

INTRODUCTION

The four Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 are the bedrock of legal protections for persons affected by armed conflict. The Conventions form a part of a larger body of law, known as international humanitarian law (IHL), which seeks to prevent and minimize suffering in armed conflicts.

The Geneva Conventions hold the distinction of being among the very few international legal instruments that have attained the status of being universally ratified by all 196 member States of the United Nations. Thus, the obligation to respect and ensure respect for its rules and principles is truly a universal one.

The exhibit is structured in five parts, each themed on (i) Historical Background and Context: Diplomatic Conferences; (ii) Fundamental Guarantees enshrined in the Conventions; (iii) Work of the ICRC and National Societies; (iv) Implementation, Promotion and Dissemination of IHL; and (v) Geneva Conventions in the 21st Century.



The Geneva
Conventions
and their
Commentaries



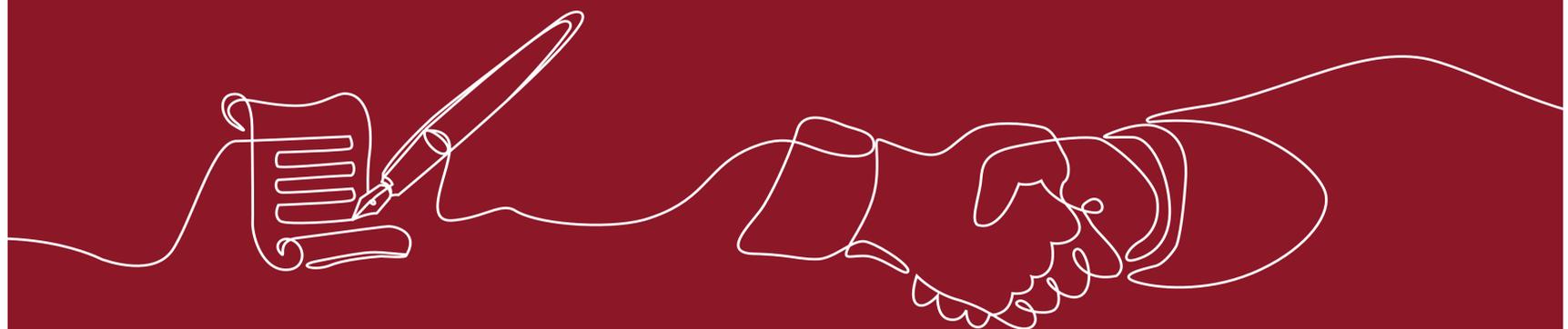
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT: DIPLOMATIC CONFERENCES

160 years ago, the first codification of contemporary IHL rules, the 1864 Geneva Convention on the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded in Armies in the Field, was adopted. The treaty enshrined key humanitarian principles, including the protection of the wounded and sick, respect for medical personnel and facilities and the use of the distinctive emblem. With the evolution of warfare, States have further developed IHL, including through revisions of the Geneva Convention in 1906 and in 1929, to extend its scope to new situations and categories of persons, as well as nuancing and upgrading existing guarantees.

The Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 resulted from the Diplomatic Conference of 1949 convened by the Swiss Federal Council in the aftermath of World War II for the negotiation and establishment of international conventions for the protection of war victims. The Swiss Federal Council currently serves as the depositary of the Conventions.

