

# Progress report



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# Foreword

**By Mirjana Spoljaric, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross**

Countries today are either at war, preparing for war or affected by war. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) counts approximately 130 armed conflicts worldwide. This is more than we saw a year ago, and far more than a decade ago.

When international humanitarian law (IHL) is allowed to erode, war descends into unconstrained barbarism. The international community is watching conflicts that are fought with far too permissive interpretations of the rules of war. This is not an abstract legal debate; it has irreversible consequences on millions of lives. When warfare abandons restraint and pursues total annihilation, the toll – both human and economic – is catastrophic, and the seeds of the next cycle of violence are sown.

If the ongoing erosion of the limits of warfare is not challenged, it will become the norm, setting dangerous precedents for future conflicts. This will further deepen global insecurity. The widespread and blatant disregard by parties to the conflict of IHL poses a major risk to both the law and security worldwide by fuelling the assumption that violations are inevitable. All states have an interest in fostering a political climate where the rules protecting adversaries on the battlefield are upheld and strengthened.

Having witnessed first-hand the devastating impact of conflict across the world, I am deeply aware that much of the suffering civilians endure could have been prevented if the rules of war had been more consistently respected. I remain convinced that IHL is vital not only to reducing suffering during conflict but also to laying the foundations for peace.

The rules exist; the law is clear. The Geneva Conventions, ratified by every state, remain one of the clearest expressions of our shared humanity. Yet, IHL has slipped from political priority as the memory of past wars fades, and we become numb to horrors live-streamed to our phones.

What is needed now is an exceptional effort – not to politicize the law, but to reaffirm it. That is why one year ago, Brazil, China, France, Jordan, Kazakhstan and South Africa, together with the ICRC, launched the Global Initiative to Galvanize Political Commitment to IHL. Since its inception, more than 80 states have joined this collective effort, demonstrating a powerful commitment to stem devastation and restore respect for the rules of war.

This report marks the first year of that collective process, which included seven state-led consultations, six high-level discussions, four regional meetings and three workshops between April and June 2025. Over 130 states participated. Many states reaffirmed the continued relevance of IHL as a vital legal and moral framework for protecting people in conflict. The momentum that this process represents gives me hope that we can reverse the tide and revive respect for these life-saving rules.

This initiative does not seek to politicize IHL but to elevate it as a political priority. It is about unity transcending borders, cultures and national interests to reaffirm our collective responsibility. It is a call to conscience and a platform for leaders who reject a world where victory at any cost is tolerated. It is about choosing humanity even in humanity's darkest moments. Over the past year, states and stakeholders have collaborated to identify concrete pathways to strengthen respect for IHL, focusing on four key areas:

- **Prevent violations.** Respect for IHL begins at home. Every state must implement effective measures to prevent violations and use all available means to influence parties towards compliance.
- **Protect hospitals and other civilian infrastructure.** There is an urgent need to safeguard civilian infrastructure, such as hospitals, schools, homes and essential services, which are all too often targeted with impunity.
- **Strengthen IHL for today's and tomorrow's wars.** Address emerging challenges, including cyber operations and military activity at sea, to ensure IHL remains both robust and relevant.
- **Link IHL to peace.** Explore how respect for IHL can contribute to mediation, reconciliation and, ultimately, de-escalation and peace.

The preliminary findings in this report mark an important milestone in our shared endeavour. They reflect the commitment of states and experts that have joined forces to address the most pressing issues facing IHL today. As we look ahead to the global meeting in 2026, these insights provide a solid foundation for progress and a clear call to action in upcoming consultations. The responsibility to uphold IHL rests with all states, in all circumstances. The active engagement of governments, diplomats and civil society is an act of leadership reaffirming our collective duty to future generations.

I extend warm thanks to the 27 co-chairs and six founding states whose leadership has been instrumental in advancing this initiative. The Geneva Conventions emerged from immense human suffering. Today, it is our responsibility to honour that legacy not merely with words but with action. Let us renew our commitment to the rules of war, protect those caught in conflict and preserve hope for peace.

Thank you for your support.

# Joint statement by the six founding states

In September 2024, our six states – Brazil, China, France, Jordan, Kazakhstan and South Africa – resolved to unite with a common purpose. Together with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), we launched the **Global Initiative to Galvanize Political Commitment to International Humanitarian Law**, a bold endeavour aimed at reigniting political will behind international humanitarian law (IHL). At its inception, the goal was clear: galvanize political commitment and strengthen respect for IHL.

Since that pivotal moment, the Global IHL Initiative has gained momentum. More than 80 states have pledged their support, and crucially, 27 countries have stepped forward to co-chair one of the Global IHL Initiative's seven workstreams, ensuring regional and thematic diversity in tackling both long-standing and emerging IHL challenges.

The past two months have witnessed a powerful growth in engagement with states demonstrating a high interest for the first round of consultations. Over 130 states have participated in at least one consultation, exchanging practical approaches and crafting recommendations to enhance the implementation of IHL. These discussions have been robust: exchanging legal perspectives and interpretations, debating good practices and highlighting the urgency of their mission. Conversations have been meaningful and urgent, reflecting growing concern that respect for IHL is waning – and that the lives of civilians and critical infrastructure are increasingly at risk. A common thread has emerged across consultations: violations of the Geneva Conventions lead to inconceivable human suffering and destruction. Many people have sounded the alarm, appealing for immediate, collective action.

We, the six founding states, see this moment as pivotal. We believe that reversing this trend demands concerted political resolve: reinforcing respect for both the letter and spirit of the law, promoting accountability and nurturing a culture of compliance. We stress the importance of mutual learning – sharing strong national practices, legal frameworks and enforcement mechanisms – to foster collective progress under the Geneva Conventions.

This report, detailing the preliminary results of the first round of consultations on seven workstreams, marks a significant milestone. Beyond consolidation, it lays the groundwork for the Global IHL Initiative's culminating event – a high-level conference in 2026 that will sustain the political momentum and strengthen the resilience of IHL.

Standing together, Brazil, China, France, Jordan, Kazakhstan and South Africa continue to issue an important invitation to all High Contracting Parties of the Geneva Conventions: join us in reaffirming that IHL must be upheld universally, impartially and consistently. Today, more than ever, we are called to our shared duty – upholding law, preserving humanity in conflict and striving together for a just and peaceful world.





# State engagement

The following section outlines engagement with states in the period from September 2024 to August 2025.

- **7 workstreams**
- **27 co-chairs**
- 7 state consultations / 6 high-level discussions / 4 regional meetings / 3 thematic workshops
- Over **80 states** have joined
- **130 states** took part in the first round of consultations over 7 weeks
- **250 statements** were delivered by states



The workstreams are co-chaired by the following 27 states:

Workstream 1	Workstream 2	Workstream 3
Prevention Good Practices	National IHL Committees	IHL and Peace
Australia Austria Kenya United Arab Emirates	Germany Peru Philippines United Kingdom	Bangladesh Colombia Ethiopia Qatar Saudi Arabia
Workstream 4	Workstream 5	Workstream 6
Protecting Civilian Infrastructure	Achieving Meaningful Protection for Hospitals in Armed Conflict	Upholding International Humanitarian Law in the Use of Information and Communication Technologies During Armed Conflict
Algeria Costa Rica Sierra Leone Slovenia	Nigeria Pakistan Spain Uruguay	Ghana Luxembourg Mexico Switzerland
Workstream 7		
Naval Warfare		
Egypt Indonesia		

# Global engagement

From September 2024 to August 2025, the Global IHL Initiative brought states together in a variety of ways to discuss contemporary challenges to IHL.<sup>1</sup> In January 2025, the president of the United Nations General Assembly, with support from the ICRC, held an interactive dialogue entitled, “Preserving Human Dignity in Armed Conflict”. With over 80 countries in attendance, the event was an important [call to make IHL a political priority](#). On behalf of the six founding states of the initiative, Jordan urged all states party to the Geneva Conventions to join. During the event, states consistently affirmed the importance of IHL, insisting on the need to find concrete ways to respond to immediate humanitarian concerns. A clear message was passed that the world stood at a crossroads where only decisive action could stem further breakdown of humanity in war.

In February 2025, the six founding states organized a high-level event in Geneva. Hosted by Kazakhstan and moderated by Brazil, with Brazil’s minister for human rights and citizenship in attendance, a growing number of states declared their strong interest in joining the initiative.

In April 2025, France’s minister of foreign affairs convened all six founding states for a meeting in New York, along with the 21 workstream co-chairs that had been confirmed to date, two advisory board members and the ICRC. This first gathering of all initiative participants focused on harmonizing strategy and refining near-term plans. ICRC President Mirjana Spoljaric asserted that “taking part in the Global Initiative is taking a stand against wars without rules”. During the meeting, the 27 states adopted a [joint communiqué](#) reaffirming their unwavering commitment to IHL and condemning the widening gap between legal obligations and battlefield realities.

In June 2025, Costa Rica chaired a high-level panel on the topic of “The Humanitarian Consequences of Armed Conflict: Promoting Respect for and Good Practices in the Application of International Humanitarian Law” during the Humanitarian Affairs Segment of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). It featured a statement by [ICRC President Spoljaric](#) warning that “humanity is failing under our collective watch”. During the discussion, South Africa declared that “if the Global Initiative succeeds to make IHL a political priority for all states, IHL violations can become a thing of the past”, while Brazil warned against the danger of permissive interpretations of IHL, stating that they undermine the legal protections carefully built over decades and erode the spirit of IHL. France spoke on behalf of the six founding states and delivered an update on the progress of the initiative’s workstreams. Slovenia delivered a [statement](#) on behalf of the co-chairs of the workstream on protecting civilian infrastructure (Algeria, Costa Rica, Sierra Leone and Slovenia) and the workstream on protecting hospitals (Nigeria, Pakistan, Spain and Uruguay). The statement was endorsed by 58 states and one regional organization. Several other states across regions took the floor in the time remaining to express their ongoing support and engagement in the initiative.

In August 2025, on World Humanitarian Day, South Africa convened a gathering of ambassadors and high commissioners of African Union member states represented in Pretoria. The aim was to underscore [Africa’s vital role in the Global IHL Initiative](#).

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<sup>1</sup> All statements related to the Global IHL Initiative can be found at [www.upholdhumanityinwar.org](http://www.upholdhumanityinwar.org).

# Progress on the workstreams

## Methodology of the consultations

The first round of consultations was convened by the six founding states, the co-chairs of the seven workstreams and the ICRC between mid-April and early June 2025. These events, which included consultations with all states, regional meetings, panel events and expert workshops, addressed contemporary challenges to IHL and started to identify practical solutions to enhance respect for IHL.

**All states** are encouraged to participate actively in the state consultations for each of the seven workstreams. States may elect to engage more actively in some of the workstreams depending on their interest and capacity. **Participation is voluntary and independent of whether a state has joined the initiative.** While many states that attended the consultations have in parallel joined the initiative, all other states will continue to be invited to contribute substantively to the discussions. This ensures that the exchanges can represent the full range of views on contemporary challenges to IHL.

Consultations with all states offer simultaneous interpretation in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish, and all preparatory documents for these consultations are translated into these languages.

In addition to the state consultations, a number of supporting events are organized to delve into more detailed questions related to the workstreams. Co-chairs present summaries of these events in the state consultations to feed the discussions among all states. The state consultations are held either in hybrid or in virtual form, while the supporting events usually take place in person.

A broad range of actors are invited to attend the state consultations and the supporting events to bring additional **knowledge** and provide a **multistakeholder perspective**. This includes representatives from civil society, practitioners and academic scholars, all with specific expertise in the thematic areas discussed.

Throughout the state consultations and supporting events, the discussions are **decontextualized** and **non-politicized**. By separating the discussions on humanitarian challenges from specific contexts, the initiative creates a space that privileges substance over power dynamics and competing political narratives on ongoing armed conflicts. Moving forward, the six founding states, the co-chairs and the ICRC remain committed to preserving this decontextualized and non-politicized space and engaging all states in a manner that continues to prioritize mutual respect and common purpose, **focusing on the consensual and universal nature of IHL and the core objective of the initiative to create a global culture of respect.**

# Preliminary takeaways

The following paragraphs represent some of the takeaways that stood out through all the consultations. While they give an indication of the road ahead, they are necessarily preliminary in nature at this mid-point of the initiative.

Importantly, the elements for further reflection and dialogue vary from workstream to workstream, reflecting the nature of the subjects and their respective maturity. While the first three workstreams (on prevention, national IHL committees and the link between IHL and peace) are methodological in nature, the other four (on civilian infrastructure, hospitals, ICTs and naval warfare) have a thematic focus. Among these, some build on work that has been done by the ICRC and others over several years or decades, and are sometimes complementary to discussions in other multilateral forums. Others are more exploratory. Furthermore, the consultations demonstrated that there is a wealth of issues to discuss, and that not all of them can be addressed appropriately in the coming year of the Global IHL Initiative. The elements proposed for further reflection and dialogue represent a selection of the issues highlighted by states that have the potential to lead to meaningful and concrete recommendations.

## Reaffirming the strength of IHL

Across all workstreams, states expressed concern over the persistent violations of IHL in contemporary conflicts. At the same time, they also firmly recalled that the consistent upholding of its rules remains the only viable path to safeguard human dignity during war and provide a pathway to durable peace. When respected, IHL provides a critical framework for minimizing suffering, preserving life and maintaining a measure of humanity even in the darkest circumstances. Increasing compliance with IHL was seen as the only means to reduce the human, societal, environmental and economic costs of war, and to break cycles of violence. States agreed that dismissing the relevance of IHL as a protective legal framework because of insufficient compliance with its rules would only deepen impunity and erode the possibility of future compliance. Instead, it is the collective responsibility of all states to ensure that wars do not spiral further out of control.

## Placing protection at the centre

All workstreams share one ultimate objective: ensuring better protection for all persons affected by wars. Rather than treating IHL as a purely legal or technical framework, discussions in the workstreams emphasized its protective and humanitarian nature. Anchoring implementation in the lived experiences and vulnerabilities of affected populations, and understanding how different people, such as men, women, girls or boys, or persons with disabilities, face different risks in armed conflict situations is essential. This ensures that the understanding of the letter of the law reflects its spirit.

