

Should Civilians Be Spared? with Seth Lazar

Sandra Bertin: Examining Ethics with Andy Cullison is hosted by the Janet Prindle Institute for Ethics at DePauw University.

[Begin Music]

Andy Cullison: On today's episode, we tried to answer the question: is it okay to kill civilians in war? As with all good questions in philosophy, it turned out to be a lot more complicated than we initially thought. We interviewed Seth Lazar on his book, *Sparing Civilians* for help with this. He shared with us his own views (spoiler alert: he doesn't think it's right to kill civilians). He also talks about some of the disagreement that philosophers have on what factors play into whether it's okay to kill someone or not. We discuss things like what it takes for someone to be a threat, what it takes for someone be responsible for that threat, and how to weigh risking harm. Then later in the show, I sit down with our producers Sandra Bertin and Christiane Wisehart to talk about some of the most provocative ideas raised by *Sparing Civilians*.

[End Music]

Andy Cullison: Before we get started with today's show, here's a note from our sponsor.

[Music]

Christiane Wisehart: Oxford University Press has generously provided us the book that we are discussing on the show today. To find out more about Oxford University Press, visit them on the web at global.oup.com. Oxford University Press has kindly offered to provide you, the listener, with a 30% discount on *Sparing Civilians* by Seth Lazar. So to get a link for a 30% discount on this book, visit our show notes page at examiningethics.org. And thanks again to Oxford University Press for sponsoring today's show.

[End Music]

Christiane Wisehart: I'm Christiane Wisehart, one of the producers of the show.

Sandra Bertin: I'm Sandra Bertin, the other producer.

Christiane Wisehart: Okay, so before we start, I just have to say, why did Seth Lazar have to write a book saying that civilians should be spared? Isn't it pretty obvious that civilians shouldn't be killed during a war? Isn't that like, decent human rule #1?

Sandra Bertin: *laughs* Yeah, that's what I thought too. Sometimes philosophers do this thing where they try to prove something that everyone kind of already knows...which is a valuable practice in itself, don't get me wrong. But that's actually not what this is. One of the first things Seth pointed out to us was that in the last twenty years, politicians have been speaking more brazenly and openly about killing civilians as legitimate military strategy.

Video Clip:

Person 1: During the Obama administration, we've launched eight times the number of drone strikes, than we did under his predecessor.

Person 2: Right now we have the executive branch making the claim that it has the right to kill anyone anywhere on Earth at any time, for secret reasons, based on secret evidence, in a secret process undertaken by unidentified officials.

Person 3: You have said you would quote: "carpet bomb ISIS into oblivion" testing whether quote, "sand can glow in the dark." Does that mean leveling the ISIS capital of Raqqa in Syria, where there are hundreds of thousands of civilians.

Person 4: What it means is using overwhelming air-airpower to utterly and completely destroy ISIS

President Trump: The terrorists, you have to take out their families. When you get these terrorists, you have to take out their families. They care about their lives, don't kid yourself (**Person 6:** Mr. Trump...)—but when they say they don't care about themselves, you have to take out their families

Christiane Wisheart: Gosh, it's just so scary hearing so many people on multiple sides of the political spectrum saying things like that.

Sandra Bertin: Yeah and they make answering this question kind of important. So some people try to fight against this kind of talk by arguing that killing civilians actually isn't effective and therefore no one should do it. But according to Seth Lazar, that's not a great argument, because unfortunately, it's not really true.

Seth Lazar: To be honest, the evidence that I found was slightly discomforting because, you know, while it would be — it would be great if killing civilians didn't work, unfortunately, it looks like it often really does.

In more recent years, there is pretty solid evidence that suicide attacks are militarily effective. You know, the defeat, which we can probably call it a defeat, of the US and its allies in Afghanistan was in large part owing to the no-holds barred approach of the Taliban. The notion that even if killing civilians were permissible, it would be kind of stupid, it would be irrational, I find to be wishful thinking. It's kind of like the idea that cheats never prosper.

Christiane Wisheart: So if killing civilians can in some cases be a good strategy in a war or battle, that makes me feel kind of hopeless. It feels like we'll never come up with anything good enough to convince people not to kill civilians.

Sandra Bertin: Yeah, it means that Seth Lazar has his work cut out for him. And it also explains why he had to write an entire book explaining why you shouldn't kill civilians.