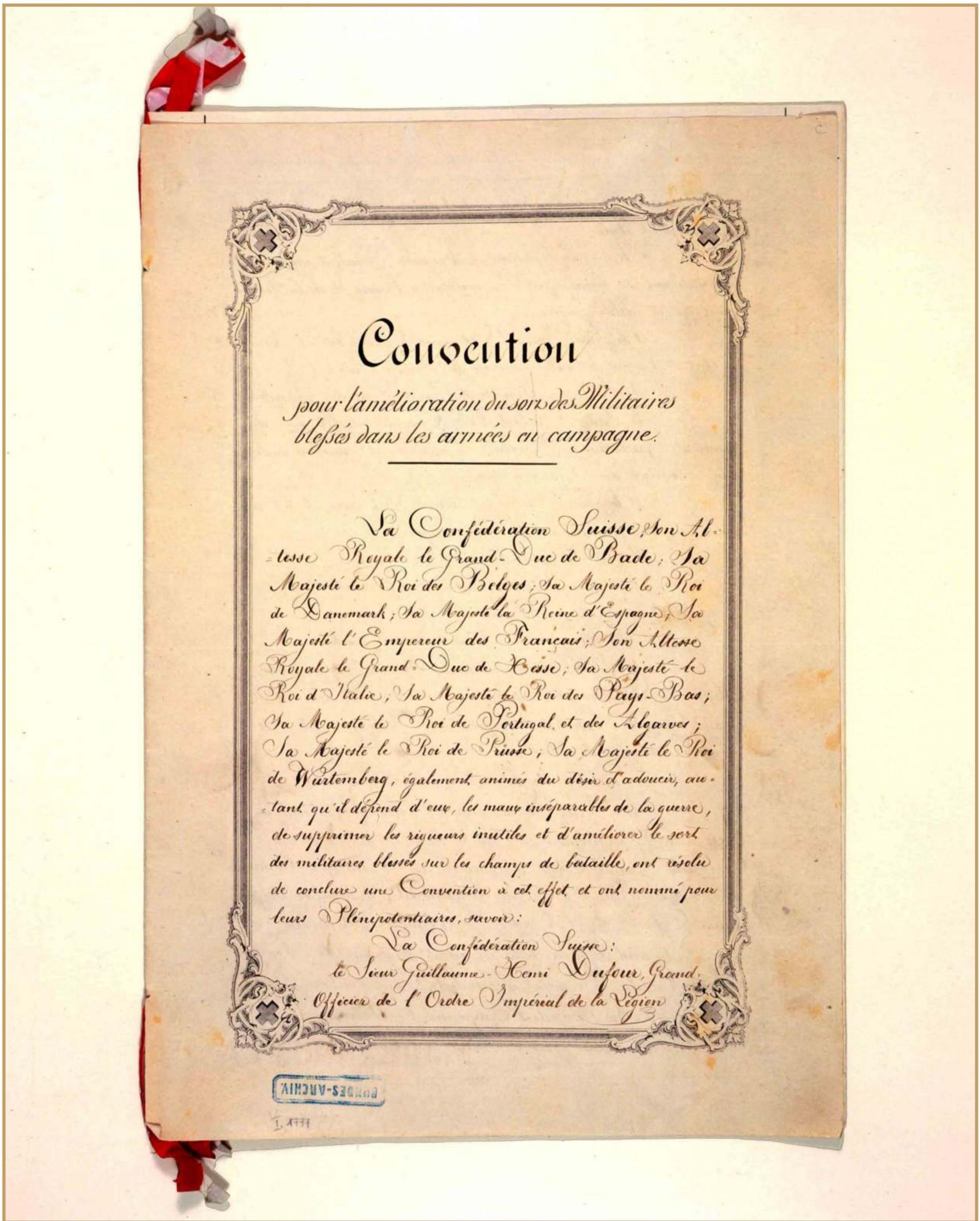
India was represented at the Diplomatic Conference through its delegation led by Sir Dhiren Mitra, Legal Adviser to the High Commissioner for India in London and included, among others, Shri PN Haksar. The Indian delegation actively contributed to formulating important protections, including correspondence of internees with family members, judicial guarantees, rules concerning the labour etc. The Indian delegation also advocated for the rights of smaller countries, which were represented by less than three delegates, to have their say in voting, as well as having sufficient time to make any decisions on the idea of proxy voting.

India was among the first five countries to become a signatory to the Conventions.



Diplomatic Conferences
for the adoption of the
Geneva Conventions and
their Additional Protocols





Convention

*pour l'amélioration du sort des Militaires
blessés dans les armées en campagne.*

Sa Confédération Suisse, Son Altesse Royale le Grand-Duc de Bade, Sa Majesté le Roi des Belges, Sa Majesté le Roi de Danemark, Sa Majesté la Reine d'Espagne, Sa Majesté l'Empereur des Français, Son Altesse Royale le Grand-Duc de Saxe, Sa Majesté le Roi d'Italie, Sa Majesté le Roi des Pays-Bas, Sa Majesté le Roi de Portugal, et des Algarves, Sa Majesté le Roi de Prusse, Sa Majesté le Roi de Wurtemberg, également animés du désir d'adoucir, autant qu'il dépend d'eux, les maux inséparables de la guerre, de supprimer les rigueurs inutiles et d'améliorer le sort des militaires blessés sur les champs de bataille, ont résolu de conclure une Convention à cet effet, et ont nommé pour leurs Plénipotentiaires, savoir:

*Sa Confédération Suisse:
le Sieur Guillaume-Henri Dufour, Grand-Officier de l'Ordre Impérial de la Légion*



ICRC

GENEVA CONVENTION - 1864

The first page of the Geneva Convention of 22 August 1864 for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded in Armies in the Field.



