This chapter first explains how the term ‘non-state actor’ is used and why it is appropriate to look at the impact of non-state actors on the enjoyment of human rights, and then recalls the ‘positive obligations’ of states to protect those within their jurisdiction from abuses by non-state actors. Finally, it considers the human rights obligations of different non-state actors: international organizations, corporations, and armed non-state actors. The chapter identifies three challenges posed by non-state actors. First, is finding ways to translate existing norms to create appropriate obligations for non-state actors; second is developing monitoring and accountability mechanisms; and third is questioning assumptions about what it means to talk about human rights and who has human rights obligations.
28. Non-state actors