



Australian Government
Australian Civil-Military Centre



AUSTRALIAN CIVIL-MILITARY CENTRE

Exercise: Evacuation of civilians

Evacuation of 75,000 civilians from the besieged
city of Dalma, Arcadia, 2024



IHL and evacuations

- API Art 58 Precautions against the effects of attacks “...endeavour to remove the civilian population...from the vicinity of military objectives”
- GCIV Art 49 Deportations, transfers, evacuations “...forcible transfers...are prohibited, regardless of their motive”
- Customary IHL Rule 129: The act of displacement “Parties...may not order the displacement of the civilian population...for reasons related to the conflict, unless the security of the civilians involved or imperative reasons so demand”
- Customary IHL Rule 87: Humane treatment “Civilians...must be treated humanely”
- Customary IHL Rule 88: Non-discrimination “Adverse distinction in the application of IHL based on race, colour, sex language, religion or belief, political or other opinion, national or social origin, wealth, birth or other status, or on any other similar criteria is prohibited”



The Arcadian Armed Forces (AAF) have been waging a ten-year war against the Arcadian Liberation Front (ALF), a non-state actor. While the ALF had made significant gains in the early years of the conflict, over time the AAF has re-captured most territory, with the ALF remaining in control of two significant Arcadian cities and rural parts of the country at this stage.

The conflict has been a brutal period for Arcadia, with 200,000 civilians estimated killed and over 2 million displaced. Notable features of the conflict include:

- the use of explosive weapons in densely populated cities (accounting for the high rates of civilian casualties and displaced);
- high rates of captivity, often resulting in ill-treatment and disappearances;
- the AAF besieging urban centres for prolonged periods, severely restricting humanitarian aid into opposition-held territories.



The city of Dalma has been besieged by the AAF for 3 years; people are not able to enter or leave. Civilians trapped inside Dalma are in a very vulnerable state, they lack food and electricity, their health system has collapsed, and aid very rarely is allowed in. Additionally, civilians are exposed to the risk of incoming explosive attacks (artillery and airstrikes).

It is estimated that around 80,000 people are in Dalma, and around 5,000 of these are ALF fighters.

Arcadian authorities plan to evacuate the city with their armed forces and police. They have publicly stated that the evacuation operation will “save lives and prevent ongoing suffering for the many civilians being held hostage by a few thousand terrorists”. The operation will involve:

- Ordering civilians onto buses, fighters may not come on board
- Moving civilians to a part of the country firmly under AAF control
- Screening civilians upon arrival at the destination point, in case fighters are among them (and detaining any fighters)
- Holding civilians in a displacement camp “up until such time it is safe for them to return to Dalma”. Location and conditions of the camp are not known.
- Once civilians are removed, military operations against ALF fighters in Dalma will resume

Civilians in Dalma have reported that while they wish to be removed from the fighting, they are concerned at leaving their homes and fear how the AAF and Arcadian authorities may treat them, even if they have not been fighters.



Discussion questions:

1. What protection challenges would you foresee given the context and circumstances?
2. If you were a POC advocate in this context, would you advocate for or against the evacuation?
 - (a) How would you advocate for an evacuation compliant with POC principles?
 - (b) How would you advocate against the evacuation?