Christiane Wisehart: So what does he have for us?

Sandra Bertin: Well we'll have to start at the beginning. Have you heard of Just War Theory?

Christiane Wisehart: Sure, it's about things like what are good reasons to go to war and how a military should behave during a war. It's like a theory on what is just (or good) and unjust (or bad) in a war.

Sandra Bertin: Yeah, it's a huge topic that we could cover for a whole year. So if you want to learn more about Just War Theory as a whole, check out our show notes. But today we are just talking about the little piece of theory about whether it's okay to kill civilians or not. So the person who started the modern day Just War Theory movement is a guy named Michael Walzer. who wrote a book in 1977 called "Just and Unjust Wars." And he really shook stuff up.

Seth Lazar: And it was incredibly influential among philosophers, for sure, but also in political science departments, international lawyers, and in particular at the military academy, so it's had an extraordinary impact.

Christiane Wisehart: So what did Walzer have to say about killing civilians?

Sandra Bertin: Well he had this very basic idea that we all start out with the right to life.

Seth Lazar: Kay, rights to life and rights to liberty, these are our most fundamental rights. And in order for it to be permissible to kill us, then either these rights have to be overridden, so you have to achieve something sufficiently worthwhile to justify overriding the right, or we have to have lost the right in some way or other.

Christiane Wisehart: We start out with the right to live. And because of this fundamental right, the only reasons it's okay to kill someone are 1) that killing that person will achieve something really big and worthwhile. Or, 2) That person has lost their right to life. Am I getting it right?

Sandra Bertin: Yeah.

Christiane Wisehart: Okay, but so, what on earth would be a big enough achievement to override someone's right to life?

Sandra Bertin: Well Seth explains what Walzer meant by that:

Seth Lazar: Intentionally killing innocent people who retained their rights to life could be permissible only if you were going to avert something like, you know, the Nazi takeover of Europe. Okay, this is the only way you can do it.

Christiane Wisehart: Ohhh, so the achievement has to be something like saving millions of innocent people from an unfair invasion or something like that.

Sandra Bertin: Yeah, the good that you would do would have to be extraordinarily large to allow this.

Christiane Wisehart: Okay. Now what about the other way it's acceptable to kill someone — that that person has lost their right to live. What does that even mean: losing your right to live?

Sandra Bertin: Well, one way to lose your right to live is if you pose a threat to others. Walzer was really big on this idea of “threat.” And he thought that soldiers were the types of people who had forfeited their rights to live, because they pose a threat.

Seth Lazar: Soldiers, regardless of what they're fighting for, pose a threat to one another. They've made themselves into dangerous men is the way he puts it. By posing a threat to someone else, you alienate yourself from your common humanity, which is sort of his underlying idea, and that's sufficient to make you lose your right not to be killed. The crucial thing there is that soldiers, regardless of what they're fighting for, because they pose a threat to one another, lose that right.

Christiane Wisehart: I don't necessarily like that idea, but I can see what he's saying here.

Sandra Bertin: So the important part of this is that because soldiers pose a threat, they lose their right to not be killed. Civilians, on the other hand, *never* give up their right to life under this way of thinking.

Christiane Wisehart: So, according to this theory, all soldiers have the right to be killed and all civilians do not have the right to be killed. Except in like special circumstance like... preventing Hitler from taking over Europe.

Sandra Bertin: Exactly. Now this is where things get hairy. Over the years lots of people have responded to Walzer and a lot of them disagree with his idea over who can be killed and for what reasons.

Christiane Wisehart: So what do these critics say?

Sandra Bertin: They basically said that if a soldier is just trying to defend her home from an invading army, why has she given up the right to life?

Seth Lazar: So I'm putting it in terms of, you know, bad guys and good guys. It's kind of how—how it's viewed. It's, you know — the good guys don't forfeit their rights to be killed just by defending themselves against the bad guys.

Christiane Wisehart: Oh, I can totally see how that's a problem.

Sandra Bertin: Yeah. But there's another serious problem for Walzer's view about soldiers being threats, Seth points out that sometimes soldiers aren't even a threat to others.

Seth Lazar: There's a lot of research about firing rates and - and conflicts that suggest that: the large majority of people who are in a position to use their weapons don't actually do so. This is true even in the Second World War. There's famous research by SLA Marshall, which suggested that between — that only between 15 to 25% of American soldiers in the Second World War who could have used their weapons did so.