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SET OF RULES
WE ALL
AGREE ON



M. Wassermann/ICRC



GENEVA, SWITZERLAND - 12 AUGUST 1949
Diplomatic Conference adopts the 1949 Geneva Conventions.





J. Cardoux/ICRC



GENEVA, SWITZERLAND - 12 AUGUST 1949

The Swiss delegation during the signature of the Final Act of the 1949 Diplomatic Conference for the Revision of Geneva Conventions for the Protection of War Victims.



FUNDAMENTAL GUARANTEES

The Geneva Conventions enshrine protections in the form of rules and principles that become applicable during international armed conflicts (IAC) and non-international armed conflicts (NIAC). Many of these codified rules over time, have crystallized into customary international law.

The Geneva Convention (I) for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field (GC I) protects the wounded and sick on the battlefield, recognizes the immunity of medical units, transport and personnel from attacks and the distinctive emblem. The Geneva Convention (II) for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded, Sick and Shipwrecked members of Armed Forces at Sea (GC II) protects the wounded, sick and shipwrecked, as well as medical services and transport at sea, including hospital ships. The Geneva Convention (III) relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War (PoWs) (GC III) lays down standards of treatment for PoWs in detention and the role of the National Information Bureaux and the Central Tracing Agency. The Geneva Convention (IV), relative to the protection of civilian persons in time of war (GC IV), protects the civilian population affected by armed conflict and occupation.

Cross-cutting themes of these treaties include fundamental guarantees, such as the obligation of humane treatment and non-discrimination, respect for life and dignity of persons, protection of displaced persons, preservation of family links, separated, missing and the dead.





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DHORPATAN, NEPAL - 1961

The ICRC distributes vitamin supplements to Tibetan refugees at their camp.





L. Chessell/ICRC



FALKLAND/MALVINAS ISLANDS, URUGUAY - 1982
Port Montevideo. British hospital ship HMS Hecla transports Argentinian prisoners.





ICRC



LIBYA - 2011

Wounded persons are carried inside the helicopter for transport to the hospital in Tripoli.





C. Appel/ICRC



WEST BANK – 2003

An ICRC delegate approaching an Israeli soldier to get the convoy of hygienic products passing through the “earth wall”.





ICRC



CÓRDOBA, COLOMBIA - 2022

The ICRC operates in communities that are difficult to access, where there is a high humanitarian need.





G. Blomen Nomer/ICRC



NORTH SUMATRA, INDONESIA - 2011

Medan, Labuhan Deli Prison. Inmates' belongings are steamed in oil drums to eliminate scabies mites.





B. Heger/ICRC



LIBERIA - 2006
An ICRC representative visits persons deprived of their liberty.





J. Jacques Kurz/ICRC



CAMBODIA/THAILAND - 1980

In the Khao-I-Dang refugee camp, children separated from their families are checking photos at the tracing agency office.





N. Shiria Cochar/ICRC



JORDAN/SYRIA - 2016

Azraq, UNHCR refugee camp, ICRC tracing office. ICRC's restoring family links program. An ICRC employee helps refugees connect with their family members.





B. Heeger/ICRC



DJIBOUTI - 2003

An ICRC delegate distributing and collecting Red Cross messages at the UNHCR refugee camp at Ali Addé.





S. Abu Latifh/ICRC



GAZA - 2017

A child is doing his homework on the balcony of his makeshift house.





S. Bajrambasic/ICRC



SREBRENICA, BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA - 2002

For these three women, the ICRC “Book of Belongings” is one of the few ways of searching for their missing relatives.





Y. Nosenko/ICRC



KHERSON OBLAST, VYSOKOPILLIA, UKRAINE - 2022
A village resident and an ICRC staff member.





