



ICRC

Under the Global Initiative to Galvanize Political Commitment to International Humanitarian Law (global IHL initiative), the International Committee of the Red Cross cordially invites your state to:

WORKSTREAM 2: NATIONAL IHL COMMITTEES

THE FIRST STATE CONSULTATION ON NATIONAL IHL COMMITTEES

For representatives of national committees, or similar entities, on IHL (national IHL committees), and legal advisers of ministries of foreign affairs and defence in states that do not have a national IHL committee.

WEDNESDAY, 7 MAY 2025

8:30–12:30 AND 14:00–18:00 (GENEVA UTC+2)

FORMAT: ONLINE

WORKSTREAM CO-CHAIRS:

- FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY
- REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
- REPUBLIC OF PERU
- UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

National committees and similar entities on IHL (national IHL committees) are advisory bodies established by governments to promote and implement IHL at the domestic level. There is no single template for national IHL committees; however, they are typically composed of representatives from key ministries involved in the implementation and application of IHL. Committee members may also come from the judiciary, the National Red Cross or Red Crescent Society and academia. As a forum that transversally unites a state's experts and decision-makers to discuss priority matters linked to the application of IHL, national IHL committees are a powerful tool. It is therefore fitting for states to continuously ask "Are we maximizing the potential impact of our national IHL committee?"

Today, there are 120 national IHL committees established across the globe. Despite this, the challenge of ensuring that IHL is implemented, understood and respected in all conflicts and at all times continues. Within the framework of the global IHL initiative, states will be provided with the opportunity to discuss the ways that national IHL committees can and should galvanize political action on IHL. Moreover, states will be asked to reflect on the unutilized potential of these important domestic mechanisms and to propose innovative means for national IHL committees to further contribute to maintaining the integrity and protective power of IHL.

This consultation will be a first step towards the identification of recommendations for national IHL committees to become, or to strengthen their role as, drivers of internal influence to ensure that the law effectively protects people affected by armed conflict worldwide.

OBJECTIVE

The objectives of the first state consultation on national IHL committees are:

1. understanding the extent to which national IHL committees are engaged in national processes relevant to promoting respect for IHL, both domestically and with other states
2. benefiting from proposals, suggestions and advice from states on potential value-added outputs from the workstream
3. framing the future direction of the workstream.

States are invited to address the guiding questions below.

NEXT STEPS

- The results of this first consultation will be shared in the general progress report of the global IHL initiative, to be published in September.
- Decontextualized findings and recommendations from this consultation will be presented at regional consultations for national IHL committees, to be held throughout 2025. At the regional consultations, there will be the opportunity for proposals to be further developed and deliberated upon in working groups.
- The outcomes from all regional consultations held in 2025 will be presented to all states ahead of a universal meeting of national IHL committees in 2026, which will provide an opportunity for states to discuss together the draft outcomes of the workstream.

DESIRED PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

- All states are welcome to participate.
- All interested states with a national IHL committee are encouraged to register two participants who are authorized to represent their national IHL committee. At least one of those participants should be a representative of the government of that state. Participants are expected to be well versed in how their national IHL committee functions. It is highly recommended that statements reflect a consolidated position of the national IHL committee.
- Interested states without a national IHL committee are also encouraged to register up to two participants who are well versed in IHL and processes to implement and promote respect IHL. At least one of those participants should be a representative of the government of that state.
- Kindly register no later than **4 May 2025** at <https://forms.office.com/e/rVPQW4RLMe>.

PROCEDURE

- The working languages will be Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish, with simultaneous interpretation.
- Two repeat sessions are offered to accommodate different time zones. States are requested to register for the session most convenient for them. However, states may register for both sessions if they wish to hear all discussions, in which case we kindly request that they speak in only one of the two sessions.
- We kindly ask states to limit their initial statement to **five minutes** to ensure sufficient time for all participants to take the floor.
- To facilitate interpretation, states are invited to send a copy of their statement by **5 May 2025** to ihlinitiative@icrc.org.
- The substance of the consultations will be summarized in the progress report, to be published in September, without attribution to participants. The consultations will be recorded to facilitate the preparation of the report, but the recording will not be made public.
- The inclusive, constructive, non-politicized and solution-oriented nature of the discussions will be maintained throughout the consultation.
- While participants are encouraged to refer to their state's domestic practice during the consultations, participants are kindly asked to refrain from discussing specific contexts or the practice of other states.
- When preparing their statements, states may wish to consider the guiding questions below.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

Statements should address the role and functioning of a state's own national IHL committee, focusing specifically on galvanizing political action on IHL. States that do not have such a mechanism are invited to share details of their internal processes to galvanize political action on IHL. States are also encouraged to discuss their hopes for the workstream. While preparing their intervention states may wish to consider the following guiding questions.

Guiding questions

1. What role does your national IHL committee have in supporting the shaping of government policy on IHL? For example, is your national IHL committee consulted on national policies or positions on conflict related humanitarian and IHL issues, and does it provide advice on joining or leaving relevant treaties or processes? Please provide details. If not, how is national IHL policy developed in your state?
2. Please give examples of where your national IHL committee has taken action that has resulted in increased respect for IHL in your state. For example, does your national IHL committee advise your armed forces on training or doctrine on IHL, provide input on after-action reviews, monitor the conduct of your armed forces or produce voluntary or other reports on adherence to IHL? Please provide details. If not, which entities support these processes?
3. Does your national IHL committee look at the application of IHL in other countries? Has it taken action that has contributed to respect for IHL in another state? For example, does it provide advice to political decision makers on engaging with states experiencing armed conflict; make recommendations on arms transfer decisions to entities engaged in armed conflict; or recommend or provide support, either technical or financial, to relevant entities promoting IHL in other states? If not, which entities support these processes?
4. Where does your national IHL committee add the greatest value, please provide examples?
5. What challenges exist that may prevent your national IHL committee from taking steps to galvanize political action to further respect for IHL in your own country or internationally? What would be needed to overcome these challenges, and how could other states support this? What are your hopes for the outcome of this workstream?

AGENDA

Following a brief introduction and welcome remarks, states will be invited to take the floor for the remainder of the session. The agenda will be identical in both sessions.

- **Welcome**
- **Statements by states, with regular breaks**
- **Discussion**
- **Closing words**

The names of speakers for the welcome and closing will be circulated at a later date.

PREPARATORY READING

- [National Committees for the Implementation of Humanitarian Law](#)
- [International Humanitarian Law at the National Level: Impact and Role of National Committees](#)
- [Practical Advice to Facilitate the Work of National Committees on International Humanitarian Law](#)
- [National Committees and Similar Entities on International Humanitarian Law: Guidelines for Success](#)
- [Online Community for National Committees and Similar Entities on International Humanitarian Law](#)