## Strengthening multilateralism

Despite acknowledging the current challenges facing the multilateral system, states expressed consistent support for strengthening international and regional cooperation. Sharing practices and building mutual trust and respect among all states were presented as key to the effectiveness of the international legal framework and hence of IHL. Peer-to-peer engagement was specially valued for creating shared understandings of complex legal concepts.

## Making IHL a political priority

A clear message emerged from the consultations: promoting respect for IHL must be a political imperative in every state, echoing the very call of the initiative. Committing to uphold the rules of war is not only a posture: it needs to be translated into concrete actions at all levels of decision-making. It means delivering on the promise that the protection of human life and dignity in war is both a legal obligation and a core value that guides political choices. It translates into investing efforts and resources in domestic implementation, while at the same time guiding diplomatic engagements and foreign policy. States must take the individual and collective responsibility to hold themselves and others to account.

## **Starting at home**

Discussions in all workstreams highlighted good practices in domestic implementation, emphasizing states' responsibility to adopt national legal and practical measures for ensuring full compliance with IHL. Making IHL a political priority starts at home, regardless of whether a state is involved in an armed conflict: it is the responsibility of every state to actively commit to integrating its principles into domestic law, policy decisions and military operations. This prioritization involves not only reaffirming legal obligations but also investing in measures towards education, domestic implementation, socialization and accountability.

## **Reinforcing accountability**

A recurring theme of the consultations was the need to reinforce accountability for serious violations of IHL as essential to upholding the credibility and effectiveness of the law. While states often noted that international bodies play a critical role in addressing serious breaches, national systems were presented as the first and most accessible means to repress serious violations of IHL as prescribed by the Geneva Conventions, other IHL treaties and customary international law. This requires that states build and develop domestic systems that investigate, prosecute and punish violations.



## Workstream 1

# Prevention Good Practices



**Co-chairs**  
**Australia, Austria, Kenya,**  
**United Arab Emirates**

States bear the primary responsibility for putting in place laws and systems that will limit suffering during armed conflict, and indeed states have generally invested efforts and resources into ensuring that their IHL obligations are effectively implemented at the domestic level. Yet, respect for IHL breaks down too easily, which may signal that the systems that states have dutifully put in place do not always achieve their preventive intent. This workstream therefore analyses the critical gap between having all necessary measures in place and actual respect on the ground, examining what more needs to be done to effectively prevent IHL violations. To do this, it analyses practices, methodologies and strategies that seem to be effective in fostering respect for IHL.

## Summary of the consultation

**13 May 2025**

Consultation  
with all states



The core aim of the first consultation was to explore why and how national measures may or may not be effective in preventing IHL violations and to generate reflection on the political, structural and institutional conditions needed to translate IHL norms into IHL-compliant behaviour during conflict.

The consultation encouraged participants to reflect on motivation, impact, political buy-in, adjustments over time and evidence of effectiveness.

### **States were invited to consider the following guiding questions:**

In order to collect lessons learned on why and how prevention measures have or have not had the desired impact, please share the following about the measure you have selected:

- What prompted your state to take this action?
- How does this measure prevent, or contribute to preventing, one or many violations of IHL?
- What changes or amendments were made as the process went on? Why? Will this contribute to making this measure more effective in preventing violations of IHL?
- Are there any indications that this measure has been successful? Is there a system in place to measure its efficacy?
- How did you ensure that you had the commitment of political leaders for this measure?

The following summary, grouped by topic, presents the wide array of good practices, challenges and lessons learned shared by states.

## **Training and education**

Training on IHL was consistently emphasized as a cornerstone of the work on preventing IHL violations. Many states referred in particular to training programmes established for their military on IHL, noting the importance of training all forces that may be involved in operations during an armed conflict.

In addition, there were many references to the importance of integrating IHL training into curricula for the police and judiciary, and on broader public-awareness campaigns. Journalists and young people were identified by some states as a particularly significant audience. States also noted the importance of training different types of audiences during peacetime, while also stressing that continuous reinforcement was necessary, particularly in vulnerable or high-stress contexts. Other good practices included using audience-appropriate materials and securing the support of the ICRC or domestic institutions, such as national committees or similar entities on IHL or National Red Cross or Red Crescent Societies.

Overall, training was seen as a key aspect of building a culture of compliance with IHL in all states and as a key component for ensuring that IHL is firmly embedded in routine mechanisms of actions and thus adhered to even in extreme combat situations.

## **Importance of institutional and legal frameworks**

Many states highlighted the role of domestic legal and institutional frameworks in preventing IHL violations. National IHL committees were frequently mentioned as key institutional platforms that could coordinate treaty implementation, advise on legal reforms and promote compliance across sectors. Domestic legal frameworks that effectively implement IHL treaties were also viewed as essential. States gave the examples of comprehensive reforms undertaken to align domestic law with international standards. Moreover, embedding these laws within national military codes, operational manuals, and rules of engagement was recognized as enhancing their preventive function by clarifying expectations and enabling early intervention.

## **Regulation of means and methods of warfare**

Some states highlighted the regulation of means and methods of warfare as a vital aspect of preventing IHL violations, including by adopting and implementing international treaties that prohibit or restrict the use of certain weapons, such as landmines, cluster munitions and nuclear weapons. Emphasis was also placed on the legal and ethical challenges posed by new and emerging technologies.

## **Military hierarchy, military discipline and command responsibility**

States emphasized the central role of command structures in ensuring that legal obligations are understood and upheld throughout the ranks. Clear lines of responsibility and accountability within the chain of command help translate IHL from abstract legal norms into practical, enforceable standards of behaviour during operations. Integrating IHL into military codes of conduct, training and operational planning – supported by embedded legal advisers and disciplinary mechanisms – reinforces a culture where compliance is expected and violations are met with consequences. This approach ensures that even in high-stress combat situations, personnel are guided by both legal standards and an internalized professional ethos rooted in the principles of IHL.



## **Accountability and enforcement**

The importance of accountability in preventing IHL violations was also emphasized throughout the consultation. Legal accountability was seen as necessary, both to deter future violations and to ensure justice for victims. National systems for investigating allegations of misconduct, reviewing the legality of military operations and prosecuting international crimes were discussed as core components of a strategy aimed at preventing violations of IHL. Several participants noted that effective accountability also depends on transparency, independence and capacity – without which legal systems may fail to investigate or respond meaningfully to violations. In addition to judicial mechanisms, some states have established administrative reviews, internal disciplinary procedures, and frameworks to report violations to strengthen accountability within their armed forces and law enforcement institutions.

A key element of these efforts is the criminalization of serious violations of IHL under domestic law. Many states have enacted legislation to define and penalize war crimes and other international crimes. Criminalization also serves as a normative signal that such acts are not only violations of international obligations but also offences against national law and values. Several states stated that aligning national penal codes with international standards – particularly the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court – has been a key step in closing accountability gaps.

## **Political commitment and leadership**

States repeatedly stressed that political leadership is a critical factor in the successful implementation of IHL. The impact of legal and institutional tools is greatly enhanced when supported by visible and sustained political will. While this can take many forms, states insisted on the importance of political leaders (heads of state, heads of government, ministers) giving clear signals of their absolute commitment to ensuring respect for IHL, for instance through declarations and public statements in support of IHL, and driving forward national IHL strategies. Political backing helps secure the necessary funding, inter-agency coordination and public support required to maintain prevention efforts over time. It also provides the mandate for institutions to act and signals to armed forces and other actors that IHL compliance is a national priority. Strong leadership was seen as a catalyst for institutional coherence and long-term investment in preventive structures.

Some states mentioned the mutually reinforcing relationship between political will at the national and international levels: national processes have galvanized international political will on certain issues, and endorsement of norms by the international community, for instance in United Nations Security Council resolutions, has led to the adoption of national measures.

## **Engagement with civil society and regional networks**

The role of regional cooperation and civil society engagement was frequently highlighted as an enabler of IHL implementation. Regional forums and networks were seen as important platforms for knowledge exchange, capacity strengthening and harmonization of standards, especially where national capacity was still developing. Civil society, including National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, academic institutions, humanitarian organizations and legal experts, plays a key role in raising public awareness, offering technical support and facilitating accountability. The ICRC is consistently recognized as a trusted partner in this space, providing advisory support, legal expertise and operational guidance to states and regional actors seeking to strengthen IHL compliance.

## Socialization of norms

A recurring insight from the consultation was that the socialization of IHL norms – that is, embedding them into the values, expectations and identities of individuals and institutions – is critical for achieving lasting compliance. It was noted that legal dissemination and formal training, while necessary, are insufficient on their own. Preventing violations of IHL requires that humanitarian norms become part of how people think, act and relate to others in situations of armed conflict.

States shared their activities aimed at building this kind of normative environment. These included public-awareness campaigns, commemorative events, IHL-themed educational programmes in schools and universities, and the use of religious and cultural leaders to promote humanitarian values. One example cited was the observance of a national IHL month, which helps normalize conversations around IHL and heightens its relevance in both military and civilian life. Another approach involved using local engagement and community partnerships to promote understanding of IHL from the grassroots level, an area highlighted as essential to long-term prevention by some participants. It was noted that deep normative change occurs when IHL is no longer seen as a rule imposed from outside, but rather as a shared value system embraced by individuals, communities and institutions alike.

Finally, the first consultation confirmed that the Prevention Good Practices workstream should inform the work of all the other workstreams of the initiative. By deepening our understanding of the link between preventive measures and actual compliance during armed conflict, this workstream will provide a framework that the other workstreams can use to ensure that the recommendations identified in their respective areas can lead to better respect for IHL.

## Elements for further reflection and dialogue

Drawing from the insights shared during this first consultation, the following elements are hereby proposed for further discussion and refinement in future consultations:

- **Fully harness training spaces.** Legal dissemination alone is insufficient; lasting prevention requires that IHL values are internalized – becoming part of professional ethics, organizational cultures and identity. Ultimately, socialization bridges the gap between the law and lived experience, turning IHL into a guiding principle, in addition to a legal obligation. Future work will include exploring how training can best be organized to socialize the underlying norms of IHL.
- **Enhance impact.** The discussions highlighted a significant gap in this area and emphasized the need to better understand the behavioural outcomes of domestic measures. It is useful for each state to assess whether their own investment in training, legal reform and dissemination translates into reduced violations or improved compliance in conflict situations. Future work on this workstream will provide a space for states to share impact assessment methodologies they have put in place, including qualitative and quantitative indicators that capture changes in norms, conduct and institutional behaviour over time. This will help states to be better equipped at the domestic level to evaluate what works in IHL prevention and refine their strategies accordingly.
- **Explore good practices to identify and respond to risks of violations of IHL.** While the first consultation focused on the link between implementation of IHL obligations and prevention of IHL violations, future work in the workstream will draw on the practice of states party to past or current conflict, as well as on analytical work done by other actors, to identify factors that increase the risk of IHL violations being committed during armed conflict. It will then capture states' good practice in monitoring these risk factors and responding to them before they result in violations.

Painting by students of the Sir Abdool Raman Osman State College,  
winner of the "Depict IHL" competition for schools organized  
by the Mauritian National IHL Committee.



## Workstream 2

# National IHL Committees

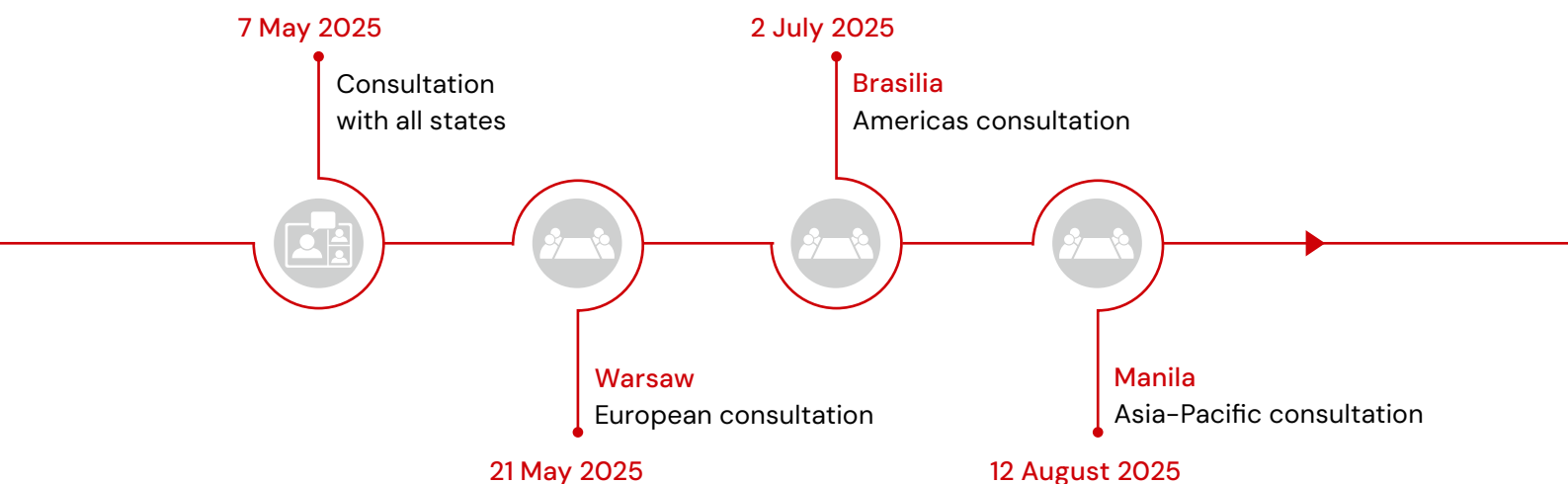


In all states, solid legal systems and structures are a prerequisite for preventing violations of IHL. IHL compliance is an “everyday fight” – it needs to be embedded in routine practices in a systemic manner. To this end, this work-stream has been exploring avenues for enhancing the role of national committees and similar entities on IHL as a vector for creating a culture of respect for IHL within a whole society.