N. Ismail/ICRC



LEBANON - 1998

In South Lebanon, transfer of detainees released by the Israeli authorities, under the aegis of the ICRC.





N. Shira Cohen/ICRC



MEJË/MEJA. KOSOVO - 2004

A 'Field of Tears' cemetery and memorial site represents the event during which the biggest number of persons disappeared in Kosovo.





N. Dantop/ICRC



CAMBODIA - 2017

Pao (45) lost his leg in 1992 due to a mine. With the ICRC's assistance, he was fitted with a prosthetic limb to help him walk again. Pao is fishing in his fish pond near his home.





R. Rafi Sircar/ICRC



BANGLADESH - 2017

The ICRC and the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society are filling tracing requests for families from Myanmar who lost contact with their relatives.





Z. Burduli/ICRC



PUTTUMATALAN, SRI LANKA - 2009
The ICRC team evacuating wounded civilians by ferry to Trincomalee.

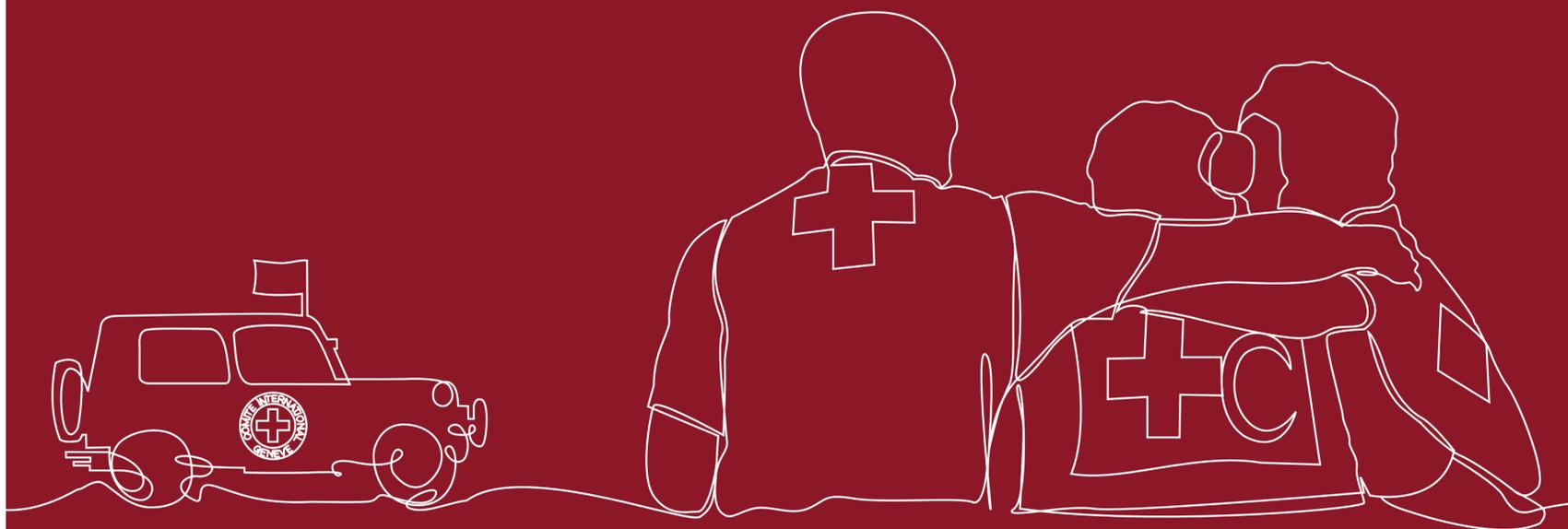


WORK OF THE ICRC AND NATIONAL SOCIETIES

The Geneva Conventions of 1949 recognize the central role of the ICRC and National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, as well as other impartial and humanitarian organizations.

Originally created for service in times of armed conflict, as auxiliaries to the military medical services, National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies today carry out a wide range of activities in situations of both war and peace. Their wartime role to support armed forces' medical units remains essential but now represents just one of many aspects of their work. Nowadays, National Societies also play an important role in the dissemination and implementation of IHL.

All four Conventions recognize the role of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) as a neutral, independent and impartial humanitarian organization. The ICRC plays various roles during armed conflict, including visits to detained persons, protection of the civilian population, provision of relief supplies, medical assistance, and tracing service, and facilitation of exchange of prisoners of war and internees.