Christiane Wisehart: Oh man, according to this research, most American soldiers in WW2 were not threats.

Sandra Bertin: Right and we have no reason to assume this just applies to Americans, by the way. So the critics are bringing up two main issues to think about. Are the soldiers part of an a just or unjust conflict? And 2) are the individual soldiers responsible for the threat that the army itself poses.

Christiane Wisehart: So a soldier may not be responsible for the threat that his army poses because he's... for example, not firing his weapons. And man, what about soldiers who were drafted, who might not have even wanted to take part in the first place?

Seth Lazar: When you actually look at most contemporary militaries, especially if you think about the ones that are largely conscript armies that involve lots of draftees, most soldiers are not responsible to any significant degree for the threats that they pose in war. They're typically acting under significant coercion, significant duress. Many of them don't actually pose threats themselves. They may indirectly contribute to the threats posed by other people.

Sandra Bertin: Seth actually has an analogy to help explain this. If someone else stuffs you in a cannon and launches you out, you are a significant threat. Your body can hurt people this way. But you are not responsible for that threat because someone put you in that cannon and launched you. You are just the projectile.

Christiane Wisehart: Okay, so lets recap: part of Walzer's argument is that all citizens should be protected, under almost every circumstance, and that all soldiers have a right to be killed because they are a threat. But then a bunch of other Just War theorists get to thinking about that cannon analogy. And they're now arguing that it's not really about the threat, it's who is responsible for that threat that really matters. And whether you are on the side of the good guys or the bad guys.

Sandra Bertin: Exactly. So as you might imagine... this complicates things quite a bit. All of a sudden, according to some Just War theorists, it's no longer okay to kill a huge portion of soldiers.

Christiane Wisehart: Yeah, and it seems like if it's just "responsibility" that's the focus, even civilians could be considered responsible for a threat.

Sandra Bertin: Right. So according to Seth we've kind of hit a wall. At this point, we've got two options:

Seth Lazar: One way is you just say, "Look, if we agree with Walzer that it's only permissible to intentionally kill people who have lost their right not to be killed, unless you are averting, you know, the Nazi takeover of Europe." So if we agree with that, and we think that lots of soldiers aren't sufficiently responsible for the unjust wars that they're a part of to be liable to be killed, then we've got to say that most ordinary armed conflicts involve impermissible killing. Kay, in other words, we have to endorse a kind of pacifism or something very close to pacifism.

Sandra Bertin: But Seth doesn't think that pacifism is very realistic. So here's a second option:

Seth Lazar: So the alternative is that you have to think, "Well okay, how much responsibility is really required for someone to be liable to be killed?" Maybe it doesn't matter if they don't contribute much causally. Maybe there's sort of little marginal unnecessary contributions are enough. Maybe it doesn't matter, you know, that they're not guilty, that they don't know even what they're doing, that they're acting under duress. As long as they're acting voluntarily, as long as they know the risks that their actions might contribute to an unjust threat, maybe that's enough to make them liable to be killed. Okay, so what you do is you lower the threshold of responsibility that's required to make someone liable to be killed.

Christiane Wisehart: I see, so if you say all it takes is a little bit of responsibility to make it okay to kill you, then that kind of covers most soldiers.

Sandra Bertin: Right. But unfortunately this lower responsibility also covers a lot of civilians.

Seth Lazar: There are many many civilians are going to be liable as well. They're going to be responsible enough partly because they contributed to war related industries in which, you know in the US, approximately 25% of people work in industries that are, to some degree, connected with the military, that's based on some research by Alexander Downs, or it could be just from the fact that we vote and pay our taxes. It could be from the public support that we provide for- for war. There are loads of ways in which civilians make these very small contributions that they know have a risk of contributing to a wrongful threat and that, on this view, would be enough to make them liable to be killed.

Sandra Bertin: So if you add this all together, this clear boundary between civilians and soldiers has gotten very very blurry. A civilian can be just as marginally responsible as, say, a soldier who never fires her weapon. Which is exactly what Seth Lazar is trying NOT to let happen.

Christiane Wisehart: Okay, so then how *does* Seth make the claim that civilians should not be killed?

Sandra Bertin: Well first he makes it clear that this low threshold for responsibility has got to go.