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 typically include 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 unites a state’s experts and decision makers to discuss priority matters linked to the application of IHL, national IHL committees should serve as 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 121 national IHL committees established across the globe.<sup>2</sup> Despite this, the challenge of ensuring that IHL is implemented, understood and respected in all circumstances continues. As part of the Global IHL Initiative, states are being asked to discuss the ways that national IHL committees can and should galvanize political action on IHL. Moreover, states have been reflecting on the unutilized potential of these important domestic mechanisms and proposing innovative means for national IHL committees to further contribute to maintaining the integrity and protective power of IHL by harnessing this potential.

## Summary of the consultations



The state and regional consultations all aimed at generating discussion on the role of national IHL committees as drivers of influence towards better respect for IHL. States discussed the opportunities for national IHL committees to help ensure that key political actors are or remain committed to defending the integrity of IHL.

<sup>2</sup> ICRC, “National committees and similar bodies on international humanitarian law”, table, 2025, available at: <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/table-national-committees-and-other-national-bodies-international-humanitarian-law>.

States were invited to consider the following guiding questions:

- 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?
- 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?
- 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?
- Where does your national IHL committee add the greatest value? Please provide examples.
- 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?

The regional consultations provided the opportunity to explore similar questions in greater detail and with a regional lens. The following summary presents insights and takeaways from the various consultations.

## Benefits of diversity

Throughout the discussions, it was clear that diversity was seen as a key element to preserve. This diversity was regularly linked to the importance of adapting the mandate, composition and activities of committees to the specific needs of their respective domestic contexts, as a means to ensure their success. Committees also reported that this diversity provides a wealth of experience and practices, which itself creates many opportunities for peer learning. Accordingly, a recurring message passed in the various consultations was to focus on sharing and learning rather than conforming. In that respect, committees demonstrated a clear desire to benefit from the guidance, experience and practices of others, including through the regional and cross-regional networks.

In addition to diversity among committees, one regional consultation highlighted diversity within each committee over time. Attention was indeed paid to the way the mandates, compositions and operations of committees in the region had evolved to adapt to contextual needs and realities. There was agreement among the committees present on the value of having continuous reviews to ensure that committees remain adequately equipped to respond to evolving needs.

## Role in domestic implementation

Most remarks in all consultations referred to the important role that national IHL committees can play in supporting the promotion and implementation of IHL domestically. States placed significant importance on national IHL committees disseminating IHL to the armed forces, overseeing such training, developing military doctrine and coordinating the drafting or reviewing of legislation. Several states also showed an interest in exploring how national IHL committees could be utilized to further disseminate IHL more widely, including with members of the public and within academia. The [Open Pledge to Promote the Establishment, Enhancement and Effective Functioning of National Committees or similar entities on IHL](#) was flagged as a good way for states and National Societies to demonstrate their commitment to strengthening the role of their national IHL committee, or, where none exists, their intention to consider establishing such a committee.

## Compositions of committees

While compositions of national IHL committees varied, there was general agreement on the importance of officials from across government leading the work in order to create a degree of independence and to facilitate the crucial internal coordination function that many national IHL committees are tasked with. Many also valued the inclusion of their National Red Cross or Red Crescent Society within their national IHL committee's membership.

## Challenges faced by committees

Despite the diversity of experiences shared, there were commonalities among the challenges they faced. Two key challenges came out in all consultations. The first related to available resources, including technical, human and financial. The second was their ability to influence political decision-making. Concrete examples included the difficulty of maintaining political support for the committee (including securing the necessary resources for its work), aligning the work of the committee with the country's foreign policy objectives and the exclusion of the committee from relevant governmental processes or discussions. Overcoming such challenges was often linked to visibility and relevance. Some committees also highlighted the importance of their commemorative function, including organizing high-profile events. This can raise awareness of their activities, bolster political support and contribute to IHL dissemination among the broader public.

An additional challenge shared by states was the difficulty in expanding the reach of the committee's operations beyond government to other actors with IHL obligations, such as non-state armed groups. On substance, several states also highlighted challenges around tackling new and evolving issues such as emerging technology and environmental issues, as well as keeping IHL promotion fresh when a state is not involved in or directly affected by conflict.

At a more organizational level, other challenges mentioned during the consultations included the regular turnover in committee members, which often impacted continuity, retention of expertise and experience, implementation of priorities and activity rates of the entire committee. A few committees also mentioned the impact of large memberships in terms of feasibility of scheduling meetings, reaching consensus, ensuring the confidentiality of discussions and balancing the levels of engagement, availability, knowledge and commitment between members. Some committees also reported difficulty in managing internal governmental dynamics and coordinating between departments.

Faced with these challenges, committees shared some solutions that they had already tested. For instance, one committee explained that having a technical secretariat that does not rotate can help mitigate the consequences of the turnover of members and facilitate communication between committee members and relevant stakeholders between meetings. Others discussed the use of technology to ease communications and retain information for institutional memory. Examples shared included the creation of groups on messaging platforms and the development of dedicated websites and sections of intranets. In one regional consultation, a proposal was made to create an online IHL course for new members of national IHL committees as a means to respond to some of the challenges of membership turnover. This proposal received broad support from those present.

Practical ideas were also offered around the structuring of national committees, such as the use of sub-groups to progress work between regular formal committee meetings, establishing a core group to support the chair of the committee, and facilitating regional and cross-regional exchanges between national IHL committees. Such exchanges were deemed beneficial for helping committees to prevent and overcome specific challenges and provide new and innovative ideas to facilitate the drive for continued development and improvement that many expressed a desire for.

## Creation of new committees

A number of committees took advantage of the consultations to encourage states that had not yet done so to establish a committee. Certain states with inactive committees also expressed an intent to explore the possibility of reviving their committee, while a number of states without a committee described processes under way in their countries to explore the relevance of establishing a committee or expressed an interest in doing so. Many states with active committees expressed a willingness to provide support and mentoring.

## Enhanced impact of committees

States consistently showed interest in exploring new ways to enhance the impact of their national IHL committee. Several ideas were mentioned in this respect. A number of states also discussed the potential relevance of agreed common standards for national IHL committees. Some states expressed an openness to exploring what role these bodies could play in supporting political action on IHL. In this respect, a number of statements referenced the role that national IHL committees are now undertaking in terms of coordinating state engagement with the initiative. Furthermore, one state proposed having national IHL committees work towards a common action point that could come in addition to their respective, and diverse, mandates. The action point could be designed to contribute to achieving the objectives of the initiative. In the view of another state, such an action point could establish a shared global identity to strengthen the normative and operational influence of these bodies.

Throughout the discussions, it was made clear that national IHL committees valued the opportunity to benefit from the experience of others. The proposal that received most support related to enhanced opportunities for peer exchange within and across regions. One state volunteered to take the lead in organizing a first quarterly online exchange among one region's national IHL committees. The objective of these exchanges would be to identify joint initiatives, generate synergies and report on progress. Other ideas proposed included capitalizing on existing regional opportunities and strengthening the role of national IHL committees in these spaces, increasing visibility with political decision makers by publishing a regular regional bulletin, or taking on a technical advisory function in the event of an armed conflict.



## Elements for further reflection and dialogue

Drawing from the insights shared during the consultations, the following elements are hereby proposed for further discussion and refinement in future consultations:

- **Develop guidance for national IHL committees.** Future work on this workstream will respond to the request for guidance on the functioning and composition of national IHL committees. This will include discussing some of the propositions made during the consultations on possible shared standards and the format they would take. Work on this will take into account the importance of context-specific approaches.
- **Capture the vast array of practices.** This workstream will explore ways to capture the mandates and practices of committees. This would allow committees across the globe to better identify the range of areas in which other committees have invested and provide a dataset to guide decision-making for committees interested in further expanding their operations.
- **Further facilitate exchanges among committees.** All consultations emphasized the importance that states placed on facilitating exchanges and support between national IHL committees. In response to this clear request, this workstream will discuss potential avenues for national IHL committees to collectively work towards creating such opportunities. Recognizing the value of existing universal and regional meetings of national IHL committees, it will also explore the possibility of strengthening exchanges between regions.
- **Further invest in national IHL committees.** A common challenge expressed across regions was availability of resources – technical, human and financial. Future discussions will seek to explore potential solutions to overcome these barriers.



### Workstream 3

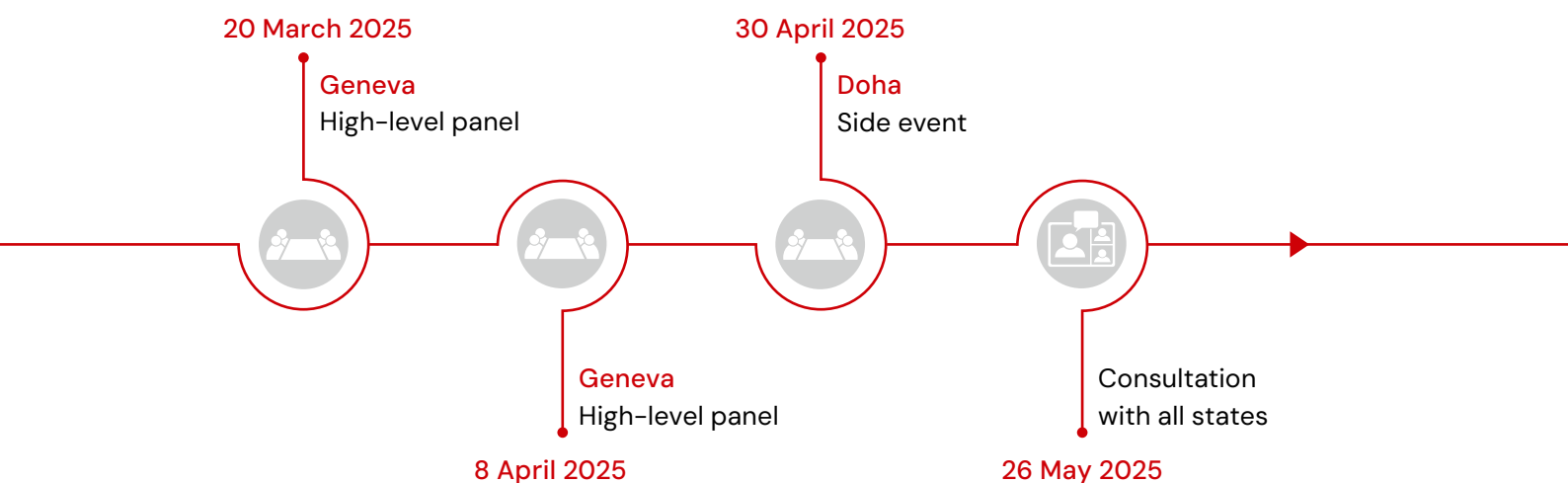
# IHL and Peace



Every armed conflict must be fought with a plan to eventually return to peace. In every war, lives are lost, families separated and livelihoods destroyed. The state of war is not a sustainable situation, especially for populations bearing the brunt of its destructive force. The workstream on IHL and peace therefore complements the work done in the other workstreams of the initiative by exploring how respect for IHL not only mitigates the impact of conflict but also fosters conditions that enable engagement between belligerents, support dialogue and pave the way for negotiated pathways to peace.

The links between respect for IHL and peace can be harnessed at different stages. First, compliance with the peacetime obligations of IHL, including on implementation or disarmament, creates environments where states and other potential parties to armed conflict may be more prepared to explore non-violent options to resolve disputes. Second, when the rules of IHL are respected during an armed conflict, harm is reduced and dialogue becomes easier between the parties. Mediation efforts have better chances of being successful as there is a certain degree of trust already established between parties through the provision of humanitarian action, facilitation of ceasefires or because key issues such as the treatment of detainees and the fate of missing people have been addressed consistently during the conflict. Third, respect for IHL can also strengthen transitions in the aftermath of combat by aiding reconciliation and promoting respect for human dignity, essential for sustainable peace.

## Summary of the consultations



The first consultation of the workstream focused on how IHL can be meaningfully integrated into mediation processes, by recognizing humanitarian obligations as shared concerns that can foster dialogue, build trust and support engagement between parties. The consultation further examined how IHL can help initiate early contact and dialogue between parties to the conflict, as well as facilitate outreach by third parties, such as mediators and humanitarian organizations, even before formal negotiations begin. It also explored how IHL can inform the substance of peace agreements and support their implementation in areas such as transitional justice and the protection of groups facing particular risks.

States were invited to consider the following guiding questions:

- How can respect for IHL be used to foster trust among conflicting parties during or in preparation for mediation processes, and what role can states play in encouraging this approach – whether as mediators, facilitators, guarantors or members of the international community?
- How can mediators and supporting states ensure that IHL obligations are adequately addressed and respected throughout mediation processes and in resulting agreements?
- What steps has your state taken, would consider taking or would recommend that other states involved in a peace process take to ensure that IHL obligations are upheld after a peace agreement?
- How does your state ensure, support efforts to ensure, or recommend that other states involved in a peace process ensure that the needs and perspectives of individuals or groups afforded special protections under IHL – such as children, detainees or wounded or sick people – are taken into account in mediation and peacebuilding processes?

The following events were also organized in the first half of 2025, where similar questions were addressed:

- **20 March 2025**, high-level panel “From respect to reconciliation: IHL in action for lasting peace”, Geneva
- **8 April 2025**, high-level panel “The humanitarian contribution to peace: A focus on the missing”, Geneva
- **30 April 2025**, side event at the Global Security Forum “Leveraging IHL for effective mediation and sustainable peace”, Doha.

The following summary presents insights shared during these events that relate to the substance of the state consultation.

## Creating conditions for dialogue and trust

States’ remarks at the various events reflected a strong consensus on the relevance of IHL as a normative and ethical tool that safeguards humanity during conflict and can contribute to establishing conditions for a return to peace. States highlighted several ways in which respect for the rules of IHL could help pave the way back to peace.

Complying with IHL means that belligerents exercise restraint in the way they behave during the armed conflict and are able to prevent violations, which are often additional obstacles to the return to peace. The examples of the prevention of sexual violence and the humane treatment of detainees were mentioned as rules of IHL that, when respected, contribute to re-establishing trust between parties to the conflict.

