

International law applicable to ICT activities during armed conflict

**IETF 123 - Research group on
human rights and protocol
considerations**

21 July 2025

Warfare is becoming increasingly digital

☰ CNN World

World / Europe

Major cyberattack on Ukrainian mobile operator disrupts banking services and air raid sirens

By Sean Lyngaas, CNN

🕒 4 min read · Updated 9:36 PM EST, Tue December 12, 2023

Statement by ICC Prosecutor Karim A.A. Khan KC on conference addressing cyber-enabled crimes through the Rome Statute system

NEWS

Technology

Stuxnet worm 'targeted high-value Iranian assets'

🕒 23 September 2010

How the Mercenaries Selling Cyber-Surveillance Software are a Threat to Cyberpeace

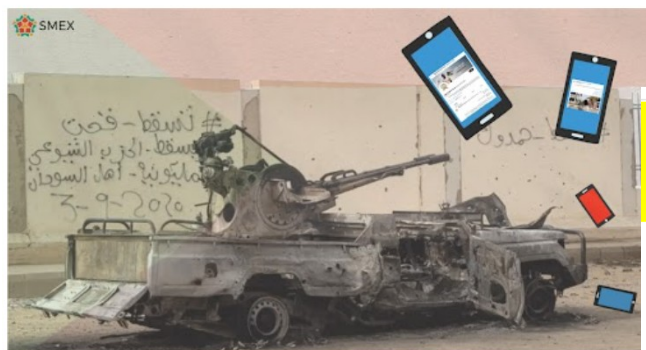
👤 CyberPeace Institute



Threats to freedom of expression



How Disinformation Campaigns Endanger Lives in Sudan



#KeptOn: authorities must restore access in Goma and across the DRC



ENGLISH

Armenia/Azerbaijan: Pegasus spyware targeted Armenian public figures amid conflict

Ukraine's request to cut off Russia from the global internet has been rejected

By [Brian Fung](#), CNN Business

🕒 2 min read · Updated 11:40 AM EST, Thu March 3, 2022



Report: IDF using facial recognition tools to identify, detain suspects in Gaza

AI tech first deployed to find Israeli hostages is increasingly being used on Palestinians, reports New York Times, with some claiming error-prone tools lead to mistaken arrests



Freedom of expression is not a luxury, but a fundamental necessity

- Helps prevent civilians from entering areas of active fighting.
- Enables access to humanitarian relief for those in need.
- Helps families stay connected and informed about their loved ones' safety.
- Allows hospitals to remain connected and functional.
- Enables journalists to report from the ground.
- Supports accountability for war crimes and other atrocities.



International humanitarian law

- Applies to armed conflict, alongside international human rights law.
- Restricts the means and methods of warfare and protects persons who are not, or are no longer, participating in hostilities.
- Seeks to strike a balance between legitimate military action and the objective of reducing human suffering.
- Core IHL treaties:
 - Four Geneva Conventions of 1949
 - Additional Protocols of 1977

Key international humanitarian law principles

- Humanity
- Military necessity
- Principles on the conduct of hostilities
 - Distinction
 - Proportionality
 - Precaution
- How do these principles apply to cyber operations during armed conflict?
 - The notion of “attack”
 - Can data alone qualify as an object?
 - The issue of so-called ‘dual-use’ objects

Tech companies as key actors in conflict

Sudan: Rapid Support Forces Facebook pages removed from platform

Facebook pages belonging to the paramilitary group and leader Hemeti have seemingly been taken down



Telenor quits Myanmar with \$105 mln sale to Lebanon's M1 Group

By Victoria Klesty

July 8, 2021 10:39 AM GMT+1 · Updated 9 months ago

Article

OPT/I: WhatsApp allegedly used to target Palestinians through Israel's Lavender AI system

The Intercept

POLITICS JUSTICE WAR ON GAZA TECHNOLOGY IMMIGRATION CHILLING DIS

GOOGLE WORRIED IT COULDN'T CONTROL HOW ISRAEL USES PROJECT NIMBUS, FILES REVEAL



UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights

- Responsibility to respect human rights and international humanitarian law.
- Responsibility to conduct human rights due diligence.
- In conflict contexts:
 - Adopt conflict-sensitive practices.
 - Conduct heightened due diligence to identify, prevent, mitigate, and account for how they address their adverse impacts during armed conflict.
- Responsibilities operate independently of a State's willingness or ability to meet its own international law obligations.