

## **ICRC IHL Initiative – Workstream 3 on IHL and Peace**

### **Intervention of Canada**

Canada views upholding International Humanitarian Law (IHL) as a cornerstone of its commitment to the rules-based international order. IHL acts as an essential legal reference to preserve human dignity and protect the most vulnerable from the effects of war, including civilians, humanitarian personnel, those deprived of their liberty, and the missing. These protections are not optional and must be upheld throughout the course of a conflict.

Respect for IHL offers a foundation upon which sustainable peace can be built. The ground for IHL compliance is laid before hostilities erupt, and the effects of IHL compliance are felt long after they have ceased. Incorporating IHL considerations into prevention and mediation efforts in a thoughtful manner can help foster trust, cooperation and long-term stability.

States can and must be instrumental in shaping the outcomes at every stage. Canada wishes to emphasise the role of States in preventing violations of IHL, facilitating de-escalation and employing diplomatic tools that are aimed at avoiding further human suffering and averting escalations of violence.

Given the global conflict landscape, Canada believes it is more important than ever to reinforce collaboration with partners such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, including the Canadian Red Cross, and our own military forces. These partnerships are vital in designing training programs and strengthening operational awareness to ensure that respect for IHL is upheld as we adapt, innovate and respond to the challenges ahead.

Humanitarian diplomacy is also another tool available to States. Canada advocates for its proactive use - publicly or behind closed doors - to mediate tensions, build trust between parties, facilitate humanitarian access, negotiate ceasefires, and prevent further cycles of violence.

Respect for IHL helps break the cycle by setting clear limits that we, as the international community, have collectively agreed must never be crossed.

As such, accountability must be a central tenet of international order and a pillar of peace, reconciliation and long-term stability. Our national legal framework enables us to prosecute international crimes, and we are a longstanding supporter of International Courts. Upholding IHL and pursuing accountability are essential steps toward a more just and peaceful international architecture. Holding violators of IHL accountable sends a powerful message: impunity will not be tolerated. Upholding these principles helps

rebuild trust in international institutions and contributes to a global order that respects the spirit of the law and promotes enduring peace.

Canada has long stood as a steadfast proponent of these principles. As we face the complex conflicts of today and tomorrow, we must continue to lead by example of strengthening cooperation and peace processes, deepening our commitment to IHL, and ensuring that humanitarian values remain at the heart of global security efforts.