Furthermore, when parties to conflict address humanitarian issues early, they open channels of communication that can then be used for political dialogue towards peace negotiations. For instance, states mentioned that addressing the fate of the missing, ensuring humanitarian access to all populations in need and ensuring the return of detainees often necessitate opening a dialogue between parties. When legal obligations are complied with, parties are more inclined to maintain this dialogue, which itself contributes to building a certain degree of confidence between them. Over time, this dialogue on humanitarian issues can contribute to creating the conditions for parties to initiate an exchange on a possible peace process. In this respect, some states mentioned that this also applied in non-international armed conflict and flagged the importance of respect for IHL to generate a dialogue with non-state armed groups.

## Integrating IHL into peace processes

Several participants in the Doha round table stressed that respect for IHL should not be treated as a parallel track to peace agreements, but rather as an enabling force that can shape the architecture and content of peace agreements. Similarly, during the state consultation, several states emphasized the importance of embedding IHL throughout peace negotiations: in ceasefires or final agreements as well as in interim arrangements and monitoring measures to sustain IHL commitments. Proposals in this respect included developing typologies of IHL-related clauses and offering guidance on how to embed them within broader political tracks, while underscoring that such clauses should not be traded off against interest-based provisions. Beyond peace agreements, embedding IHL in domestic legal frameworks and transitional justice initiatives was seen as essential for strengthening post-conflict accountability and ensuring sustained protection for vulnerable populations. In addition, many states emphasized that integrating IHL from the outset of peace negotiations helps deter impunity and lends legitimacy to outcomes.

## Addressing the fate of the missing

This question received particular attention during the different discussions. In the high-level panel, “The humanitarian contribution to peace: A focus on the missing”, several participants agreed that the issue of missing persons should be prioritized in mediation efforts, as both a humanitarian imperative and a confidence-building measure between parties, to strengthen peace and reconciliation processes. It was emphasized that addressing missing persons is not only a deeply symbolic and emotional issue for affected communities, but also a legal obligation under IHL. The latter obliges parties to the conflict to prevent disappearances, clarify the fate of the missing, and support the rights of families, before, during and after hostilities. When integrated early in peace processes, the issue of the missing can serve as a practical entry point for dialogue and help rehumanize adversaries.

The discussion also highlighted the societal trauma caused by unresolved cases and the role of families in driving efforts to clarify the fate and whereabouts of loved ones. Panellists stressed that resolving cases of missing persons should be integral to peace processes, not an afterthought. In this respect, several speakers highlighted the importance of designing tracing mechanisms in a way that respects the dignity of those affected and includes psychosocial and material support to families.

Participants also cautioned against the instrumentalization of missing persons and stressed the need for sustained political and technical engagement to ensure their effective inclusion in peace negotiations. Experiences shared from different contexts illustrated how addressing the fate of the missing, whether through humanitarian search mechanisms, truth commissions or confidence-building agreements, can strengthen the credibility and sustainability of peace efforts.

## Training mediators on IHL

The discussions also highlighted the importance of developing context-specific tools and training to support mediators in navigating legal obligations and applying IHL in sensitive political environments. States called for practical tools to help mediators translate IHL into accessible language, alongside targeted training and consistent access to legal expertise. Furthermore, one recommendation was to draw on regional experiences and comparisons of practices shared to inform guidance and support. Many states underlined the need for early technical guidance and closer coordination between legal and mediation communities, stressing that tailored, context-specific approaches are essential.

## Fostering locally led action

Overall, grassroots and victim-centred approaches were identified as key to rebuilding social cohesion and hence contributing to more sustainable peace. In this regard, the role of insider mediators emerged as a central theme. States emphasized the importance of local and regional actors whose contextual legitimacy enables meaningful dialogue with communities. These actors were seen as particularly well-placed to embed IHL in culturally meaningful ways, especially when formal mechanisms are absent or lack reach. Participants called for greater international support to enable insider mediators to navigate legal and political dimensions, while maintaining local legitimacy.

The state consultation also stressed the need for inclusive mediation approaches, particularly in addressing the protection needs of women, minorities and other groups facing specific risks. States reaffirmed the critical role women play in shaping inclusive, sustainable peace and emphasized that their full, equal and meaningful participation must be embedded from the outset of any mediation process – not retrofitted at later stages. Local legitimacy and long-term engagement were identified as essential to ensuring that inclusion is substantive rather than symbolic. IHL was recognized as a flexible and principled framework that can help enable this, notably through its non-discrimination norms, specific protections for women and prohibitions on sexual violence, all of which can inform gender-sensitive peacebuilding efforts that address both immediate protection concerns and underlying inequalities.

The remarks by civil society and experts echoed these points, emphasizing that humanitarian concerns often open the door to dialogue and that local actors frequently lead early engagement with armed groups. They underscored the importance of inclusive, context-sensitive strategies grounded in humanitarian principles, and the need to equip mediators with practical legal tools for complex conflict settings. Ensuring that mediation processes reflect a wide range of constituencies and perspectives was seen as vital to their legitimacy and sustainability and to protection outcomes. Inclusivity was seen as crucial, but it must be meaningful rather than tokenistic.

Finally, participants pointed out the link with the need to invest in socializing IHL. Military training, public outreach and legal education were viewed as critical to embedding humanitarian norms across institutions and society, transforming IHL into a living framework that supports sustainable peace.

## Elements for further reflection and dialogue

Drawing from the insights shared during the consultations, and with a view to exploring other links between respect for IHL and peace, the following elements are hereby proposed for further discussion and refinement in future consultations:

- **Treat humanitarian concerns as early confidence-building measures.** Issues such as clarifying the fate of missing persons, ensuring humanitarian access and protecting detainees and civilians should be addressed from the outset of negotiations. These issues not only reflect core IHL obligations but can also help rebuild trust and open space for dialogue between parties.
- **Strengthen inclusion of civil society and women mediators as part of a broader protection agenda.** Mediation frameworks should incorporate concrete mechanisms to ensure the full and meaningful participation of women and local civil society actors, particularly in relation to IHL-linked issues such as sexual and gender-based violence, missing persons and their families or the protection of civilians and detainees.
- **Support mediators with practical tools and context-specific IHL training.** To bridge the gap between legal obligations and political processes, practical resources – such as annotated model clauses, checklists and guidance notes – should be developed to support the integration of IHL at various stages of negotiation. States also emphasized the importance of tailored training for mediators, insider mediators and other actors in peace processes. These should use accessible language, foster cross-disciplinary learning and ensure consistent access to legal expertise to embed IHL in practice and strengthen its operational value.
- **Facilitate structured exchanges between legal and mediation actors.** Creating regular opportunities for dialogue between IHL experts, humanitarian practitioners, and mediators would foster better mutual understanding and support the practical application of legal principles in fluid negotiation contexts.
- **Support implementation of and follow-up on IHL-related provisions in peace agreements.** Building on the results of the discussions on the necessary insertion of IHL rules in peace agreements, this workstream will discuss how measures put in place to implement peace agreements should also include guidance on respecting IHL rules.
- **Promote respect for IHL in the aftermath of armed conflict and during post-conflict transitions.** Many IHL rules continue to apply after hostilities cease and can guide the transition back to peace. These include obligations related to disarmament, detainee release and repatriation or resettlement, demining, safe and voluntary returns of populations, and the clarification of the fate of the missing. In parallel, legal obligations related to victims' rights, reparations and guarantees of non-repetition can consolidate lasting peace. Future discussions will examine how post-conflict respect for IHL contributes to long-term protection, accountability and reconciliation.





#### Workstream 4

# Protecting Civilian Infrastructure





**Co-chairs**  
Algeria, Costa Rica,  
Sierra Leone, Slovenia

Protecting civilian infrastructure goes beyond sparing civilian *objects* from the effects of armed conflict: what is fundamentally at stake is the protection of *people*.

When infrastructure is directly targeted or incidentally damaged, lawfully or not, it is people who are killed and injured. It is families who are shattered, and survivors who are left to cope with agonizing physical and mental afflictions. When water treatment plants fail, cholera outbreaks and other diseases follow. When food systems collapse, malnutrition rises. People are pushed to adopt dangerous and harmful behaviours to access these services and flee uninhabitable cities, creating further humanitarian needs. It is also people who operate, maintain and repair civilian infrastructure, and when they are harmed or prevented from carrying out their jobs, services can fail.

Finally, it is people who can ensure that hostilities are carried out in a way that avoids or minimizes harm to civilian infrastructure. While such instances rarely make the headlines, we have seen, time and again, the preservation of humanity in war. IHL offers a way to achieve these seemingly small and often hidden feats that, for the people affected by armed conflict, may determine whether they or their loved ones live or die. The essence of this workstream is to preserve this body of law and its ability to protect people.

## Summary of the consultations



The aim of the consultation was to exchange views on what is at stake from a practical and legal perspective for the workstream and to highlight what areas of the law required the greatest attention.

**States were invited to consider the following guiding questions:**

- What humanitarian, economic or other consequences are at stake when it comes to the protection of civilian infrastructure during armed conflict, particularly with respect to challenges in applying the distinction between civilian objects and “military objectives” under IHL?
- How does your state understand the constitutive elements of the concept of “military objective” in Article 52 of Additional Protocol I (and its equivalent under customary international law) that impose limits when determining whether civilian objects turn into military objectives? What elements would benefit from more precision when applied in practice?
- What measures can states undertake to ensure that the content of the rules and principles protecting civilian infrastructure under IHL remains protective for current and future generations in armed conflict?

Related events were organized and co-sponsored by the co-chairs in other forums in the first half of 2025, where similar questions were addressed. These include:

- **23 May**, side event during the Protection of Civilians Week in New York, “Tools of protection: Upholding the object and purpose of international humanitarian law protecting civilian infrastructure and hospitals”<sup>3</sup>
- **23 May**, UN Security Council Arria-formula meeting in New York, “Freshwater resources and related infrastructure under attack: Protecting water in armed conflict – Protecting civilian lives”<sup>4</sup>
- **19 June**, ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment in Geneva, high-level panel, “The humanitarian consequences of armed conflict: Promoting respect for and good practices in the application of international humanitarian law”.<sup>5</sup>

The following summary presents insights shared during these events relating to the substance of the state consultation.

## Protection of civilian infrastructure

A consistent refrain throughout the first consultation was that infrastructure is a crucial lifeline for civilian populations in armed conflict. States deplored the devastating and widespread destruction of civilian infrastructure and repeatedly stressed the severe consequences and immense humanitarian suffering that the damage or destruction of civilian infrastructure can lead to. In particular, concerns were raised with respect to so-called “dual-use” objects, i.e. objects simultaneously used for civilian and military purposes.

Examples of human costs resulting from the damage and destruction of civilian infrastructure included fatalities, injuries, dehydration, malnutrition, starvation, disease, disability and displacement. Beyond the human cost, states underscored that such destruction and damage hampers economic and social progress and disrupts the functioning of public institutions. It was also noted that the failure to protect civilian infrastructure increases the costs associated with humanitarian action, early recovery and reconstruction efforts. This in turn, was described as a factor in exacerbating combative social dynamics, which can drive further instability and complicate a return to lasting peace.

<sup>3</sup> Organized and hosted by the Permanent Mission of Spain to the United Nations in New York, and co-sponsored by Algeria, Costa Rica, France, Sierra Leone, Slovenia and Uruguay, along with the ICRC, Médecins Sans Frontières and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

<sup>4</sup> Organized by Slovenia in collaboration with Algeria, Panama and Sierra Leone, with support from non-council members Costa Rica, Hungary, Indonesia, Jordan, Mozambique, the Philippines, Senegal, Switzerland and Viet Nam.

<sup>5</sup> Organized by H.E. Ambassador Maritza Chan-Valverde, permanent representative of Costa Rica to the United Nations in New York, in her capacity as ECOSOC vice-president for the Humanitarian Affairs Segment.

Another consistent thread throughout discussions was an emphasis on the obligation to interpret and apply IHL principles and rules on civilian infrastructure in good faith, and in line with their object and purpose. States that opined on the matter specified that this object and purpose is to afford protection in armed conflict. This was echoed in the aforementioned ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment high-level panel, where a joint [statement](#)<sup>6</sup> was delivered by one of the co-chairs of this workstream on 19 June and underscored this very point.

## Definition of military objectives

Participants in the first consultation provided their reflections on the definition of “military objectives” under IHL. In accordance with Article 52(2) of Additional Protocol I (AP I) of 8 June 1977, military objectives are “limited to those objects which by their nature, location, purpose or use make an effective contribution to military action and whose total or partial destruction, capture or neutralization, in the circumstances ruling at the time, offers a definite military advantage”. States, including those not party to AP I, confirmed that this definition is reflected in customary international law.

The need for strict interpretations of the existing definition of military objectives and to restrain overly permissive conceptions was repeatedly stressed. At the same time, one state stressed that the concept of military objectives must maintain its flexibility to allow it to adapt to a broad range of contexts and evolutions in the means and methods of warfare.

On the definition itself, there was agreement that the definition of “military objective” under IHL is comprised of a cumulative two-pronged test. The first prong requires that the object, through its “nature, location, purpose or use make an effective contribution to military action”. The discussions revealed the need for further reflection as to what satisfies this requirement. The determining factors in this debate appeared to be what constitutes “military action” and what contribution can be considered “effective” in practical terms. One state suggested that objects sustaining the war effort could satisfy the first prong. Another state took the view that the contribution of the object to specific military operations or tactical-level activities need not be direct or immediate. All other states expressing themselves on this matter required a closer nexus between the object and military operations and cautioned against broad understandings of the standard due to the grave risks it poses to the civilian population. Concerns were raised that this would dramatically increase the number of targets and directly undermine the protections that IHL had constructed over the past decades. These states also consistently rejected the targetability of war-sustaining objects, including revenue-generating objects. Relatedly, infrastructure involved in disseminating propaganda to contribute to the general “war effort” was given as a specific example that would not satisfy the first prong.

The second prong of the definition was also discussed. This prong requires the object that is effectively contributing to military action to also offer a definite military advantage in the circumstances ruling at the time through its total or partial destruction, capture or neutralization. States underscored the need to independently satisfy both prongs of the definition of military objective. The requirements that the military advantage be “definite” and, moreover, that it be definite in the “circumstances ruling at the time”, were described as important restrictions on civilian infrastructure being considered a military objective.

