This chapter examines the historical development and contemporary operation of the international law of armed conflict. It begins with a discussion of the historical development of this body of law, from the Hague Conventions to the Geneva Conventions and the two 1977 Additional Protocols, to the contemporary relation between international humanitarian law and human rights law, particularly in the field of targeting and detention of members in non-international armed conflicts. It then analyses the status of lawful combatants in international armed conflicts and the question of membership of non-State armed groups, as well as the notion of direct participation in hostilities and 'unlawful combatants'. It then turns to the restrictions on the use of force based on the principles of distinction and proportionality, the choice of weapons, the protection of war victims, and some compliance mechanisms.
17. Legal Restraints on Violence in Armed Conflict

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