Seth Lazar: And my basic approach is to say, "Okay, so broadly speaking, I agree with recent just war theorists about what it takes to lose one's right to life," you know, but I think that... you know I opt for the kind of the high threshold approach. I say that in order for you to be liable to be killed, you have to be responsible to a degree that makes that kind of fate appropriate for you. There has to be some degree of fit between what you've done and the fact that you have lost your most fundamental right. So you have to be responsible to a significant degree.

So this is going to mean, then, that very few civilians are liable to be killed, which I think is exactly the right result, but it's also going to mean that a lot of soldiers are not liable to be killed, even if they're fighting for an unjust war.

Christiane Wisehart: So the only way to protect civilians is to say you need to have a high level of responsibility for a threat before you lose the right to not be killed.

Sandra Bertin: Yeah, but this also makes it morally wrong to kill a soldier who does not have a high level of responsibility. Like, say, that same soldier who never shot her weapon. Seth's challenge is to prove that killing an innocent civilian is worse than killing an innocent soldier.

Christiane Wisehart: That sounds like something that would be so difficult to prove, especially after all the stuff we've just talked about.

Sandra Bertin: So Seth comes up with some arguments to say that killing an *innocent* civilian is worse than killing an innocent soldier. One piece of that is that you should never treat a human being as a tool.

Seth Lazar: Alright, so that's Kant's idea. You mustn't treat, you must never treat people as a mere means. You must always treat them also as ends in themselves. You've got to treat people as though they are part of the kingdom of ends. That's another way of putting the same idea. So using people as the means to bring about some bad result involves this especially objectionable kind of disrespect towards that person. You're treating them just like a resource in your puppet show.

Christiane Wisehart: I can agree with that. But how does this idea relate to killing civilians?

Sandra Bertin: He actually gives the example of the beheading of journalist Daniel Pearl in 2002.

Seth Lazar: But, what kind of strikes me about that is the way that, you know, the people who murdered Daniel Pearl, they used him as a, as a tool in their horror show. They used him as a board to describe their message to the world, to sow dissent, and confusion, and chaos in the world. He was just a means for them. They had no respect for him as a human being. He was just being used in this way that was so deeply objectionable. And I think that's one of the reasons why we find those kinds of murders to be so - just so paradigmatically evil because you're treating somebody as though they're a prop, a resource for you to use.

Sandra Bertin: So he calls these opportunistic killings. Like when you kill to achieve a climate of terror or to send a message. This is in contrast to what he calls "eliminative killing" like when someone is trying to kill you and you kill them first. That kind of killing doesn't feel like you were using that person as a mere tool. And as Seth states in his book, by killing someone attacking you, you are merely removing a threat that wouldn't have been there in the first place had that person not been there. To Seth, this is a much more permissible reason to kill someone.

Christiane Wisehart: I get that part of it, but doesn't killing enemy soldiers for military gain feel opportunistic too? I mean usually killing soldiers is one of the ways that generals gain military victories? So doesn't that go against what he says?

Sandra Bertin: According to Seth, from the perspective of the generals or whoever is making the strategic decisions, this may be true. But Seth is focusing on who is actually doing the killing (in most wars, it's really just a lot of soldiers killing other soldiers). So from the soldier's perspective, it still falls under eliminative killing--which he claims is much less morally wrong.

[Music]

Christiane Wisehart: Alright folks, grab some popcorn, we're going to do another recap. So critics of Michael Walzer argue that when you're thinking about killing, you have to think about more than just whether or not a person is a threat. You have to also think about whether that person is responsible for the threat they pose. (Remember that cannon analogy.) So these arguments turn out to be a problem for Seth Lazar. So he's sitting here trying to prove that we shouldn't kill civilians. And these arguments are floating around that make it seem reasonable to kill civilians because a lot of them might have some sort of responsibility. They might own stock in an arms company, for example, which means they have some level of responsibility in a conflict. So, in order to make his argument that civilians should be spared, he had to add some stuff to these criticisms of Walzer's Just War theory.

Sandra Bertin: And we've already mentioned one of the things he added--the thing about opportunistic killing, which is one way to treat people like a means to an end. Now, here's the final piece of Seth's puzzle: RISK. He says that if you kill a civilian, you are taking a bigger risk that you're killing someone innocent. Likewise, if you kill a soldier, it's less of a risk that you're killing someone innocent.