## Related IHL principles and rules

States frequently stressed that even if a piece of infrastructure qualifies as a military objective, it is not sufficient to render an attack lawful under IHL. Strict adherence to the other principles and rules is required as well, such as the prohibition on indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks, the many obligations stemming from the principle of precautions, and applicable specific protections that go above and beyond these general protections. Among these rules and principles, states underscored, in particular, the obligations to account for and avoid, or at least minimize, reasonably foreseeable indirect or reverberating effects from attacks, and the need to incorporate these factors into operational planning and post-attack assessments.

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6 “The humanitarian consequences of armed conflict: Promoting respect for and good practices in the application of international humanitarian law”, joint statement delivered by Ambassador Edvin Skrt, the director-general for International Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid of the Republic of Slovenia, 19 June 2025, available at: <https://www.icrc.org/en/statement/humanitarian-consequences-armed-conflict-ihl-respect-application>.

There was also broad recognition that the failure of one of the parties to armed conflict to take precautions against the effects of attacks (or “passive precautions”) pursuant to Article 58 of AP I and customary IHL does not negate the attacking party’s obligations in attack. One delegation recommended that these passive precautions could be a subject of further reflection in this workstream.

In sum, the statements by delegations throughout the reporting period underscored the need to ensure that civilian infrastructure is protected in armed conflict, and the devastating human and societal cost when parties to conflict fail to do so. To this end, the concept of “military objective” was confirmed to be of fundamental importance. It must remain relevant and practical in today’s and tomorrow’s conflicts while effectively fulfilling its object and purpose of affording protection through an appropriate balance between humanity and military necessity.

## Practical measures

States shared practical measures to ensure civilian infrastructure is protected during armed conflict. Some of these would merit further reflection given the format and timeframe of the workstream. They are outlined separately below.

Many recommendations were cross-cutting and linked to other workstreams, in particular the Prevention Good Practices workstream. For instance, states emphasized the need to operationalize IHL principles and rules into domestic legislation and regulations, military manuals, rules of engagement and targeting protocols. One state mentioned the need to bolster these measures with periodic training sessions. States reiterated the importance of strengthening international and domestic accountability measures for safeguarding civilian infrastructure.

States also expressed the need to develop and adhere to strict targeting procedures, including but not limited to: procedures to verify that an object qualifies as a military objective and is not subject to specific protection, and to continuously obtain and cross-check information reasonably available from all sources in the circumstances to increase certainty; “restricted targeting” and “no strike” lists for specific types of objects and infrastructure; and requirements for high-level command approval before engaging with selected targets. Additionally, states underscored the importance of incorporating legal advisers, engineers and water, environmental and other specialists into the planning of military operations. One example that was raised was the importance of such specialists’ involvement in conducting pre- and post-strike impact assessments, with a view toward ensuring compliance with the principle of distinction and avoiding or at least minimizing incidental harm from such military operations.

States observed that endorsing the 2022 Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas<sup>7</sup> and implementing it in good faith would improve IHL compliance and the protection of civilian infrastructure. Examples of civilian harm mitigation policies were also shared by states as relevant for the protection of civilian infrastructure.

States also underscored the role that new and emerging technologies could have in protecting civilian infrastructure. Examples included developing and utilizing technologies to improve precision, reduce explosive remnants of war, achieve temporary or reversible effects, and enhance decision-making and battlefield awareness to minimize civilian harm.

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<sup>7</sup> See <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-foreign-affairs/publications/protecting-civilians-in-urban-warfare/>.

## Elements for further reflection and dialogue

Drawing from the insights shared during the consultations, the following elements are hereby proposed for further discussion and refinement in future consultations:

- **Invest in training and socialization of norms.** Echoing the results of the Prevention Good Practices workstream, this workstream identified the need for continuous operational training on and dissemination of the rules and principles of IHL protecting civilian infrastructure. It will remain important to continue to exchange practices, strategies, tools and methodologies relating to training of armed forces, and to integrate these rules and principles into military manuals, and in rules of engagement governing military operations, to ensure these protections are fully integrated into the system.
- **Further explore the concept of “military objective” under IHL, in line with its object and purpose.** The state consultations highlighted that limits placed by the concept of military objectives under IHL on the targeting of pieces of infrastructure and other objects need to be examined further. These discussions will be undertaken through an expert process, co-organized by the ICRC and the Oxford Institute for Ethics, Law and Armed Conflict.
- **Strengthen respect for IHL principles and rules protecting civilian infrastructure.** Future work on this workstream will continue to discuss how states operationalize the principles and rules of IHL to give full effect to the protection of civilian infrastructure during armed conflict, looking for instance at:
  - the involvement of legal advisers as well as engineers and water, environmental and other specialists in the planning of military operations
  - the obligation to ensure that the principle of distinction is upheld in military operations, as well as obligations under the principle of precautions, including obligations to protect civilian infrastructure from the effects of attacks (or “passive precautions”)
  - the specific protections applicable to certain civilian infrastructure which are additional to the general protections afforded to civilian objects. Such infrastructure explicitly includes drinking water installations and irrigation works, and works and installations containing dangerous forces, such as dams, dykes and nuclear electrical generating stations. Depending on the circumstances, other types of infrastructure, for example energy and communications infrastructure, could also be included in discussions.
- **Protect civilian infrastructure to reduce the economic costs of war.** As several states highlighted during the consultation, the economic impact of damage and destruction to civilian infrastructure is immense. States underscored that such damage increases reconstruction costs, which can hinder efforts to achieve a lasting peace. Hence there is potential to further explore what is at stake when protecting civilian infrastructure from an economic perspective, also in close coordination with the “IHL and Peace” workstream.

## Workstream 5

# Achieving Meaningful Protection for Hospitals in Armed Conflict



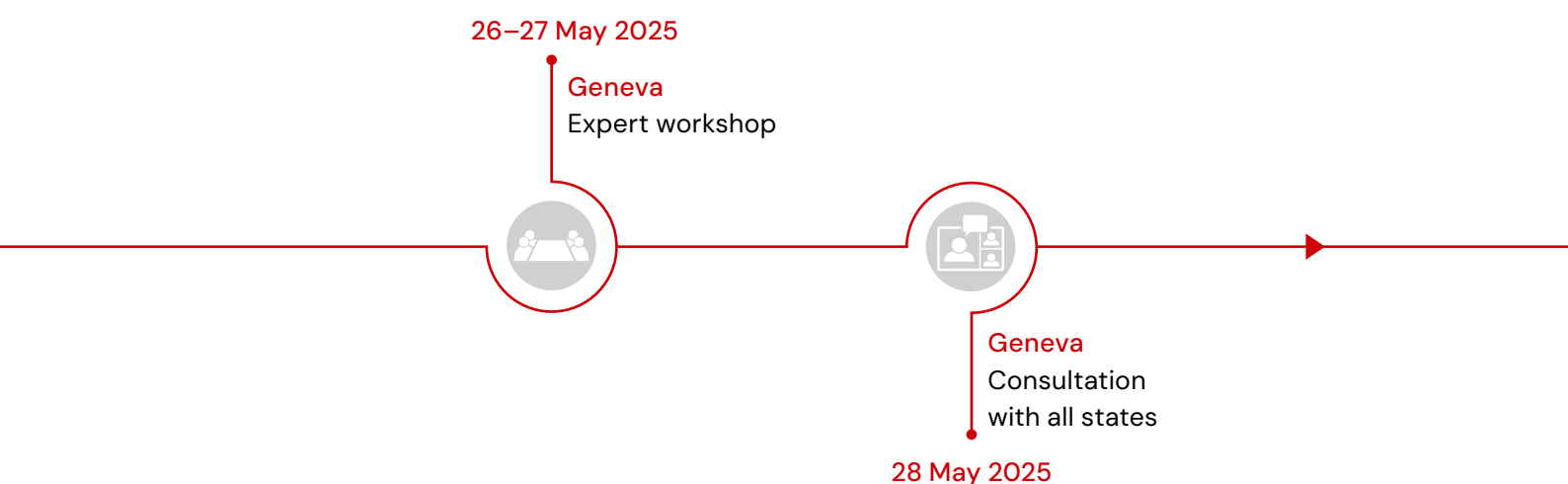


Hospitals – used here as shorthand for hospitals and other medical facilities – enjoy one of the highest levels of protection under IHL, whether they are civilian or military. This ensures that they remain functional when they are needed most and are able to provide life-saving medical care to wounded and sick persons. Parties to armed conflict must respect and protect hospitals and other medical facilities in all circumstances.<sup>8</sup> This is not an end in itself: protecting hospitals is a prerequisite for fulfilling the overarching obligation to collect and care for the wounded and sick. Wars inflict terrible physical and psychological injuries on combatants and civilians, which add to the existing health needs of the population. Without meaningful protection for hospitals, the entire framework that guarantees medical care collapses.

Although the specific protection granted to hospitals under IHL can be lost only in the rarest and most exceptional circumstances, in many of today’s conflicts, that understanding is being challenged. Worrying trends include hospitals being misused for military purposes, being attacked or being rendered unable to deliver medical services due to military interference. Taken together, these trends highlight some of the serious challenges that medical facilities face on the ground, in stark contrast with the specific protection they enjoy.

This workstream seeks to engage states and experts in examining the main contours of the specific protection of hospitals to address these pressing legal and operational challenges. The aim is to ensure that existing IHL rules granting specific protection to medical facilities are better known and understood, and to support states and other parties to armed conflicts in applying them in a way that upholds their humanitarian purpose and protective intent.

## Summary of the consultations



The expert workshop and state consultation had a similar structure and covered the same topics. The following summary presents the insights shared during the state consultation, indicating where discussions from the expert workshop complemented them.

<sup>8</sup> Article 19, First Geneva Convention.

## Specific protection of hospitals

Participating states unanimously reaffirmed that the specific protection of hospitals under IHL is the rule and any loss of protection the absolute exception. They stated that both civilian and military medical facilities lose their specific protection only if they are used to commit acts harmful to the enemy outside their humanitarian function. Such loss of protection can only become effective after a warning is provided to cease such acts – setting a reasonable time limit wherever appropriate – and only after such a warning has gone unheeded. Even when a hospital loses its specific protection, the rules on the conduct of hostilities, including distinction, proportionality and precaution, must be respected. Several states also asserted that the principle of humanity must remain at the forefront, guiding protective interpretations of these rules.

## Acts harmful to the enemy

**States were invited to consider the following guiding questions:**

- What factual indications are relevant to concluding that a medical facility has been or is being used to commit acts harmful to the enemy outside its humanitarian function?
- Are there examples from existing military practice on avoiding using medical facilities for military purposes?
- How could communication or coordination between personnel in charge of health facilities and the parties to the conflict help address cases of misuse of medical facilities for military purposes, and what form could such coordination take in practice?
- How could it be ensured that health-care providers are aware of what could lead to a loss of specific protection?

During the discussion, a number of states recalled the language of the ICRC's updated commentaries on Article 21 of the First Geneva Convention, on the notion of acts harmful to the enemy.<sup>9</sup> They confirmed they understand that such acts refer to the use of medical facilities outside their humanitarian function to directly or indirectly interfere in military operations and thereby harm the adversary. There was also an acknowledgement that the lack of clear criteria for what constitutes an act harmful to the enemy makes it prone to a range of varying interpretations, which creates the risk of reducing the protective purpose of the rule. It was therefore suggested that clear and verifiable criteria for acts harmful to the enemy could be explored. Two states presented a different view, arguing that the term was intentionally ambiguous. As a separate point, others noted that the protective emblems of the red cross and red crescent visibly indicate that the facility must be respected and protected in all circumstances.

There was broad agreement that the obligation to respect and protect medical facilities implies that hospitals must not be used to commit acts harmful to the enemy. In this regard, a few states suggested the adoption of a declaration whereby states would commit to avoid misusing hospitals for military purposes outside their humanitarian function.

Several states expressed the view that once it is suspected that a hospital is being used for acts harmful to the enemy, this must be verified through credible evidence, for instance by using field reports, visual or signal intelligence as well as intelligence from human sources. While in some cases this information can be shared publicly, one state stressed that such information is often classified and that legitimate security concerns preclude public disclosure.

The challenge of verifying allegations of acts harmful to the enemy was also discussed. Allegations that a hospital is being misused are difficult to verify when it concerns less visible acts, for example when a party to the conflict claims that patients in hospitals are planning military operations. Proposals included: setting up an entity in charge of verifying allegations of misuse as a means to increase the effectiveness of the specific protection of hospitals; and developing guidelines on a verification process, which could involve medical authorities and neutral observers to assess allegations.

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<sup>9</sup> See <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/gci-1949/article-21/commentary/2016>.



## Warning requirement

States were invited to consider the following guiding questions:

- Who should the warning be addressed to, and how can it be ensured that it is accessible to the addressee?
- What factors need to be considered in setting a reasonable time limit for the warning?
- How can a party issuing a warning determine that the warning has been heeded and be assured that the medical facility will henceforth be exclusively dedicated to medical purposes?

States reaffirmed that issuing a warning is a strict obligation and a prerequisite before a medical facility used to commit acts harmful to the enemy loses specific protection. The purpose of the warning is for the party to the conflict to cease using the facility to commit hostile acts, failing which, to allow sufficient time for patients to be evacuated. According to a few states, however, a narrow exception to this requirement exists when forces exercise the right of self-defence in response to an immediate threat. Despite the reaffirmation that the warning is mandatory and has a protective purpose, experts reported that in practice, warnings are rarely issued, and that this gap is a key problem.

The state consultation focused on how to make warnings more effective in practice. It was generally agreed that the warning must be clear, effective and include an appropriate time limit. In terms of format, several states pointed out that practices such as “roof-knocking” strikes or firing shells near a hospital cannot be considered as warnings. Instead, a warning should be conveyed by direct modes of communication, for instance through phone calls, emails and text messages. When this is not feasible due to a lack of direct communication channels between belligerents, more indirect forms of communication could be used, such as public announcements through loudspeakers, broadcasts, leaflets or other public messages. However, experts cautioned that delivering a warning through indirect means such as using a loudspeaker outside a hospital is not recommended given the chaos that would unfold within the hospital.

