



Ceasefires and IHL¹

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On June 23rd, 2025 the US, Israel, and Iran entered into a ceasefire agreement, the details of which have not been publicly released.

1. What is a ceasefire?

- a. A [ceasefire](#) is a binding agreement made by parties to an armed conflict that temporarily halts some or all hostilities.
- b. Ceasefires typically govern the length of time and the geographic area in which hostilities will be halted.
- c. Sometimes, the word “[armistice](#)” or “[truce](#)” are used interchangeably with “ceasefire,” but the terms are technically not the same.
 - A **truce**, or a **suspension of hostilities**, is a *non-binding* agreement between belligerent parties that indicates a halt in hostilities.
 - **Armistices** are military agreements that suspend active hostilities between belligerents. They can be binding or non-binding.
 - [Humanitarian pauses](#) are distinct from ceasefires and halt hostilities for humanitarian purposes, such as the delivery of aid supplies to an area.
- d. Ceasefires, truces, humanitarian pauses, and armistices are temporary cessations of hostilities. Under any of these agreements, the belligerent parties *may resume hostilities at any time* (subject to the terms of the agreement).
- e. Only a [peace treaty](#), or peace agreement, can *permanently* end an armed conflict.

2. What legal obligations does a ceasefire impose upon the parties?

- a. Ceasefire obligations can differ greatly, even within a single armed conflict. Each one is an independent agreement governed by its own terms and conditions.
- b. IHL does not specifically govern ceasefires, including their content or violations.
- c. However, the Geneva Conventions require that parties should pause fighting or make special agreements wherever possible to allow the safe removal, exchange, or transport of people who are wounded or sick away from areas of active fighting. It is up to the parties to decide when it is appropriate or possible to do so.

Since an armed conflict is not permanently ended by a ceasefire, parties are [still bound to respect IHL](#)—IHL obligations remain in effect until a final peace agreement or some other means ends the armed conflict.
- d. This means that a party can still violate IHL even during a ceasefire (e.g. deliberately targeting civilians after a ceasefire has begun).
- e. Violating a ceasefire by resuming hostilities is not, by itself, a violation of international law, including IHL. However, ceasefires may specify consequences and remedies for violations.

¹ Researched and drafted by Maddy Menard, IHL Legal Intern, Georgetown University Law Center '27.