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Protecting Civilians in War: The ICRC, UNHCR, and Their Limitations in Internal Armed Conflicts

By Miriam Bradley



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Since the complex emergencies of the 1990s, humanitarian agencies have placed increasing emphasis on the protection of civilians during armed conflict. In spite of this, there is a consensus among humanitarians that outcomes are falling short of intentions, and that the increased emphasis on protection by humanitarian actors has failed to yield a corresponding improvement in the security of the civilian population.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) are two of the most important humanitarian agencies for the protection of civilians, and both have protection at the heart of their mandates. *Protecting Civilians in War* explores how organizational history, structure, and culture affect how each organization goes about protection, and highlights the ways in which their resulting approaches to protection are inherently limited.

Whereas existing explanations for shortcomings in humanitarian protection tend to blame factors external to humanitarian agencies, the focus of this book is on the organizations themselves, and their understandings of protection. While acknowledging the importance of other actors in determining the level of civilian security or insecurity, the analysis in this book focuses on the ways in which the ICRC and UNHCR conceptualise and practise protection in order to add another layer to our understanding of why protection outcomes are so often so disappointing. Based on research in Geneva, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Myanmar, it examines headquarter-level policy and the way that such policy is translated into practice on the ground.



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Editorial Review

Review

The book's rich and detailed empirical discussion of a topic of urgent policy concern makes this book essential reading for practitioners in humanitarian, human rights, and peace operations organizations with protection mandates and for scholars of IOs and humanitarianism. This book is also highly recommended for courses on international organizations or humanitarianism at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Michael Lipson, Springer Review

About the Author

Miriam Bradley is Assistant Professor at the Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals. Prior to joining IBEI, Miriam held a postdoctoral fellowship at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva, and teaching positions at University College London, the University of Oxford, and Oxford Brookes University. She also previously worked in the Humanitarian Policy Group at the Overseas Development Institute. She holds a doctorate in International Relations from the University of Oxford, where her thesis won the 2012 Winchester prize. Her research interests lie at the intersection of international relations, international security, and humanitarian policy.

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