

**Call for Papers:  
Organized crime in armed conflicts and other situations of violence:  
The state of play for international law in the 2020s**

Though organized crime is the subject of numerous treaties, traditionally it has not been central to conversations about international humanitarian law (IHL) and the conduct and regulation of armed conflict. The same gap exists, for situations below the threshold of an armed conflict, regarding discussions on law enforcement operations— to which international human rights law applies — failing in their mission of addressing the threat posed by organized crime. Yet, the reality is that criminal groups frequently play an undeniable role in armed conflicts and other situations of violence. That role is often limited to groups' efforts to profit financially from the chaos and instability of war and violence—but sometimes, criminal groups go much further, taking up arms against the state or rival groups to protect their illicit business interests. In still other situations, criminal groups are contracted by parties to an armed conflict or evolve into paramilitary groups themselves. Likewise, criminal groups can be instrumentalized by various actors in other situations of violence.

When it comes to determining whether IHL applies to such groups, no unanimity currently exists as to the criteria to be included. Some look to an armed group's expression of political or ideological revindications as one of the indicators required before concluding that the group aims to engage in war; meanwhile, other voices in this debate have long argued that, as a matter of IHL, ideology is irrelevant when determining if a non-state armed group is in fact a party to an armed conflict. In practice, even highly militarized and heavily armed criminal groups fighting against the state rarely express such ideological revindications.

In other situations of violence, certain criminal groups control large geographical areas. As a result, they challenge the government's law enforcement capabilities to counter such groups. In these scenarios, voices emerge which question the appropriateness of international human rights law as an operationally sound legal basis for those operations. Should international human rights law be fine-tuned when it comes to law enforcement operations dealing with high intensity armed violence, and if so, how?

**This call for papers aims to compile a collection of essays exploring how organized crime and the groups that carry it out can, do, and should be regulated with the international legal framework governing armed conflict and other situations of violence. The collection will form part of a recurring series in the Review as of 2022 that spotlights upcoming debates in international humanitarian law, policy, and action.**

We invite anyone interested to submit, by **23 December 2021**, an abstract of maximum 500 words, plus a CV of maximum 300 words. Given the breadth of this topic, we encourage authors to focus closely on a particular line of legal argumentation or a specific angle within this broader debate. Please note that we particularly value innovative and creative arguments that may have an impact on future legal and policy debates. Note as well that the target length for a completed article should be between 4,000 and 5,000

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words. If your submission is accepted, of which you will be notified by January 10 at the latest, a full draft of your article will be due on 15 March 2021.

The abstract you submit must include:

- (i) title;
- (ii) main arguments you intend to develop; and
- (iii) an explanation as to how your topic fits within the Review's editorial line (for further reference, please visit our [Guidelines for Authors](#)).

Please send these in a single Word document to [review@icrc.org](mailto:review@icrc.org). Please indicate the words "organized crime" in the title of your email. In line with the Review's ongoing commitment to provide space for a diverse array voices in this field, we encourage submissions by established and emerging voices, alike.

Submissions to this edition will be reviewed by a jury, the composition of which will be announced by late December 2021.