The state consultation also addressed the question of the addressees of the warning. It was broadly agreed that, to be effective, warnings should be directed to the party that is using the facility to commit hostile acts. Some states and experts emphasized the importance of also communicating the warning to hospital staff, while also cautioning against unduly burdening hospital personnel with the responsibility to remedy a situation of misuse. Belligerents are the ones who bear the obligation under IHL to avoid misuse, verify allegations and cease misuse.

Another important aspect of the obligation to issue warnings is the timeframe. A warning must ensure sufficient time is given for the safe evacuation of patients, taking into account factors that render evacuations more difficult, such as the complexity of the medical facility and the medical conditions of the patients. The duration of the time limit depends on what is reasonable under the circumstances, considering the operational context and the nature of the hostile act; however, it must remain effective for its purpose. The time limit can be extended for any reason, and it should be if the misuse was not intentional and the operational consequences of extending the time limit are not significant. A good policy measure shared was to provide repeated warnings in cases of repeated misuse after the specific protection has already been lost.

Given all these considerations, there was a call for further discussion and guidance on effective warnings, with a few states differing in finding that the ambiguity on warnings was a feature that allows the law to be relevant in all types of conflicts, irrespective of the technological capability of belligerents or circumstantial considerations.

States also discussed appropriate military responses to an act harmful to the enemy. A few states argued in favour of a case-by-case approach, counterbalancing operational feasibility against the relative risk of harm to patients and the medical facility. Some states considered that different courses of action should remain available, including carrying out a raid through ground operations to seize a medical facility or an air strike against the facility.

The question of ground forces entering medical facilities was discussed. Some states pointed out that searches to deter an adversary from misusing a medical facility would not constitute an attack and therefore would not require the issuance of a warning. Other states cautioned that, in their practice, it is prohibited for armed forces to enter or

search civilian medical establishments unless there is a clear military necessity or humanitarian requirement to do so. They explained that even when entry is considered necessary, they take steps to avoid entering the facility by waiting for the enemy to leave the facility or by issuing warnings. Furthermore, the timing, duration and scope of the search is carefully calibrated with a view to minimizing harm to patients.

## Relationship between “acts harmful to the enemy” and the notion of “military objective”

**States were invited to consider the following guiding questions:**

- What factors are relevant to concluding whether a medical facility – having lost specific protection because it was used to commit acts harmful to the enemy and did not cease such acts following a warning – also meets the definition of a military objective under Article 52(2) of Additional Protocol I? (1) The medical facility under the prevailing circumstances must make an effective contribution to military action; and (2) there must be a definite military advantage in destroying, capturing or neutralizing the facility.
- In such circumstances, does the hospital building as a whole qualify as a military objective or is it limited only to the part of the hospital that is used to commit acts harmful to the enemy? What factors influence this assessment and decision?
- What measures short of destroying the medical facility, such as capturing or seizing it, can be taken to terminate military use of the facility while also preserving its medical function? Are there certain circumstances in military operations that would be conducive to taking such measures and thereby enabling both these objectives to be met?

There was convergence among the states that gave remarks that the notion of “act harmful to the enemy” is broader than the one of military objective and that even when specific protection is lost, a hospital constitutes a military objective only if it meets the two-pronged definition of the term as set out in Article 52(2) of Additional Protocol I. The use of a hospital to commit acts harmful to the enemy does not automatically mean it becomes a military objective; there is a presumption of civilian status under Article 52(3) of Additional Protocol I. It was suggested that medical facilities should be put on a “no strike list” or a “specifically protected” list and the decision to remove a hospital from the list should be made at the highest level of military command.

When a hospital does meet the definition of a military objective, according to experts and many of the participating states, it is only the part of the hospital used to commit acts harmful to the enemy which forfeits specific protection and not the whole hospital. In the same vein, when a hospital is composed of separate structures, only those specific structures that meet the definition of military objective will be considered as such. Thus, the spatial boundaries of military objectives are the physical contours of those separate structures of the hospital. However, even if this approach is taken and a part of the hospital is targeted, the harm to the entire hospital needs to be taken into consideration given how modern hospitals are built. One state challenged this view, stating that it depends on the nature of the misuse, and that if a hospital is used as a base for military operations, then targeting only a part of the hospital would allow the enemy to relocate to another part and continue to use it for military operations.

The discussion also briefly covered the question of dual use, i.e. when a hospital is simultaneously used for civilian and military purposes. Some states expressed the view that there is no category of so-called dual-use objects under IHL, and therefore, if a hospital becomes a military objective, it cannot remain at the same time a civilian object. Other states challenged this view, arguing for an absolute prohibition on attacking hospitals, meaning any misuse for military purposes would never justify an attack on hospitals.

Echoing discussions in the workstream on the protection of civilian infrastructure, some states expressed the view that concerns about attacks against hospitals should not be limited to targeting the hospital itself but should extend to attacks affecting critical infrastructure that enable their functioning, such as electricity and water systems, and this needs to be mapped in advance. In their view, even when such critical infrastructure is used by military forces, it should not be attacked in a manner that detrimentally affects medical services.

## Principle of proportionality

States were invited to consider the following guiding questions:

- When a medical facility has lost its specific protection and becomes liable to attack, what kind of impact – both direct and indirect – is factored into the proportionality assessment?
- How would the proportionality assessment differ in the case of medical facilities from that of other civilian objects that become liable to attack?
- For a commander to decide to refrain from an attack or to cancel or suspend an attack, how would the elements of the proportionality assessment – i.e. expected incidental civilian harm and the reverberating effects of the attack – have to be assessed against the anticipated concrete and direct military advantage?

There was strong agreement among many states and experts that even when a hospital qualifies as a military objective, the principle of proportionality will in most cases prohibit an attack. Given the presence of wounded and sick persons, medical personnel and other civilians, the expected civilian losses will generally outweigh the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated from the attack.

In this respect, most states and experts agreed that the expected harm to the hospital includes both the direct and indirect harm that can be expected from the attack, and that long-term harm for patients and affected populations must be included in the proportionality assessment. Two states, however, expressed the view that they would only consider indirect harm in the proportionality assessment if the information available at the time of the attack indicated that such harm was reasonably likely to occur and proximately linked to the attack by a chain of causality.

One state presented its view that wounded and sick combatants or fighters in a hospital should not be included in the understanding of the notion of “loss of civilian life and injury to civilians”, as they do not have civilian status, even if they are receiving medical care. One state suggested that in the case of successive strikes against the same military objective a new proportionality assessment should be conducted following each attack.

## Principle of precautions

States were invited to consider the following guiding questions:

- In planning military operations, what steps can be taken to avoid and, in any event, minimize the indirect impact on the delivery of health care, such as the breakdown of electricity, water supply and access routes for patients, health-care providers and delivery of medical supplies?
- Are there certain means and methods of attack (for example, air strikes or the use of heavy explosive weapons) which should be avoided in attacks against hospitals in order to comply with the obligation to take all feasible precautions, including in the choice of means and methods of warfare, to avoid or minimize incidental civilian harm? What are examples of military and humanitarian considerations that may place a limitation on the choice of weapons?
- What are approaches for best managing the evacuation of medical personnel and patients (including post-operative patients, patients in intensive care, and patients facing specific risks or with specific needs) in order to ensure the continued delivery of health care?

Feasible precautions are those that are practically possible taking into account all circumstances ruling at the time, including humanitarian and military considerations. Article 57(3) of Additional Protocol I requires that where it is possible to choose among several military objectives conferring a similar military advantage, the objective that may be expected to cause least danger to the civilian population must be chosen. Article 58 of Additional Protocol I requires belligerents controlling medical facilities to take passive precautions to protect hospitals from the effects of attacks, which includes removing them from the vicinity of legitimate targets.

Looking first at precautions in attack, states reaffirmed that feasible precautions involve selecting weapons and military tactics and the timing of the attack so as to minimize civilian harm and damage to civilian objects.

The use of specific types of weapons or tactics was discussed, such as heavy explosive weapons or air strikes when attacking a hospital that has lost its specific protection and qualifies as a military objective. Several states considered that such weapons or tactics should be avoided given the severe damage they may cause to medical facilities, yet one state disagreed with this and expressed the view that the circumstances of each case dictate what is feasible.

Preparation and planning were mentioned as key to safe evacuations and the development of guidelines was suggested, covering for instance the safe evacuation of patients to minimize harm to protected persons and the re-establishment of health-care services to ensure continuity of care.

## Elements for further reflection and dialogue

Drawing from the insights shared during the expert workshop and state consultation, the following preliminary elements are hereby proposed for further discussion and refinement in future consultations:

- **Invest in training and socialization of the norms.** Echoing the results of the Prevention Good Practices workstream, this workstream identified the need for continuous operational training and dissemination of IHL for the military on the specific protection of hospitals. In parallel, better awareness is also needed among civilian medical personnel, military medics and members of armed forces in charge of medical facilities, in particular on what may lead to a loss of specific protection. Rules on the specific protection of hospitals should be integrated into military manuals and rules of engagement governing military operations to ensure these protections are fully ingrained in the system.
- **Identify possible new preventive measures.** Further discussions in the workstream will explore preventive measures suggested during the consultations, including: developing guidelines, in line with the principle of precautions, to determine and verify when a hospital is indeed used to commit acts harmful to the enemy; and involving medical personnel and/or neutral observers to assess allegations of misuse of hospitals, without, however, putting them at risk or making them responsible.
- **Forge shared understandings of core concepts.** Future work in this workstream will consider specific elements in relation to acts harmful to the enemy as well as guidance on the warning requirement. It will also aim to support better implementation of the principle of proportionality prohibiting attacks anticipated to cause excessive civilian harm in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage expected. Further discussion to improve implementation of the principle of precautions to minimize harm while ensuring continuity of care may focus on what states would need to do in the event of the evacuation of patients, medical personnel and equipment in the rare event that part of a medical facility becomes a military objective.

## Workstream 6

# Upholding International Humanitarian Law in the Use of Information and Communication Technologies During Armed Conflict



**Co-chairs**  
Ghana, Luxembourg,  
Mexico, Switzerland

The increasing use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) during armed conflicts raises significant humanitarian and legal questions. States have recognized the need for continued discussions on these questions. The ICT workstream aims to foster shared understandings on how IHL imposes limits on ICT activities during armed conflict to safeguard civilians from harm.

This workstream builds upon the multilateral discussions on ICTs, national and common positions on the application of international law to the use of ICTs, and Resolution 2 of the 34th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent “Protecting civilians and other protected persons and objects against the potential human cost of ICT activities during armed conflict” (ICT Resolution).<sup>10</sup> This workstream is complementary to existing multilateral processes and does not seek to duplicate or replace them.

## Summary of the consultation

15 May 2025

Geneva  
Consultation  
with all states



The first state consultation focused on identifying legal and humanitarian issues and concerns arising from the unique characteristics of ICT activities in armed conflict, and exploring how they should be addressed with a view to upholding the protection that IHL affords to civilians and civilian objects, as well as other protected persons and objects in armed conflict.

<sup>10</sup> 34th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, Geneva, 2024, Resolution 2, “Protecting civilians and other protected persons and objects against the potential human cost of ICT activities during armed conflict”, available at: [https://rcrcconference.org/app/uploads/2024/11/34IC\\_R2-ICT-EN.pdf](https://rcrcconference.org/app/uploads/2024/11/34IC_R2-ICT-EN.pdf).



## Use of ICTs in today's armed conflicts and the human cost

States were invited to consider the following guiding questions:

- What ICT activities during armed conflict pose a threat or risk of harm either directly or indirectly to civilians and civilian objects?
- How can information spread through ICT activities in armed conflict – in particular through social media platforms – cause, or contribute to, physical, lasting psychological, economic and societal harm?
- From a practical standpoint, does your state consider that there are any relevant differences in how ICT activities manifest or pose risks to civilians in international and non-international armed conflicts? Has your state observed any specific challenges or trends in these types of armed conflict?
- What measures has your state taken to assess or mitigate the human cost of ICT activities during armed conflict? Are there lessons learned that you could share with other delegations?

States underscored the specific challenges and risks that ICT activities pose to civilians in both international and non-international armed conflicts, citing disruption of essential services such as health care, energy, water and communications. It was reported that these services, alongside humanitarian activities, have been targeted by ICT operations, including data breaches. The harmful effects of information spread through ICT activities – particularly via social media – were also highlighted. Some states also noted that ICTs facilitate civilian involvement in armed conflict and that civilian ICT infrastructure is increasingly used for military purposes, both exposing civilians and essential civilian services to additional risks. While noting that new technologies can also enhance IHL compliance, through, for example, improved targeting information and using ICTs to give advance warning, states emphasized the importance of understanding both direct and indirect (reverberating) effects of ICT operations on civilian populations, infrastructure and data, and raised concerns about long-term societal and psychological consequences.

There was widespread support for the premise that the use of ICTs in armed conflict can result in real-world humanitarian consequences, and that IHL remains the framework protecting against the dangers arising from ICT activities in both international and non-international armed conflicts, though one state cautioned against the automatic applicability of IHL in cyberspace. While welcoming progress made so far, including the ICT Resolution, states called for practical and concrete discussion on the application of IHL to the use of ICTs and encouraged more states to develop and publicly share their national positions on these issues.

Several states highlighted national initiatives to address the above-mentioned risks, including national legislation and policies, dissemination of and training on IHL, legal review of ICT capabilities and assessment of specific ICT operations, and the availability of dedicated legal advice to military units and commands in charge of ICT activities. There was a call for a systematic exchange of lessons learned and good practices, alongside the need for capacity-building.



## Protecting civilians and other protected persons and objects from the dangers arising from ICT activities during armed conflict

States were invited to consider the following guiding questions:

- In your state's view, what limits do IHL rules and principles impose on ICT activities in armed conflicts with a view to protecting the civilian population from risks of harm? In particular, what limits do IHL rules and principles impose on ICT activities that disable civilian objects – whether as direct or reverberating effects – without causing physical damage?
- How does your state apply IHL protections to medical services, impartial humanitarian organizations and objects indispensable for the survival of the civilian population from ICT activities during armed conflict?
- Has your state considered whether civilian data in general, or certain categories of civilian data, are protected from being tampered with, damaged or deleted under IHL? What protection does IHL provide against the unauthorized copying, seizing and potential publication of civilian or public data?