Seth Lazar: If all you know about two potential targets is that one is a soldier, one is a civilian, then it's more likely that the civilian is innocent.

Sandra Bertin: It all comes down to risk.

Seth Lazar: If you kill somebody and in your action you take a bigger risk of killing an innocent person, then you've wronged that person more gravely if it turns out that they were, in fact, innocent. Okay, and this, I think, is a very basic idea that we have in ethics that, you know, it doesn't matter only how you treat people, it also matters how your actions actually affect them. The risk that you take with respect to them also matter and they matter independently.

Christiane Wisehart: So what he's saying is that killing a person who still has their right to not be killed is a harm you've caused that person. *And* taking a risk with a person's life, or in other words, not being *sure* whether a person is innocent or guilty but killing them anyway, is a second, separate harm.

Sandra Bertin: Right.

Christiane Wisehart: But can you explain why this risk is a separate harm. So what if the person is guilty but you just weren't sure about it?

Sandra Bertin: Well Seth said if you don't know that they are guilty, if you are unsure, the risk you take with their life is actually a lot like using them as a means to an end. And the other reason that taking a risk with someone's life is its own separate harm, is that it doesn't just endanger or hurt that one person. It endangers everyone around that person too.

Christiane Wisehart: What do you mean?

Sandra Bertin: So, we all have the right to survive, but also we have the right to not feel threatened.

Seth Lazar: It's not as good to survive walking on a knife edge as it is to have a good, solid land to stand on. I think that when you expose others to risks of avoidable wrongful harm, you're undermining their security, so you're undermining the separate interest they have in not being subjected to these kinds of risks.

Christiane Wisehart: So by taking a risk with one person's life you've undermined the security of all innocent people around them.

Sandra Bertin: Yeah, it reminds me of police shootings. When police kill an unarmed black man in the street, it doesn't just harm that one man, it also harms the entire black community who feel that they could be killed just as easily without posing any threat.

Christiane Wisehart: When you take a risk and kill someone who might be innocent, you make the entire community feel unsafe.

Sandra Bertin: So ultimately, riskier killings are worse than less risky killings.

Christiane Wisehart: But then couldn't you have a situation where you have a civilian that you know is guilty and a soldier that you're not sure whether or not he's guilty wouldn't it be less risky to kill the civilian?

Sandra Bertin: Yes... but Seth has a different argument to say that killing soldiers is always better than killing civilians. He basically says that ALL soldiers, every single one, has taken a risk with other people's lives.

Seth Lazar: So again, you're taking a risk. As between people who have gambled with other's rights and those who haven't, if you're going to harm one of those groups, you should harm the gamblers because I think that, you know, showing proper respect for other people's rights means not just conforming to them as things actually turn out, but it means respecting them across a range of possible scenarios.

Sandra Bertin: So there you have it Christiane.

Christiane Wisehart: My brain is mush right now.

Sandra Bertin: Me too. Let's have a nice sponsor message and music break before we get into our discussion...

Christiane Wisehart: Good idea.

[start music]

Andy Cullison: *Sparing Civilians* by Seth Lazar is available from Oxford University Press. To find out more about Oxford University Press, visit them on the web at global.oup.com. Oxford University Press has kindly offered to provide you, the listener, with a 30% discount on *Sparing Civilians*. Visit our show notes page at examiningethics.org to get that 30% discount. And thanks again to Oxford University Press for sponsoring today's show.

[end music]

Sandra Bertin: Christiane, Andy and I thought that Seth Lazar's view was fascinating. And we really got attached to this idea of responsibility. A question we kept coming back to was: what responsibility do civilians who live in a democracy have for the threats their government poses abroad. Do we as citizens of the democracy of the United States have more responsibility for our government's foreign threats than, say civilians living under a monarchy, for example? So we decided to sit down and hash it out.

Andy Cullison: I think we do, I think we do have more responsibility... than someone in a monarchy. But I think we should make a distinction between being just like causally responsible for something and morally responsible. You can cause something, but if you're not aware of the fact that you caused it or if you're not aware of how much harm it might cause, it would be weird

to think that you should be held morally responsible. If I accidentally push you down the stairs versus knowingly pushing you down the stairs. And so I think in a democracy, arguably, we're a little bit more causally responsible for the wars that our country wages. But I still think it's going to be an open question of to what degree are we morally responsible.