International
Committee of
the Red Cross,
Who we are

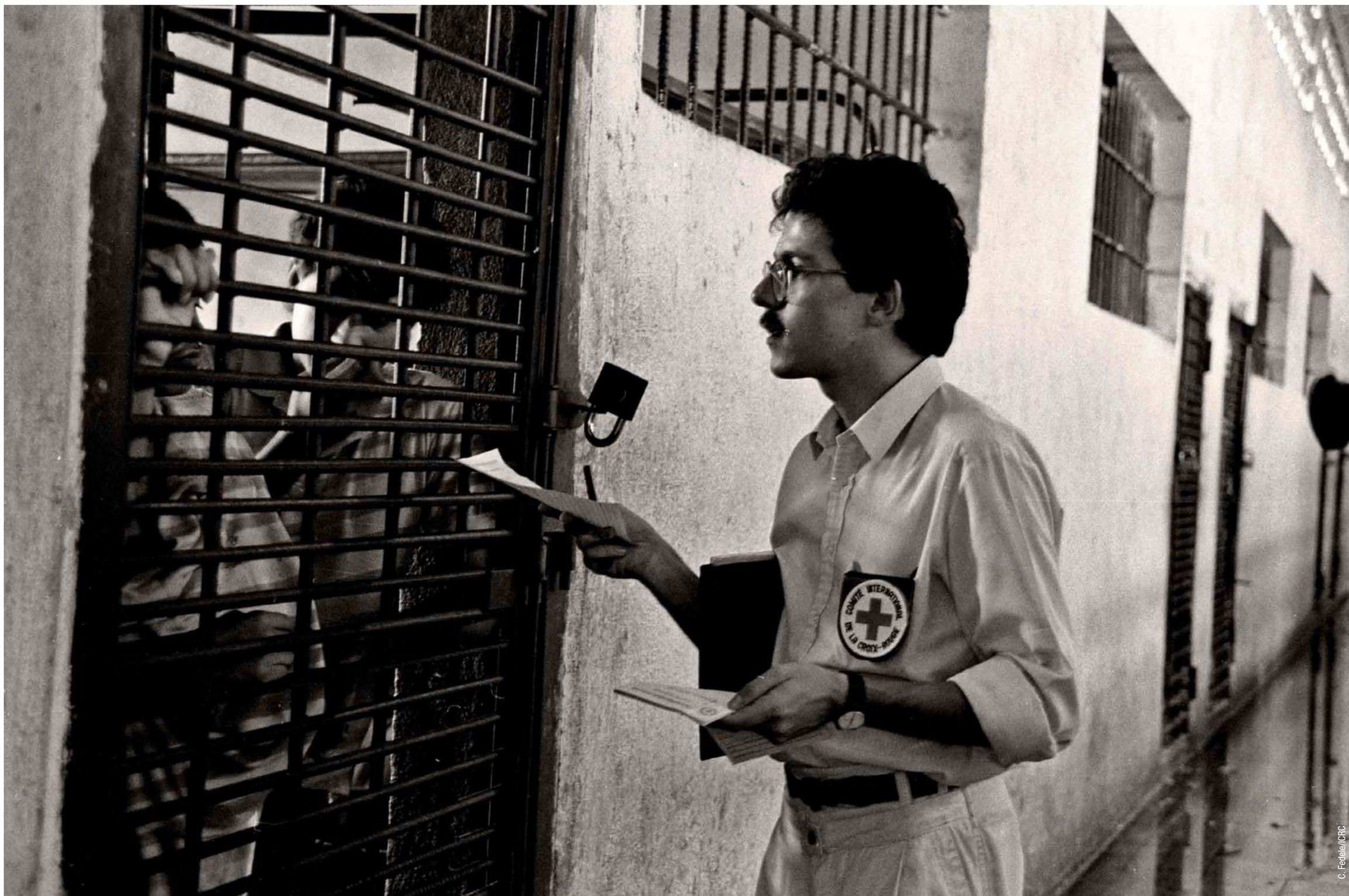




SOUTH SUDAN - 2019

Persons injured during intercommunal clashes are being transferred to Juba Military Hospital by the ICRC.