States stressed the need to protect civilian infrastructure – including ICT infrastructure – and data from disruption, damage or destruction resulting from ICT activities. The relevance of IHL rules and principles on the conduct of hostilities was generally reaffirmed, particularly distinction, proportionality and precautions. States recalled the protection that IHL provides for civilians and civilian objects, in particular critical civilian infrastructure and data, from the dangers arising from the use of ICTs in armed conflict, including reverberating and other indirect effects. States highlighted the obligation of taking constant care to spare the civilian population, civilians and civilian objects when planning and conducting ICT operations.

There was a strong call for greater clarity on how these rules apply in practice to ICT operations, with a view to protecting civilians and civilian objects from the effects of such operations. States supported the idea of further examining the IHL rules, notably in relation to the notion of “attack”, that set limits on ICT operations causing non-physical effects, such as loss of functionality of systems.

The protection of civilian data and other data protected under IHL was highlighted as an issue requiring further analysis. In light of the object and purpose of IHL, many delegations expressed support for recognizing the protection of civilian data, such as medical, biometric and social security records, under the notion of “civilian objects” as well as under specific IHL provisions. While a few delegations expressed caution or called for further clarity and continued discussion on this issue, the prevailing view pointed to the importance of protecting civilian data as a key element of mitigating risks of harm in digitalized warfare. Several states offered to share national legal frameworks and policy instruments – such as data protection laws and cybersecurity strategies – that guide assessments and mitigation measures.

States expressed concern about the vulnerabilities of health-care and humanitarian services to ICT threats, and reiterated IHL rules affording them specific protection. There was strong support for the understanding that the specific protection of medical services and humanitarian personnel and objects includes their data. In this respect, several delegations noted the importance of initiatives such as the Digital Emblem project.<sup>11</sup> States also recalled the IHL protections for objects indispensable for the survival of the civilian population, works and installations containing dangerous forces and the natural environment. The risks of ICTs being used to promote or even facilitate sexual violence during armed conflict or the unlawful recruitment of children were flagged. States recognized that IHL prohibits a broader set of ICT activities against specifically protected persons and objects beyond the prohibition of “attacks”.

Support was voiced for building shared understandings on how IHL imposes limits on ICT activities in armed conflict. There was a call for operationalizing these IHL protections and for sharing lessons learned across states.

<sup>11</sup> See the project on digitalizing the red cross, red crescent and red crystal emblems, available at: <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/icrc-digital-emblems-report>.

## Protecting civilians and other protected persons from information spread in violation of IHL during armed conflict

States were invited to consider the following guiding questions:

- What ICT activities does your state consider fall under the prohibition of encouraging or inciting IHL violations? What measures have you taken to prevent such activities?
- How are persons deprived of liberty protected against public curiosity caused by the dissemination of information through ICT activities/digital communication? What measures are in place to prevent and address such situations?
- Has your state taken, or considered taking, measures to prevent the misuse of information operations in ways that could violate IHL? Are there good practices that could be shared?

Many states emphasized the IHL objective of preserving human dignity, including in the ICT environment, and focused on the humanitarian consequences arising from ICT-facilitated spreading of information during armed conflict. In particular, they emphasized that the increasing use of social media, messaging applications and technologies such as artificial intelligence amplified the speed, scale and impact of the spread of harmful information. There was broad recognition that while not all information operations are unlawful, some violate IHL, such as those inciting or encouraging IHL violations, propaganda aimed at recruiting children, exposing persons deprived of liberty to public curiosity, and whose primary purpose is to spread terror among the civilian population.

A number of states referred to their national practices or military doctrines to regulate military information operations and avoid harm to civilians, or to address hate speech, propaganda and the protection of persons deprived of liberty. The importance of protecting medical services and humanitarian operations from harm due to ICT-enabled spreading of information was also emphasized.

Some states expressed concern about the challenge of distinguishing between lawful and unlawful information operations through digital means. There was broad support for further work to clarify IHL limits in this area.

## Risk of harm from military use of civilian ICT infrastructure and the involvement of civilians in ICT activities during armed conflict

States were invited to consider the following guiding questions:

- How does your state assess the risks to civilians and essential civilian services when ICT infrastructure serves both civilian and military functions? How are the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution applied when considering ICT activities against “dual-use” infrastructure?
- What risks does your state see if civilians are asked or permitted to perform ICT activities in connection with an armed conflict, and what measures should be taken to mitigate such risks?
- What measures should states implement to ensure that civilians involved in ICT activities during armed conflict are aware of and comply with their obligations under IHL? Has your state adopted national legal frameworks to address this issue and to prevent and suppress potential IHL violations?

States generally recognized the challenges posed by the military use of civilian ICT infrastructure, where the lines between civilian objects and military objectives risk becoming blurred, and highlighted that such infrastructure is increasingly targeted during armed conflicts. Several states emphasized that the military use of civilian ICT infrastructure may, depending on the circumstances, turn it into a military objective – thereby exposing the infrastructure to attack, with civilians and essential services that depend on it being incidentally harmed. They acknowledged the need to further discuss the implications of these trends for IHL protection, particularly under the principles and rules of distinction, proportionality and precautions as well as the specific protection regimes.

Concern was expressed about the growing involvement of civilians, such as civilian technology companies and civilian hackers, in ICT activities during armed conflict, often without them understanding their IHL obligations or the risk of losing protection from attacks. States highlighted the need for further exchanges on the circumstances under which civilian involvement in ICT activities may amount to “direct participation in hostilities”, and the conditions under which the ICT assets they employ for such activities may become military objectives under IHL.

There was widespread support for the need to prevent and address civilian harm arising from the growing military use of civilian ICT infrastructure, its critical and increasing importance for the delivery of essential services to civilian populations, and the involvement of civilians in ICT activities. While preserving the civilian character of ICT infrastructure can help limit cascading effects of incidental harm given the interconnected nature of ICT infrastructure, some states acknowledged that doing so is not always feasible or practicable. Some states shared national experiences: segmenting military and civilian ICT infrastructure, embedding legal advisers in military units and commands in charge of ICT activities, and training or awareness-raising initiatives for both military personnel and civilians on IHL obligations. There was a clear call for capacity-building and due diligence obligations to ensure that civilian hackers and civilian technology companies supplying ICT services to parties to armed conflict understand and respect IHL. States also underscored the obligation of states to ensure that civilians involved in ICT activities during armed conflicts comply with the IHL rules that bind them, and emphasized their duty to disseminate IHL and to prevent and suppress violations by private individuals or entities.

The first state consultation recognized the human cost of the use of ICTs during armed conflict, underscoring the imperative to protect people and safeguard human dignity, and the urgent need for risk assessment and mitigation measures. It reaffirmed that IHL is the core legal framework to protect civilians and other protected persons and objects from the dangers arising from the use of ICTs in both international and non-international armed conflicts, and recalled that IHL principles and rules govern any ICT activity that takes place in the context of an armed conflict and is associated with that conflict. There was a clear call for inclusive and practical outcomes, grounded in IHL and focused on protecting civilians and civilian objects from harm.

## Elements for further reflection and dialogue

Drawing from the insights shared during the consultation, the following preliminary elements are hereby proposed for further discussion and refinement in future consultations:

- **Protect civilians and civilian objects, including civilian critical infrastructure and civilian data, from the dangers arising from ICT activities during armed conflicts.** The consultation reaffirmed the need to protect civilian critical infrastructure and civilian data from ICT operations, including those causing non-physical effects, and to explore how certain categories of data may fall under IHL protections, including as civilian objects. Further work will aim to clarify the IHL implications of ICT operations that result in non-physical effects, such as the loss of functionality of the targeted system, and determine how IHL protects civilian and other data from tampering, damage, deletion, extraction or unauthorized publication.
- **Operationalize specific protections under IHL in relation to ICT activities during armed conflict.** The consultation reaffirmed IHL protections for medical services, humanitarian activities and objects indispensable for the survival of the civilian population, including their ICT systems and data, while recognizing that certain legal and technical aspects may warrant further discussion. The consultation also underscored the specific protections for women and children from sexual violence and the unlawful recruitment or use of children in hostilities, including when facilitated by ICTs. Next steps will focus on translating these rules into practical measures to ensure compliance.
- **Delineate limits under IHL on information spread through ICT activities during armed conflicts.** The consultation recognized the risks associated with information spread through ICT activities in violation of IHL, for instance when inciting or encouraging IHL violations, exposing persons deprived of liberty to public curiosity and spreading threats of violence the primary purpose of which is to spread terror among the civilian population. Further discussion is needed to refine limits that IHL imposes on information spread through ICT activities.
- **Address the risks of harm arising from the military use of civilian ICT infrastructure and the involvement of civilians in ICT activities during armed conflicts.** The consultation acknowledged that when civilian ICT infrastructure is used for military purposes or when civilians (including private companies, individuals and hacker groups) engage in ICT operations during armed conflict, civilians and civilian objects risk being exposed to attacks. Future work will be needed to further explore the associated legal implications and identify IHL-grounded measures to mitigate the risks of harm for civilians and essential civilian services.
- **Enhance national measures to ensure IHL compliance.** The consultation highlighted the value of states developing and publicly sharing national positions on the application of international law, including IHL, to the use of ICTs in armed conflict, as a means to improve transparency and exchange of practice among states and to reduce the risks of civilian harm. It also underscored the importance of increasing dissemination of IHL knowledge and legal awareness among civilians involved in ICT activities and implementing measures to prevent and suppress IHL violations committed through ICT activities during armed conflict. Further discussion will offer an opportunity for states to share their national practice in this regard, and to provide practical guidance for raising legal awareness and enforcing accountability in diverse national contexts.



E. Zanoun/ICRC

Workstream 7

# Naval Warfare



The law of naval warfare – comprising IHL applicable at sea, prize law and the law of maritime neutrality – was developed primarily between the late 19th and early 20th century. At that time, vessels were flagged to the state of the owner of the ship, and generally the master and crew would be nationals of that state too. The legal regime focused on platforms and vessels, with little consideration of the persons aboard them, who were all assumed to hold the same nationality as their flag state.

The maritime domain today is considerably different from when the laws of naval warfare developed. As of January 2024, the world’s merchant fleet consisted of 109,000 vessels of at least 100 gross tons (gt), 58,200 of which were over 1,000 gt.<sup>12</sup> Modern shipping has become the cornerstone of the global economy thanks to innovations in containerization, specialized vessels and digital technologies. Over 80 per cent of the volume of international trade in goods is carried by sea.<sup>13</sup> Ninety-nine per cent of the world’s digital communications rely on submarine cables.<sup>14</sup> Civilian activity at sea comes in a variety of forms, including fishing and aquaculture, with a fishing fleet estimated at 4.4 million vessels in 2021; passenger transport and cruises; the transport of goods, fuel and raw materials; ports; offshore oil and gas platforms; marine renewable energies (offshore wind- and wave-power facilities, etc.); and shipbuilding.<sup>15</sup> In parallel to the increase in the number of vessels at sea,<sup>16</sup> the number of independent states has also increased considerably from the early 20th century to today. This means that more states enjoy rights and bear obligations under the law of maritime neutrality during armed conflict today than in the early 20th century. There are also more ships flagged to a larger number of states, whose commerce may be impacted by naval warfare. In other words, the stakes are higher and implicate more states than ever before. It is therefore timely to focus the discussions around naval warfare on the importance of better protecting the millions of people interacting with and on the oceans, as well as populations on land and the marine environment, all of which may be impacted by hostilities at sea.

## Summary of the consultations



<sup>12</sup> United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), Handbook of Statistics 2024, available at: [https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/tdstat49\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/tdstat49_en.pdf).

<sup>13</sup> UNCTAD, Review of Maritime Transport 2021, available at: <https://unctad.org/publication/review-maritime-transport-2021>.

<sup>14</sup> William Park, “The deep-sea ‘emergency service’ that keeps the internet running”, BBC, 15 October 2024, available at: <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20241014-the-deep-sea-emergency-service-that-keeps-the-internet-running>.

<sup>15</sup> Vincent Bernard, “War and security at sea: Warning shots”, International Review of the Red Cross, Vol. 98, No. 902, 2016, pp. 383–392.

<sup>16</sup> UN Food and Agriculture Organization, Fishery And Aquaculture Statistics: Yearbook 2021, available at: <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/2be6c2fa-07b1-429d-91c5-80d3d1af46a6/content>.



States were invited to consider the following guiding questions:

- What do you consider to be the main issues of concern when considering humanity in naval warfare?
- In particular, what do you consider to be the main issues of concern when it comes to civilians and civilian infrastructure in naval warfare?
- On the basis of the issues you identify, what areas of the law of naval warfare do you see as challenging to apply in modern naval warfare in order to preserve humanity?
- What solutions do you see at this stage that might help address these challenges?

Ahead of the state consultation, the ICRC and the government of Indonesia co-hosted an expert discussion with academic and legal practitioners. The aim was to address the broad topic of “humanity in naval warfare” with a particular focus on the protection of civilians and civilian objects, and to identify avenues to minimize the impact in humanitarian terms of naval warfare. The following summary presents the insights shared during the state consultation, indicating where discussions from the expert workshop complemented them.

## Challenges in modern armed conflict at sea

“International law, not power, should govern the oceans during armed conflicts”: that was the tag line for the consultations. Most states agreed that this initiative is timely; more consideration is needed on international law applicable to armed conflict at sea as it would apply today in a world that is more interconnected by sea than ever. Upholding IHL in such an interconnected environment is challenging where non-state actors share the seas with state actors. Civilian seafarers, commercial ports, offshore platforms and undersea communication systems – critical for global trade, communication and essential humanitarian functions – are increasingly vulnerable considering the development of naval and other military capabilities. The proximity of civilian assets to military operations and their susceptibility to being used for military purposes exposes them to heightened risk and makes the application of the rules governing the conduct of hostilities even more difficult. Hostilities at sea inevitably affect not only belligerent states but also states not participating in the armed conflict, including neighbouring coastal states.