Sandra Bertin: I guess, I think that if we're not morally responsible, then I don't see what the point of our democracy is... We're told that we have a responsibility to vote, because we have an impact on what our country does. And so, if then we get to cop-out and say we actually don't- we didn't effect what happened, I think it's... yeah, it sounds like a cop-out to me.

Andy Cullison: I think that's actually a really great point. So, one of the arguments for a democracy, is that it's the best way to ground a political legitimacy. What gives the president or congress the right to do anything is supposed to be explained by the fact that we put them there, right, we caused them to be there and basically assented to their governance. And so I think it's a good point to say well, wait a minute, how can you... how can you say you're responsible for the leadership in a way that grounds political legitimacy but not for the wars they cause. I take it that's your...

Sandra Bertin: Yeah.

Andy Cullison: So I think one thing you can say, is the reason political legitimacy gets grounded is because we put the people there, but that doesn't necessarily mean that we are in any robust way morally responsible for every single decision that they make right, we could put somebody there because we trust them in general to do things that we want them to look out for. But if they start going off the deep end or doing other kinds of things that we object to, it'd be hard pressed to say that you're casually or morally - well, that you're morally responsible for every single decision that they make, but you can still maintain that they have legitimacy to be acting on your behalf.

Sandra Bertin: I think... I agree with that. But my issue then is that, there are some things then that you are responsible for. So like, if there's a presidential candidate who says that they will carpet bomb Syria, for example. Or if there's a presidential candidate that says that they're going to go to war somewhere then you, if you elect them or if you vote for them, then you are... you are definitely responsible, at least... well I would say morally responsible for that action.

Christiane Wisehart: So I want to... I want to put a pin in that. So, so, so we're kind of saying that there are... if you vote for this presidential candidate that wants to go to war and then that presidential candidate goes to war like you're responsible for that in some way. But what about the people who don't vote for that person. So what if I know that, like you know... I knew that George Bush was a hawkish politician, he wanted to go to war. I knew that. And that was part of the reason that I decided not to vote for him. So am I responsible - because I still live in this democracy, am I still responsible for, you know, the Iraq War?

This is so... this is so tricky. Cause, it seems wrong, it seems just as wrong to me to say, you know, everybody in the democracy is equally responsible for everything. But I also, it just doesn't seem right to say that only those people who voted for that president are responsible. And how would you even figure that out. So if we are saying that somebody has to be responsible, in a democracy... who is it? Is it the particular number of people that voted for that politician and that politician? Is it everybody who lives in that democracy, including the people who didn't vote for that politician.

Sandra Bertin: I- I think I would say that it was everybody. Even who didn't vote for that politician, because you never know how your actions are feeding into a culture of war. So like we don't know the aspects of our culture that produce the desire to go to war in the first place, let's say. So like I don't think it's okay to just separate the people who voted and didn't vote from responsibility. And I think there's also something interesting, like we're mostly talking about citizens in terms of the average citizen, like you and me, who has no political power, other than the right to vote basically. But there are citizens that have way more responsibility than that, right? So like, there's... responsibilities our congressmen and senators and stuff like that, so, they obviously would have a ton more responsibility. And then, even further, let's say you have a company that benefits greatly from going to war, like you have an arms company. Then I think, the arms company is more responsible than - than the average citizen, who doesn't have any of those links.

Andy Cullison: I think this is why it's actually important to think about different kinds of responsibility. Like causal responsibility, moral responsibility, but also responsibility in terms of just being sort of an enabler. So, your average person who doesn't vote for whoever the politician is who takes us to war... there's an interesting question, if you live in a free and open society that's a deliberative democracy, you know, did you do anything to persuade people not to? Did you participate in the political process in a robust way? Or did you just sort of sit back and let things happen? And you might think, if... between two people, one who didn't vote for the person who took us to war, and one who didn't vote but also saw the writing on the wall and was like hey! You know, everybody wake up, like there's something here to be seriously concerned about, you ought think twice before voting for this person. I think the person who did that is in some sense less responsible than the person who just simply failed to vote for that person.

Christiane Wisheart: Yeah, cause that's something we have to think about, especially when we're talking about the United States, because a significant portion of the population does not vote. For a number of reasons: because they are five, because they are felons, because they don't want to, because they don't have time. I mean a significant - you know, because they're just opting out on purpose, right. Like a ton of people in America do not vote, right? So, I think it is something important to think about right? The degree of responsibility for all the people.

