

## Definition of Armed Conflict

An armed conflict is a contested incompatibility which concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths.

The separate elements of the definition are operationalised as follows:

**Use of armed force:** use of arms in order to promote the parties' general position in the conflict, resulting in deaths. Arms: any material means, e.g. manufactured weapons but also sticks, stones, fire, water, etc.

**25 deaths:** a minimum of 25 battle-related deaths per year and per incompatibility.

**Party:** a government of a state or any opposition organisation or alliance of opposition organisations.

(3.1) **Government:** the party controlling the capital of the state.

(3.2) **Opposition organisation:** any non-governmental group of people having announced a name for their group and using armed force.

Incompatibility concerning government and/or territory the incompatibility, as stated by the parties, must concern government and/or territory.

(5.1) **Incompatibility:** the stated generally incompatible positions.

(5.2) **Incompatibility concerning government:** incompatibility concerning type of political system, the replacement of the central government or the change of its composition.

(5.3) **Incompatibility concerning territory:** incompatibility concerning the status of a territory, e.g. the change of the state in control of a certain territory (interstate conflict), secession or autonomy (intrastate conflict).

### Concept of armed conflicts:

Where wars erupt, suffering and hardship invariably follow. Conflict isn't just about death, it is a breeding ground for mass human rights violations, including torture, disappearances and imprisonment without charge.

Armed conflicts can be triggered by issues, including identity, ethnicity, religion or competition for resources. Women and children are disproportionately affected by armed conflict - they make up 80% of all refugees and displaced people. Rape and other forms of sexual violence are routinely committed during conflict.

### Types of Arm Conflicts:

International humanitarian law distinguishes two types of armed conflicts, namely:

- International armed conflicts, opposing two or more States, and
- non-international armed conflicts, between governmental forces and nongovernmental armed groups, or between such groups only. International humanitarian law (IHL) treaty law also establishes a distinction between non-international armed conflicts in the meaning of common

1. **International armed conflicts** exist whenever there is resort to armed force between two or more States.

2. **Non-international armed conflicts** are *protracted armed confrontations* occurring between governmental armed forces and the forces of one or more armed groups, or between such groups arising on the territory of a State [party to the Geneva Conventions]. The armed confrontation must reach a *minimum level of intensity* and the parties involved in the conflict must show a minimum of organization.

### Types of Armed Conflict

The following is a simple typology of modern intrastate armed conflict based on three overlapping types:

- state control
- state formation
- failed state

**State control wars** centre on struggles for control of the governing apparatus of the state. State control struggles have typically been driven by ideologically defined revolutionary movements, decolonization campaigns or simply as a mechanism for the transfer of power from one set of elites to another. In some

instances, communal or ethnic interests are significant to the fight to transfer power, and in other instances religion becomes a defining feature of the conflict.

**State formation conflicts** centre on the form or shape of the state itself and generally involve particular regions of a country fighting for a greater measure of autonomy or for outright secession — or for the right to decide in a fair and binding referendum whether or not to secede. Communal or ethnic interests are usually central to struggles for regional autonomy or secession, and in some instances religion also becomes a defining feature of the conflict.

For the purposes of this annual report, we regard as spreading domestic chaos and armed violence, sometimes brought on by persistent and debilitating state control and/or state formation wars, as **failed state wars**: wars in which the armed conflict is neither about state control nor state formation, but about more local issues and disputes involving violence in the absence of effective government control. The primary failure is incapacity to provide minimal human security for individual citizens.

*In some instances, it is possible for a state to be experiencing all three types at once.*

**Examples:** Sudan's decades long civil war involved, all at the same time, armed struggle to overthrow the ruling regime (elements of the Northern opposition), armed struggle for greater autonomy (Nuba) or outright secession (elements of the South), as well as failed state conflict (the internecine wars among the

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