

**Forum:** Disarmament Commission

**Issue:** Creating and maintaining safe zones in conflict regions

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## Introduction

Safe zones in conflict regions are necessary for the protection of innocent people who aren't involved in the armed conflict. It provides citizens with a temporary refuge from the dangers and reduces the chances of harm to the people. As said by the United Nations Security Council, safe zones are used to maintain an area of peace to those who seek it and have no involvement to the conflict. Safe zones also provide an outlet to the crimes of humanity such as extermination or deportation in addition to the dangers of war. Although the term safe zones has not legally been outlined the major regulation of safe zones are that they do not serve any sort of military purpose such as shelter for soldiers or munitions. Neighboring military camps are also not allowed in the chance that the safe zone may accidentally be attacked. If such regulation is broken the opposition gains rights to attack the area however may not cause harm to citizens or any unnecessary damage to civilian property: meaning that a small raid consisting of a few opposition soldiers is allowed to enter however a full scale attack on the safe zone will be unacceptable.

## Definition of Key Terms

### Safe Zone

A temporary refuge for citizen who wish to seek peace. Also referred to as security zones/corridors, safe havens/areas, corridors of tranquility, secure humanitarian corridors, neutral zones and protected areas.

### ICRC

International Committee of the Red Cross, an organization which helps facilitate the extended needs of a country's citizens in safe zones.

### UNPOL

United Nations Police, targeting at restoring the peace and order in safe zones.

## **UNPA**

United Nations Protected Area, similar to safe zones. Based in UNFICYP Headquarters in Cyprus.

## **UNPROFOR**

United Nations Protection Force, established in February 1992 with a mandate to help keep peace in order to provide security for negotiations of the conflict.

## **General Overview**

### **Overall Goal**

Safe Zones wishes to create an area free from attacks and prosecution, insure access to aid and a location for international peace talks. Safety zones are immediately implemented if there is a identified threat of humanitarian crisis, endangerment of world-peace or international security.

### ***Treaty- Based Safe Zones***

The specific types of safe zones are different for each country and dependent of the established treaty such as the 1949 Geneva Convention, providing hospitals and safe zones for the wounded, sick, elderly and pregnant from the dangers of conflict. As well individual nations have the right to set up their own safe zones as a defensive strategy approved by the Fourth Geneva Convention. No matter whether it is government established or set by the United Nations, the agreement of the opposition is needed before it can be recognized as a safe zone. Furthermore, the support and security is given to these safe zones if needed such as no-fly zones. The issue of safe zones is that since it's an international humanitarian law many countries impose the zone against the oppositions will in order to protect the area from falling to the enemy.

### ***UN Police***

United Nations Police is a source for maintaining law and order in the safe zones as well as assist the local military. One of their closest operations is a part of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) in April 14, 1964. There are 68 police officers from nine countries in the UNPOL in Cyprus. The individuals however do not have the power of local authority (policemen) for actions such as arresting or detaining people. With their stay in Cyprus the United Nations has developed the UNPA in order to provide security and protection on top of buffer zones. The role of the UNPOL is to investigate criminal offences inside safe zones, controlling public order during public demonstrations/ disturbances, resolve disputes and illegal activity among members within the safe zone.

## Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
1870	Henry Dunant, the founder of ICRC, recommended towns as safe areas in the Franco- Prussian War.
1936	The first temporary safe zones were established in the Spanish Civil War (Madrid)
1937	The first temporary safe zones were established in the conflict in Shanghai, China.
1948	3 neutral zones set up due to the Palestine conflict
1949	The Geneva Conventions was established and safe zones became international law.
1970s	Common spread of safe zones in Cyprus, Vietnam and Bangladesh.
1991	United States, United Kingdom and France set safe zones and no-fly zones in Iraq.
1992	Neutral zones centered in Dubrovnik due to the conflict in Croatia.
1995	United Nations Security Council set 6 safe zones mainly in Tuzla, Zepa, Gorazde, Bihac, Srebrenica and Sarajevo and no fly zones in Bosnia.

## UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

Major influences of the UN regarding this issue of safe zones are organized through organizations such as the UNPOL and UNFICYP as well as the Geneva Conventions.

- First Geneva Convention, Article 23, December 21 1950 (**A/CONF.2/108/Rev.1**)
- Fourth Geneva Convention, Article 14, August 12 1949 (**A/CONF.183/9**)

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