Andy Cullison: And that's also, the degree of responsibility is important here too because... Well I think the person who, is politically active and actively tries to persuade people not to vote for a certain person who might take us to war. I think their degree of responsibility is very very very very minimal, right. In part because I can easily see people not participating in the political process because they feel like it's just going to be screaming into the wind, right? Like why bother? And I get that. But, precisely because people think they could be so causally ineffective, I think that's another reason why we need to be careful about just how responsible do we think they really are. Like if you, if you believe of yourself that I have no power to do anything about this, why bother? Why not spend my time, you know, on my other pursuits, or my children or something like that. I think that, that has to play into judgements about people's responsibilities.

[Music]

Christiane Wisehart: So the depressing thing about all of this, and the thing that surprised me the most, is that Seth Lazar even had to write this book at all. It just seems like common sense to say that we just shouldn't kill civilians. But given our current political climate and the conversations around it, I guess it *is* a necessary thing.

Sandra Bertin: Yeah, definitely seems like it is. I think I surprised myself with how quickly I felt like the only answer was pacifism in this. Because if soldiers are sometimes not responsible and most of the time not even threats then I kind of just give up on this whole system we have going on right now.

Andy Cullison: The thing I kept going back to was something that came up in our previous episode that had to do with, thinking about moral issues when there might be a lot of fear involved. Because I think when there is fear involved, it's more important to pay close attention to the moral arguments. Because when fear is involved, it'll be tempting to not think very carefully about those arguments.

[Music]

Christiane Wisehart: Before you go, we're hoping to hear from you for an upcoming episode.

Sandra Bertin: We want to know about how you think about the ethics of voting.

Christiane Wisehart: And just to be clear, we're not so much concerned with *who* you are voting for, although, if you really want to tell us, you can.

Sandra Bertin: We just want to know what you think ABOUT voting itself.

Christiane Wisehart: So please call us at 765 658 5014 and leave a 1-3 minute voicemail and tell us how you think about voting. And we promise - this is definitely the right number.

Sandra Bertin: If you don't know where to start, you could tell us: Do you think everyone should vote?

Christiane Wisehart: Do you think it's okay to vote for someone you know has no chance of winning the election?

Sandra Bertin: What do you think about people not voting because they don't like any of the candidates?

Christiane Wisehart: That's just some stuff to get you started. We're interested in anything you think about *how* people should vote in our version of democracy.

Sandra Bertin: Again the number to call and leave a 1-3 minute voicemail is 765 658 5014. You can find these instructions on our social media as well. Thanks so much, we can't wait to hear from you!!

[music]

Christiane Wisehart: One of the things you all can do if you like what you're hearing from us, or if you feel like you're getting something from our show is to tell a friend about us. Word of mouth really helps.

Sandra Bertin: You can also help us out by rating us on iTunes (even if you don't use iTunes to listen to the show). You can subscribe to the show on iTunes, Stitcher, or your favorite podcast app.

Andy Cullison: Thanks for listening. If you'd like more information about the topics we've discussed today, visit our show notes for this episode at examiningethics.org. When you visit, be sure to sign up for our newsletter. You'll be entered into our monthly book giveaway.

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Credits:

Hi this is Christiane with the credits from the Greencastle Starbucks. Examining Ethics with Andy Cullison is hosted by the Janet Prindle Institute for Ethics at DePauw University. Sandra Bertin and Christiane Wisehart produced the show. Our logo was created by Evie Brosius. Our music is by Cory Gray, the Blue Dot Sessions, Jason Leonard and Kai Engel and can be found online at freemusicarchive.ORG. Examining Ethics is made possible by the generous support of DePauw Alumni, friends of the Prindle Institute, and you the listeners. Thank you for your support.

Christiane Wisehart: No.

Sandra Bertin: That was good except that you laughed when you said 'and,' because you were laughing about-

Christiane Wisehart: *laughs* War!

Sandra Bertin: Death! Destruction! Waaaar *laughs*

continuous laughter

Sandra Bertin: okay-

Christiane Wisehart: okay.

Christiane Wisehart: Should I just do that whole thing?

Sandra Bertin: I think you're good from the end.

Christiane Wisehart: Okay.