

## **Ensure the protection of civilians and the respect of international humanitarian law**

In recent years new non-conventional weapons technologies have been developed and tested with a view to their future use in military and law enforcement operations. The various technologies discussed and sometimes already fielded include incapacitating chemical agents, dazzling lasers, millimetre waves and electric shock.

It is widely recognized that all the discussions on these new technologies have to cover also legal aspects. While the author of this paper takes a position neither in favour of nor against new non-conventional weapons technologies, he recalls the obligation which exists under international humanitarian law to determine whether the use of such new weapons, means or methods of warfare would, in some or all circumstances, be prohibited by current international law. The paper presents different issues related to such a legal review and comments on specific legal rules which are applicable to some of these new technologies. The need for a rigorous multidisciplinary approach incorporating legal, scientific, technical and medical expertise in legal reviews of new non-conventional weapons technologies is emphasised.

The paper also addresses concerns that some of the new technologies could severely undermine existing prohibitions on the use of chemical and biological weapons as well as fundamental rules and specific treaty provisions of international humanitarian law. This could, in turn, weaken the general protection of civilians, contrary to what many proponents of these new technologies are promising. Finally, in many situations today, military or police forces are deployed at the interface between warfare and law enforcement; some questions relating to the legal framework applicable to the use of these new technologies in such situations will be touched upon,

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