C. Fedelle/ICRC



NICARAGUA - 1990
An ICRC representative visits persons deprived of liberty.





M. Al-Barazi/ICRC



YEMEN - 2023
Release of detainees facilitated by the ICRC and Movement Partners.





K. Cook-Pellegrini/ICRC



AYACUCHO, PUBLIC MINISTRY, PERU - 2016

Family members watch as the remains of their deceased loved ones are reassembled by forensics specialists.





JAMMU, INDIA - 1948

Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, independent India's first Minister of Health, also served as the Chairperson of the Indian Red Cross Society for 14 years.





A. Bhatia/ICRC



NEW DELHI, INDIA - 2020

As part of the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic and support for personal protective equipment, the ICRC regional delegation distributes 1,000 body bags to the Indian Red Cross Society, National Headquarters.





BRCS



BHUTAN - 2021

Bhutan Red Cross Society (BRCS) volunteers led by the Secretary General managed the first COVID-19 death case in Bhutan, which happened during the second national lockdown.





MRC



THE MALDIVES - 2021

A Maldivian Red Crescent (MRC) volunteer approaching mangrove as part of mangrove conservation project under climate change initiatives supported by the ICRC.



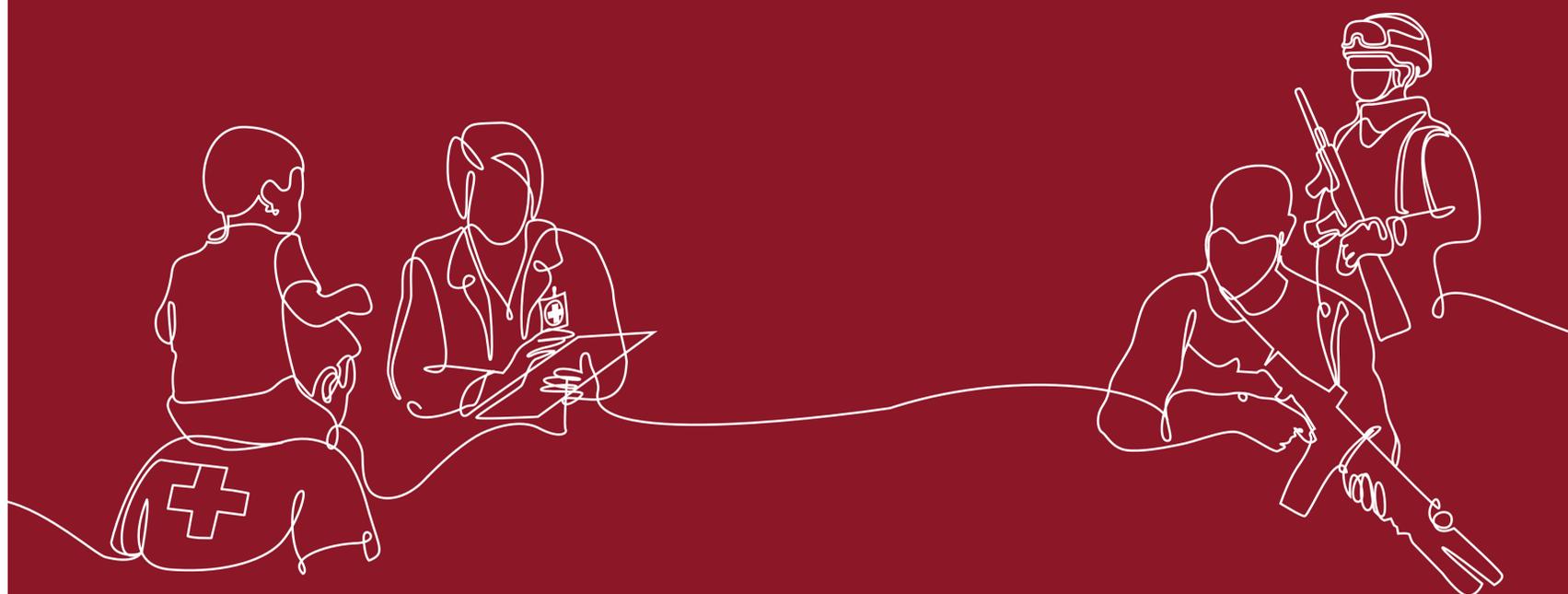
IMPLEMENTATION, PROMOTION AND DISSEMINATION OF IHL

Common Article 1 of the Geneva Conventions enjoins all high contracting parties to “respect and ensure respect for IHL”. Part of this obligation entails taking legal, practical and administrative steps to give effect to the Conventions.

