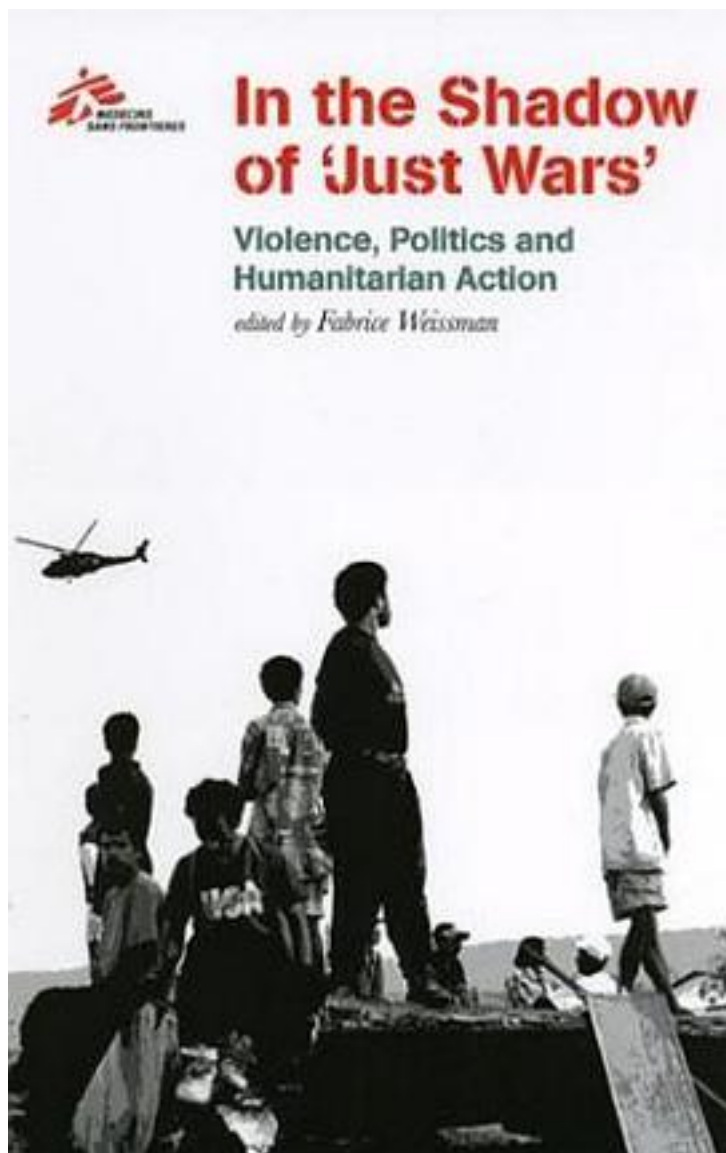


# In the Shadow of "Just Wars"



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During the planning stages of military intervention in Iraq, humanitarian organizations were offered U.S. government funds to join the Coalition and operate under the umbrella of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Nongovernmental organizations had previously been asked to join in "just wars" in Kosovo, East Timor, Sierra Leone, and Afghanistan, wars initiated by Western powers against oppressive regimes or armed groups. Many aid organizations cooperated eagerly.

Few Afghans regret the eclipse of the Taliban, or Sierra Leoneans the stabilization of their country after British military intervention in 2000. However, the incidental victims of these triumphs, those on the "wrong" side, are soon forgotten. Humanitarian organizations are duty-bound to save these people, although in so doing they must remain independent of the warring parties and not support the "struggle against evil" or any other political agenda.

Then there are places where the pretense of providing assistance allows donor governments to disguise their support for local political powers. Millions in North Korea, Angola, and Sudan have starved to death because of the diversion and unequal distribution of huge quantities of food aid. There are also those whose sacrifice is politically irrelevant in the wider picture of international relations—the victims of brutal wars in Algeria, Chechnya, and Liberia, for instance, where what little international aid is available is subsumed by the adversaries' desire to wage total war, to exterminate entire populations.

In this book, international experts and members of Médecins Sans Frontières analyze the way these issues have crystallized over the five years spanning the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first. They make the case for a renewed commitment to an old ideal: a humanitarianism that defies a politics of expendable lives.

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