and critical thinking on concepts, principles and professional standards most common amongst protection actors in conflict settings, and helps designing and implementing a protection response in practice.

Objectives of the course

At the end of the course, you will be able to:

- Discuss the main protection of civilian concepts and principles, operating environments and related legal or normative frameworks
- Explain the protection roles and responsibilities or mandates and objectives of states, non-state armed actors, humanitarian actors and international peace & security operations
- Analyse protection threats and risks and identify or distinguish the protection needs of specific individuals or groups (women, boys and girls, IDP, refugees, etc.)
- Understand protection mainstreaming, programming and operations
- Design and implement various field protection strategies

Workload

Around 20-25 hours of work each week, including:

1. Asynchronous self-study activities (such as case studies, videos, recorded slideshows, readings, etc.)
2. Synchronous live sessions (2-3 times per week)

Thematic structure of the course

- Day 1: Introduction to the protection of civilians in armed conflicts
- Day 2: The protection architecture (I): protection norms and principles
- Days 3-4: Protection assessment: complex environments, strategic priorities, threats and civilians at risk
- Day 5: Protection monitoring and information management

- Day 6: The protection architecture (II): mandates, agencies and coordination mechanisms
- Days 7-8: Humanitarian protection responses
- Days 9-10: Peace and security operations

Prerequisites

Audience

- Professionals in the humanitarian, development or social sector who wish to increase their understanding in protection norms, policies, doctrines and strategies
- Professionals of international and regional peace operations, national defence and security forces who wish to develop their understanding of protection of civilians and institutional and field level
- Graduate students with relevant volunteer or intern experience (2-3 years), looking to undertake a postgraduate course with a view to entering the humanitarian sector

Distance Learning

- Broadband/high speed connection - 2.5 Mbps minimum.
- Please note that most weekly content and activities is accessible via phone, but a PC/laptop/tablet is preferred
- microphone and webcam

Admission requirements

1. a university qualification (Bachelor's degree or equivalent)
2. at least three years of relevant professional experience
3. excellent command of English
4. motivation working in the humanitarian sector

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