

# Union of Saints Briefing

## Soft vs. Hard Targeting in Warfare and the Use of Aggravation Campaigns

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### Part I: Soft vs. Hard Targeting in Warfare

#### Definitions

- **Hard Targets:** Military objectives such as armed forces, command centers, fortified positions, weapons systems, or other infrastructure with direct military use.
- **Soft Targets:** Civilians, civilian infrastructure, or cultural/religious sites that lack military defenses. These are protected under international law unless directly used for military purposes.

#### Legal Principles (International Humanitarian Law)

1. **Distinction** – Parties must distinguish between combatants and civilians.
2. **Military Necessity** – Attacks must aim at legitimate military advantage.
3. **Proportionality** – Civilian harm must not be excessive compared to the expected military gain.
4. **Precautions** – All feasible steps must be taken to minimize civilian harm.

#### Examples

- **Hard Target:** Military airbase, missile launcher, armored convoy.
- **Soft Target:** Market, school, hospital, civilian residential area.
- **Gray Zone:** Dual-use infrastructure like bridges or power plants.

#### Strategic and Ethical Implications

- Attacking hard targets is generally lawful when proportional.
  - Attacking soft targets is almost always unlawful and considered a **war crime**.
  - Non-state actors often deliberately attack soft targets to spread fear; professional militaries generally avoid this to maintain legitimacy.
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# Part II: Purposeful Aggravation and Recruitment in Targeting Campaigns

## Why Aggressors Aggravate Targets

- **Psychological Warfare:** Erode confidence, cause stress, force silence.
- **Propaganda Value:** Public humiliation validates aggressor narratives.
- **Deterrence:** Makes the victim an example to discourage others.
- **Escalation Testing:** Gauges limits of law enforcement and social tolerance.

## Recruitment of Others to Target

- **Social Leverage:** Rally friends, family, or networks to participate.
- **Narrative Framing:** Casting the victim as a “deserving enemy.”
- **Influence Channels:** Coordinated use of social media, messaging groups, or influencers.
- **Low-risk Engagement First:** Likes, shares, small insults, escalating later to threats.
- **Material or Status Incentives:** In some cases, recruits gain social standing or direct benefit.

## Harms to Victims

- **Emotional/Psychological:** Anxiety, PTSD, depression.
  - **Economic:** Business loss, reputational harm, legal costs.
  - **Reputational:** Stigma that lingers beyond the incident.
  - **Safety Risks:** Stalking, threats, or violence if escalation continues.
  - **Collateral Harm:** Families, employers, and associates often targeted as well.
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# Part III: Legal and Defensive Framework

## Legal Exposure of Aggressors

- **Criminal Liability:** Harassment, stalking, threats, conspiracy, distribution of private images.
- **Civil Liability:** Defamation, intentional infliction of emotional distress (IIED), invasion of privacy, and damages for lost business or opportunities.
- **Punitive Damages:** Possible if malice or coordinated harassment is proven.

## Defensive Strategies for Victims

1. **Evidence Preservation** – Document and archive everything.
2. **Platform Action** – Report and request takedowns.
3. **Legal Remedies** – Cease-and-desist letters, injunctions, civil suits.
4. **Criminal Complaints** – File where harassment involves threats, stalking, or intimate images.
5. **Safety Measures** – Both digital (privacy protection) and physical (law enforcement support).
6. **Mental Health Care** – Ongoing counseling, support groups.

## Strategic Considerations

- **Public vs. Private Response:** Decide whether to engage publicly or focus on legal/private remedies.
  - **Long-term Documentation:** Maintain records for future legal or advocacy use.
  - **Coalition Support:** Advocacy groups, employers, or allies can help reduce isolation and add legitimacy to the claim.
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## Part IV: Key Takeaways

- In warfare, **hard targets** are lawful objectives; **soft targets** are protected and attacking them is a war crime.
  - Outside of battlefield conflict, similar dynamics apply in **information and psychological warfare**, where aggressors deliberately aggravate individuals and **recruit others** to multiply harm.
  - Victims can seek **civil, criminal, and injunctive remedies** while prioritizing safety, mental health, and reputation management.
  - Documentation, legal action, and platform intervention are critical steps to counter and deter coordinated targeting campaigns.
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