International Relations · GS - II

The protection of civilians remains one of the most serious challenges in contemporary armed conflicts. Examine the adequacy of International Humanitarian Law in addressing the humanitarian consequences of attacks on populated areas.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
DAILY PRACTICE 22/11/2026	GS - II	International Relations

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

Geneva Conventions, Additional Protocols, distinction, proportionality, precautions in attack, civilian infrastructure, urban warfare, accountability, humanitarian access.

Model Answer

Introduction

Contemporary conflicts increasingly involve military operations in densely populated areas, exposing civilians to missile strikes, drone attacks and destruction of essential infrastructure. International Humanitarian Law (IHL) seeks to limit such suffering through rules governing the conduct of hostilities.

Legal Framework and Safeguards

1. **Principle of distinction:** Parties must distinguish civilians and civilian objects from combatants and military objectives.
2. **Proportionality:** Attacks expected to cause excessive incidental civilian harm compared with the anticipated military advantage are prohibited.
3. **Precautions in attack:** Parties must take feasible measures to minimise civilian casualties.

4. **Protection of medical services:** Medical personnel, hospitals and humanitarian operations receive special protection under IHL.
5. **Accountability:** Serious violations may constitute war crimes under applicable international law.

Implementation Challenges

- Urban warfare makes distinguishing military objectives from civilian surroundings difficult.
- Use of explosive weapons in populated areas increases civilian risks.
- Repeated attacks can obstruct rescue operations and humanitarian assistance.
- Weak enforcement and geopolitical divisions impede accountability.

Way Forward

Strengthen independent investigations, ensure humanitarian access, improve compliance monitoring and support international accountability mechanisms. States should also promote restraint in the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

Conclusion

IHL provides an established legal framework for civilian protection, but its effectiveness depends on compliance, credible accountability and consistent international enforcement.

BECOME IAS
AI POWERED UPSC PREP