



People may turn to **civil society organisations** for help; other organisations should coordinate with them.



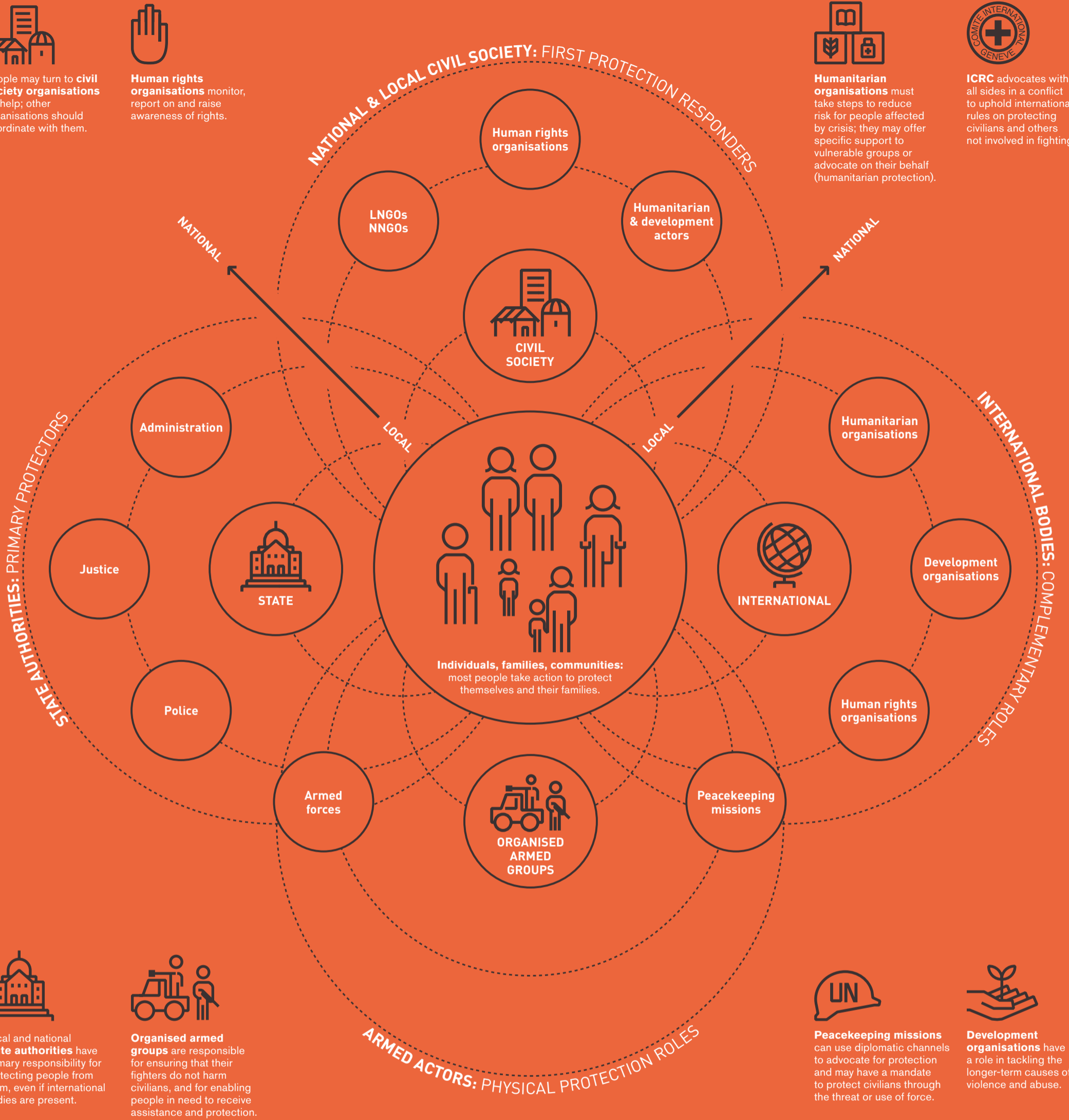
Human rights organisations monitor, report on and raise awareness of rights.



Humanitarian organisations must take steps to reduce risk for people affected by crisis; they may offer specific support to vulnerable groups or advocate on their behalf (humanitarian protection).



ICRC advocates with all sides in a conflict to uphold international rules on protecting civilians and others not involved in fighting.



Local and national **state authorities** have primary responsibility for protecting people from harm, even if international bodies are present.



Organised armed groups are responsible for ensuring that their fighters do not harm civilians, and for enabling people in need to receive assistance and protection.



Peacekeeping missions can use diplomatic channels to advocate for protection and may have a mandate to protect civilians through the threat or use of force.