These obligations include, for example, translation of the Conventions into national languages and the adoption of implementing legislation, including criminalization of grave breaches of the Conventions and other serious violations of IHL. States parties to the Geneva Conventions also undertake to disseminate IHL among the military and civilian personnel, as well as the general public.

India pioneered the enactment of such implementing legislation at the domestic level in South Asia.

ICRC plays an important role in the implementation, clarification and development of IHL. Its Advisory Service on IHL provides expertise and technical support to states in the implementation, promotion and dissemination of the Geneva Conventions, as well as other IHL treaties.



National
Implementation
of IHL, from
Advisory Service



121:0/55 rule. 22/3/60

REGISTERED No. D. 221

The Gazette  of India

EXTRAORDINARY
PART II—Section 1
PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY

No. 7] NEW DELHI, SATURDAY, MARCH 12, 1960/PHALGUNA 22, 1881

MINISTRY OF LAW
(Legislative Department)

New Delhi, the 12th March, 1960/Phalguna 22, 1881 (Saka)

The following Act of Parliament received the assent of the President on the 12th March, 1960, and is hereby published for general information:—

THE GENEVA CONVENTIONS ACT, 1960
No 6 OF 1960

[12th March, 1960]

An Act to enable effect to be given to certain international Conventions done at Geneva on the twelfth day of August, 1949, to which India is a party, and for purposes connected therewith.

BE it enacted by Parliament in the Eleventh Year of the Republic of India as follows:—

CHAPTER I

PRELIMINARY

1. (1) This Act may be called the Geneva Conventions Act, 1960. Short title, extent and commencement.
- (2) It extends to the whole of India.
- (3) It shall come into force on such date as the Central Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, appoint.
2. In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires,— Definitions.
 - (a) "Conventions" means the Conventions set out in the Schedules; and the First Convention, the Second Convention, the Third Convention and the Fourth Convention mean the Conventions set out in the First, Second, Third and Fourth Schedules, respectively;

(51)

1075 G. of I.—1.



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INDIA - 1960

The first page of the Geneva Conventions Act of 1960. India has been the first country in South Asia to adopt implementing legislation for the Geneva Conventions of 1949.



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A. Bhatia/ICRC



NEW DELHI, INDIA - 2024

The ICRC conducts training for the UN Formed Police Unit (FPU) of the Border Security Force (BSF) going for deployment in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) at the BSF Chhawla camp.





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COLOMBO, SRI LANKA - 2023

At the South Asia Regional IHL Conference, by the Government of Sri Lanka and the ICRC, representatives from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Iran, Nepal, The Maldives, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka discuss current and emerging issues of IHL.





ICRC



NEW DELHI, INDIA - 2023

The ICRC regional delegation hosts a high-level panel discussion to launch one of the latest editions of the International Review of the Red Cross, themed on 'How International Humanitarian Law Develops' at the gathering of alumni of the South Asia Training Session on IHL.





A. Bhatia/ICRC



NEW DELHI, INDIA - 2019

Organized by the Indian Society of International Law (ISIL), in collaboration with the ICRC, the 19th Henry Dunant Memorial Moot Court competition's India National Rounds saw the participation of 48 teams from across the country.





GUJARAT, INDIA - 2020

Participants pose for a group photo during a symposium on maritime security operations and humanitarian considerations jointly organized by the ICRC and Rashtriya Raksha University (RRU). The symposium brought together experts and panellists from Thailand, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Japan and India.