Development organisations have a role in tackling the longer-term causes of violence and abuse.

WORKING TOGETHER FOR PROTECTION



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WORKING TOGETHER FOR PROTECTION





INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES

The most immediate protective action is taken by people at risk themselves, their families and communities – whether it’s a woman in Syria fleeing a war zone with her children, a man in DRC accompanying his wife to the fields to discourage potential attackers, or a disabled person stuck on the frontline in Georgia who hides in the forest at night to escape violence.

This leaflet is about some of the bodies which have responsibilities or legal mandates for helping to keep people safe from harm. They can be most effective when they work together and are accountable to the people affected.



LOCAL CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

People at risk may seek support from local civil society organisations that they trust. Others should respect that choice, by working or coordinating action with people’s civil society representatives.



STATE AUTHORITIES

State authorities have primary responsibility for protecting people from harm, even if international bodies are present; this often falls to local representatives. The state must ensure that its agents (army, police, etc.) do not harm civilians, but protect them from harm – including by ensuring that those in need can receive protection or assistance from others if the government cannot provide it.



ORGANISED ARMED GROUPS

Organised armed groups too are responsible for ensuring that their fighters do not deliberately or unintentionally harm civilians, and for enabling people in need to receive assistance and protection from others.

Where state authorities do not protect people effectively, for whatever reason, others, including humanitarians, may play a part. Humanitarians can never replace the state, but they can advocate for or support the state to fulfil its responsibilities.

STATE RESPONSIBILITIES, LOCAL TO NATIONAL: EXAMPLES

A **DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR** must help provide identification papers to people who have lost them fleeing disaster or fighting, so they can register for assistance.

The **HEAD OF STATE** must direct and equip local authorities to provide documentation where needed.

A **VILLAGE POLICE OFFICER** must respond quickly to reports of violence against women.

The **INTERIOR MINISTRY** must ensure that police are trained to respond to violence against women, and monitor implementation.

An **ARMY OFFICER** must ensure that soldiers are not targeting civilians.

The **HEAD OF THE ARMY** must ensure that soldiers are trained not to target civilians, and must investigate reported breaches.

STATE RESPONSIBILITIES, LOCAL TO NATIONAL: EXAMPLES

LOCAL SOCIAL SERVICES must identify and respond to the needs of older and disabled people.

The **SOCIAL WELFARE MINISTRY** must ensure that services are available for vulnerable people.

A **PROVINCIAL JUDGE** must ensure that reported abuse of a minority group is tried fairly.

The **JUSTICE DEPARTMENT** must instruct and equip courts to treat minorities equitably.



HUMANITARIAN ORGANISATIONS

All humanitarian organisations must act to reduce risk for people affected by crisis. Some organisations offer specific support to help keep people safe (e.g. providing information on their rights or clearing unexploded bombs left after conflict) or specialised services for those suffering violence (e.g. child soldiers or rape survivors), or they may advocate for the protection of people at risk. These activities come under the protection sector and are coordinated by the protection cluster (or the protection working group, in refugee emergencies), often under the designated leadership of UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency.

Most humanitarian organisations commit to the principles of humanity, impartiality, independence and neutrality. This means assisting and helping to protect those in need, regardless of who they are, not taking sides with parties to a conflict, and remaining independent of political and military influence.



HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANISATIONS

National and international human rights organisations promote protection by monitoring, reporting on and raising awareness of human rights. Unlike humanitarians, they will often gather evidence that can form the basis for legal action to hold perpetrators to account.



DEVELOPMENT ORGANISATIONS

Development organisations have a role in tackling the causes of violence and abuse, coordinating with government and humanitarian organisations for a joined-up response.



INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is legally mandated to ensure humanitarian assistance and protection for victims of conflict and violence. Its functions include confidential dialogue with all sides in a conflict to uphold international rules on protecting civilians and others not involved in fighting.



PEACEKEEPING MISSIONS

Peacekeeping missions are mandated by intergovernmental organisations such as the United Nations, often to monitor peace or ceasefire agreements or to support political transition. They can use diplomatic channels to help resolve conflicts and advocate for the protection of vulnerable groups. Many have armed personnel with a mandate to protect civilians through physical presence and the threat or use of force.

Sometimes UN humanitarian agencies work alongside peacekeepers or political affairs staff in 'integrated' missions. To preserve the neutrality and independence of humanitarian action, both sides must maintain a clear distinction between the political and military efforts of peacekeeping and political missions and the work of humanitarians. Decisions on the protection of civilians must be based on their exposure to threat, not on political or military considerations.



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