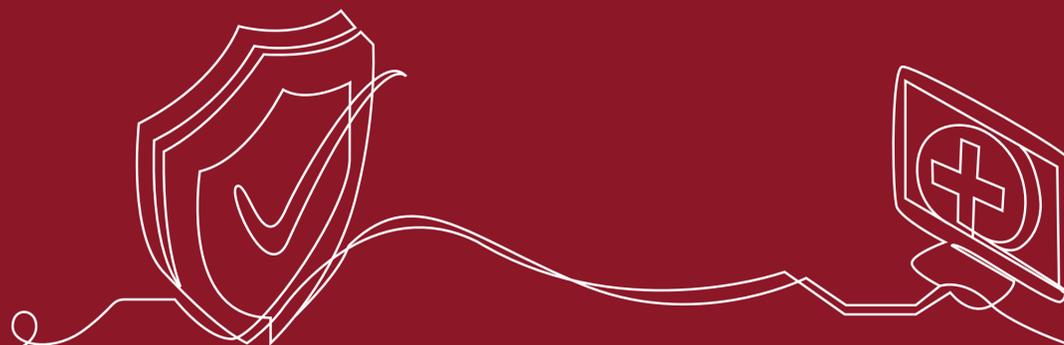
GENEVA CONVENTIONS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Since its inception, IHL has served humanity through a singular purpose – to respect and protect the lives and dignity of all those who are affected by armed conflict. However, rapid technological and political developments over the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have transformed the conduct of contemporary warfare. To maintain its relevance, it is imperative that the law, too, keep up with such developments to address newer challenges and remain fit for purpose.

Since their publication in the 1950s and 1980s, respectively, the Commentaries on the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols of 1977 have become a major reference for the application and interpretation of those treaties. The ICRC, together with a team of renowned experts, is currently updating these Commentaries in order to document developments and provide up-to-date interpretations of the treaty texts.

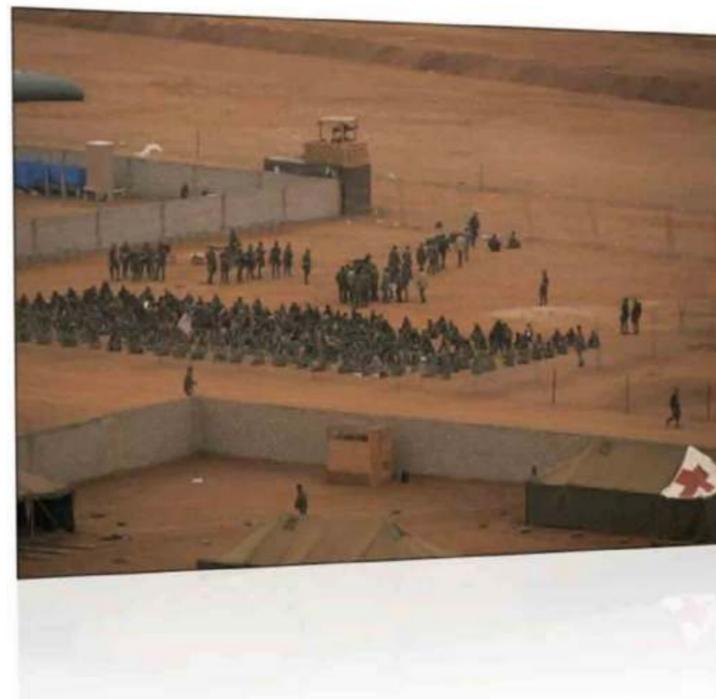
States are also discussing challenges posed by new technologies of warfare and their international regulation, including the use of cyber operations in armed conflict, autonomous weapons systems, artificial intelligence and machine learning, or outer space. The ICRC is part of these discussions exploring how IHL applies to the use of these new and emerging technologies in armed conflicts.

A new project exploring the digitalization of the distinctive emblem to signal legal protections in cyberspace to protect medical and humanitarian facilities and personnel from harmful cyber operations is one such initiative that seeks to adapt one of the essential tenets of the Geneva Conventions to the realities of the 21st century.



Updated
Commentaries
to the Geneva
Conventions





Launch of the updated Commentary on the **Third Geneva Convention**

16 JUNE 2020



GENEVA/ONLINE - 2020

Online Launch of the Updated Commentary on the Third Geneva Convention, with the participation of Maj. Gen. Nilendra Kumar, former Judge Advocate General of the Indian Armed Forces and a peer-reviewer of the Updated Commentary to the Third Geneva Convention.





ICRC



SWITZERLAND - 2023

Statement by the International Committee of the Red Cross at the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) - Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems.





R. Benerjee/ICRC



2022
 Illustration for the ICRC's Report "Digitalizing the Red Cross, Red Crescent and Red Crystal Emblems: Benefits, Risks, and Possible Solutions".