The increase in non-international armed conflicts at sea and their heightened intensity underscore the importance of respecting IHL and of clarifying its application in such conflicts. Modern naval warfare often involves non-state armed groups, depending on whether they classify as parties to conflicts or are acting on behalf of parties to conflicts. This raises important questions about the extent to which certain rules and principles of the law of naval warfare – originally developed for international armed conflicts – apply more broadly. Attacks on merchant shipping by armed groups, which have disrupted maritime supply chains, killed seafarers and led to dangerous accidents and environmental damage have been one of the most serious maritime security threats at sea in recent years, aside from the risk of large-scale armed conflict. There is also considerable overlap in practice between maritime law enforcement and maritime security and the use of force at sea in countering illegal activities such as smuggling or fishing.<sup>17</sup>

While some argue for a fundamental rethink of the laws of naval warfare, others believe existing law already contains relevant protections for vessels and civilians. For example, there have always been significant civilian uses of the maritime domain, and the law has always sought to protect civilians and other persons in vessels not participating in the conflict. Nonetheless, there is widespread support among states for clarifying and updating legal norms, particularly through an update of the 1994 San Remo Manual on International Law Applicable to Armed Conflicts at Sea (San Remo Manual),<sup>18</sup> with broad consultation including from coastal and archipelagic nations.

In conclusion, the protection of civilians must remain at the core of any interpretation and implementation of IHL, including at sea. The seas are no longer isolated theatres of war: they are vital arteries of international trade, communication and humanitarian assistance.

<sup>17</sup> UNIDIR reviewed the key challenges for maritime security in 2024: C. Bueger, T. Edmunds, J. Stockbruegger, *Securing the Seas: A Roadmap for Enhancing UN Maritime Security Governance*, Geneva, Switzerland: UNIDIR, 2024, available at: [Securing The Seas: A comprehensive assessment of global maritime security](#).

<sup>18</sup> <https://ijhl.org/san-remo-manual-launching-the-drafting-phase-of-the-project/>.



## Continuous application of other rules and principles of international law, such as law of the sea during armed conflict

The outbreak of armed conflict at sea does not terminate or suspend the applicability of most provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). They remain in operation and apply simultaneously to the Second Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of Wounded, Sick and Shipwrecked Members of Armed Forces at Sea (GC II) and other IHL rules during an armed conflict.<sup>19</sup> The expert workshop stressed the relevance of the series of treaties adopted under the auspices of the International Maritime Organization, conferring protection on persons in distress at sea. The discussions on the law of the sea covered several key issues, such as navigation rights, and the obligations of states and non-state actors in safeguarding the marine environment, including natural resources, during conflicts. Further in-depth attention was also paid to the topic of the protection of civilians at sea, encompassing the need to ensure that essential goods and services reach civilians, protection of merchant vessels, and protection of the wounded, sick, shipwrecked and dead at sea. Protection of civilian infrastructure was also explored with topics such as critical civilian infrastructure, the impact on civilians when undersea cables are cut and the effects of attacks on oil rigs and gas pipelines.

## Rights and duties of neutral states, in particular coastal and archipelagic states

More consideration was requested as to how the rights and duties of neutral states can be respected during armed conflict at sea. This requires a clearer understanding of maritime and other neutrality concepts, especially on aspects relating to navigational rights, protection of the environment and protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure across neutral waters. Moreover, guaranteeing the rights of neutral states and their access to international shipping lanes is vital to ensure the survival of civilian populations in both belligerent and neutral states.

Some examples given as to the complexities include that, under UNCLOS, neutral states are obliged to allow the innocent passage and archipelagic sea lane passage of foreign warships through their territorial seas and archipelagic waters. Belligerent warships could then use the neutral waters for hostile actions inconsistent with these passage rights and, possibly, in violation of a state's neutrality, putting its environment and civilians at risk.

A similar dilemma arises in the context of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), where coastal states are confronted with overlapping legal obligations. Under UNCLOS, they are entrusted with the duty to protect and preserve the marine environment. Yet, the law of naval warfare traditionally permits the conduct of naval hostilities within the EEZ of neutral states. The question then remains as to whether belligerent states should protect the marine environment and have "due regard" for the rights of neutral states in their EEZs; in other words, should neutral EEZs be protected from the effects of armed conflict nowadays given the impact on civilians and the environment?

## Means and methods of warfare, including new technologies of warfare

States widely emphasized the importance of compliance with the IHL rules that generally apply at sea, in particular, those regarding distinction, proportionality and precaution. The protection of certain critical infrastructure, such as submarine cables, pipelines and other installations supporting civilian populations, e.g. oil rigs, is increasingly important. Attacks and the threat of attacks against merchant vessels, as well as the use of sea mines, have increased recently, which raises several concerns – in particular, in terms of the principle of distinction – for the protection of merchant vessels and the seafarers on them, as well as civilian coastal populations and the marine environment.

On new technology, the increasing deployment of uncrewed maritime systems (underwater vehicles, autonomous surface vessels) and cyber capabilities has introduced new modes of conflict. While IHL applies to the use of new technology in warfare, there are several practical, legal and ethical issues particularly as regards the use of such capabilities for the exercise of belligerent rights and other hostile actions.

There is growing concern about the vulnerability to hacking, particularly concerning the automatic identification system and spoofing. Drones, anti-ship missiles, electronic warfare and GPS spoofing expose seafarers to battlefield tools, and the burden on ships and their masters and crews is severe. In terms of practical communication mechanisms, states recognized that protecting global digital communication infrastructure, particularly submarine fibre optic cables, is a collective responsibility.

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<sup>19</sup> ICRC, Commentary on the Second Geneva Convention, Cambridge University Press, 2017, para. 48.

## **Blockade**

The illegality of causing starvation by blockade was widely discussed. The San Remo Manual and many military manuals prohibit a maritime blockade that leaves civilians without food and other items essential for survival. Such essential items must be appropriately supplied to the civilian population in the blockade area. The belligerent purpose in establishing a blockade is to deny the enemy the use of enemy or neutral vessels or aircraft to transport goods or personnel to or from its territory that are inherent to the military effort. Blockades must not be designed to bar access to neutral ports or coast, nor to straits used for international navigation or archipelagic sea lanes. The belligerent states must comply with their obligations regarding humanitarian relief. Imposition of blockades, whether for operational or economic reasons, can lead to humanitarian crises. Together with the legal and ethical implications, this must be taken into account when establishing and maintaining a blockade.

## **Protection of the natural environment**

There was a call from some states for better protection of the natural environment. Naval warfare can cause damage to the natural marine environment. Whenever ships are hit by attacks, they lose fuel and often other hazardous goods such as oil or chemicals that damage the environment. Similarly, if gas or oil pipelines are cut during armed conflict at sea, the effect on the natural environment could be considerable. The use of sea mines and other explosive weapons at sea kills or seriously injures or damages marine animals and plants. The use of sonar technology causes marine animals to lose their sense of direction and thus their ability to survive. Questions were asked as to what the positive obligations are on militaries to prevent environmental harm in such instances and to facilitate or take actions to mitigate environmental risks. Further consideration of the marine environment in armed conflict at sea is warranted.

## **Protection of seafarers and merchant shipping**

The involvement of civilian seafarers in conflict zones, from belligerent states as well as from neutral or non-belligerent states, highlights the urgent need to preserve the principles of distinction, proportionality and precautions. While they are not combatants, they are nonetheless caught in the crossfire of modern naval warfare, while performing the vital global service of keeping shipping services with necessary goods running. In recent conflicts, front lines have intersected with key shipping routes and the direct targeting of port infrastructure has placed thousands of civilian seafarers in direct danger. Even when merchant seafarers are kept out of the direct line of fire, the burden on crews is severe: longer voyages, higher risks and the psychological toll of navigating war zones weigh heavily on those who keep supply lines moving.

## **Protection of the wounded, sick, shipwrecked, dead and detained**

There are legal and practical difficulties in rescuing shipwrecked individuals after a naval engagement. While Article 18 of the Second Geneva Convention mandates searching for and collecting the wounded, sick, shipwrecked and dead, some states reflected on the complexity of search and rescue operations for the evacuation of the wounded, sick, shipwrecked and dead after an engagement. Modern operational challenges such as the risk of enemy use of long-range weaponry may prevent a quick response. This underscores the need to understand how this obligation can be effectively implemented in current conflicts while safeguarding its humanitarian purpose. In certain circumstances, it may be necessary and indeed legally required for belligerents to appeal to neutral vessels for assistance from neutral vessels when a belligerent cannot meet its humanitarian duties alone. Furthermore, neutral states might have obligations in relation to the protection of the wounded, sick, shipwrecked, dead and detained, which have not been sufficiently considered. Moreover, the protection of hospital ships and coastal rescue boats must be strengthened.

## **How to address or prevent violations**

There were some calls for the establishment and support of credible accountability mechanisms, including investigations into the targeting of humanitarian aid vessels and workers at sea. More sharing of rules of engagement (and ensuring those rules of engagement are up to date with current practices and laws) was also recommended; so was training of naval personnel, both military and civilian and indeed further cross-government engagement; and training and exercising on search and rescue and other protective aspects of evacuation at sea.

## Elements for further reflection and dialogue

Drawing from the insights shared during the workshop and state consultation, the following preliminary elements are hereby proposed for further discussion and refinement in future consultations:

- **Further explore how the fundamental IHL principles and rules governing the conduct of hostilities (distinction, proportionality, precautions) apply at sea**, including by looking at the following:
  - The circumstances under which merchant vessels may potentially be classified as military objectives and the measures that may subsequently be taken against them, up to possibly attacking them, should be discussed.
  - The significant effects that naval warfare can have on civilians, civilian objects and the civilian population on land need to be further examined. Blockade operations in particular raise serious concerns about a blockading party's ability to comply with the prohibition against the starvation of civilians as a method of warfare and obligations regarding humanitarian relief. The belligerent state must facilitate humanitarian assistance through a blockade. Other maritime interdiction operations, such as contraband enforcement and exclusion zones, can severely disrupt the flow of commercial goods as well as foodstuffs and other essential supplies, including humanitarian relief, with a detrimental effect for the population on land.
  - Civilian infrastructure at sea and under the sea must be protected. Further discussions are needed on how the rights of neutral states and the importance of this infrastructure for the civilian population (e.g. energy provision) and for global interconnectedness must be duly considered even when pieces of this infrastructure may have become military objectives.
- **Strengthen understanding of and coordination on the obligations around protection of people at sea.** The protection, search for and evacuation of the wounded, sick, shipwrecked and dead is highly important. States underscored that when belligerents cannot undertake evacuation themselves, they must facilitate the search for, collection, care and evacuation of such persons, possibly with the support of neutral states or other vessels. How this must be done warrants further discussion.
- **Address the impact of new technologies.** States acknowledged the significant challenges and considerations posed by the use of new and emerging technologies during naval warfare (artificial intelligence, autonomous systems, cyber warfare, spoofing) and their potential harmful impact on civilians. The particular challenges in the naval environment require further examination.
- **Enhance the protection of the natural environment.** States highlighted the necessity of doing more to protect the marine environment (and the natural environment more generally) from the consequences of naval operations. Discussions could include a clarification of the notion of "due regard" for the environment (both for the coastal state and for the state seeking to use those waters), which finds expression in the law of the sea, various military manuals and the 1994 San Remo Manual.
- **Invest in training and the socialization of norms.** Strengthening training, dialogue and cooperation is required: states underscored the vital role of ongoing training for naval forces, cross-government engagement and international dialogue to improve understanding of and adherence to the law of naval warfare, including IHL. Specifically, states reflected on the necessity for naval IHL capacity-building on maritime-based scenarios and naval operational planning with the inclusion of humanitarian considerations and the inclusion of the risk to civilian shipping.



# Second round of consultations

## Consultations with all states

### November 2025

Monday

03

Geneva | Hybrid

Workstream 4

Protecting Civilian Infrastructure

Thursday

06

Geneva | Hybrid

Workstream 7

Naval Warfare

Monday

24

Geneva | Hybrid

Workstream 6

Upholding IHL in the Use of  
Information and Communication  
Technologies During Armed  
Conflict

Tuesday

25

Geneva | Hybrid

Workstream 1

Prevention Good Practices

### December 2025

Wednesday

26

Geneva | Hybrid

Workstream 3

IHL and Peace

Tuesday

02

Geneva | Hybrid

Workstream 5

Achieving Meaningful Protection  
for Hospitals in Armed Conflict

# Regional Consultations for Workstream 2: National IHL Committees

## September 2025

Thursday

Abuja | In person

25

Regional consultation during the 2025 ECOWAS–ICRC Annual Review Meeting on the implementation of IHL in West Africa

## November 2025

Wednesday–Thursday (date TBC)

Cairo | In person

Regional consultation during the Thirteenth Meeting of Arab National Committees on IHL

## December 2025

Wednesday

Pretoria | In person

03

Regional consultation during the 24th Regional IHL Seminar for Southern Africa and Indian Ocean Island States

# Supporting events

## September 2025

Tuesday–Friday

Abuja | In person

23–26

ECOWAS–ICRC Annual Review Meeting on the implementation of IHL in West Africa

Workstreams: National IHL Committees, Protecting Civilian Infrastructure, Achieving Meaningful Protection for Hospitals in Armed Conflict, Upholding IHL in the Use of Information and Communication Technologies During Armed Conflict

## October 2025

Tuesday

Astana | Hybrid

07

Regional Conference of Representatives of Central Asia on Galvanizing Political Commitment to IHL

Workstream: IHL and Peace

Tuesday–Wednesday

Nairobi | In person

07–08

Regional Seminar for East Africa on IHL

Workstreams: Prevention Good Practices, Protecting Civilian Infrastructure, Achieving Meaningful Protection for Hospitals in Armed Conflict

## October 2025

Friday

17

Brussels | In person

Workshop, “Preventing violations of IHL through socialization of norms: An exchange of practice” (in partnership with the European Union)

**Workstream: Prevention Good Practices**

Tuesday

28

Paris | In person

Seminar, “Upholding international humanitarian law in an era of digitalized warfare: Presenting the ICT workstream of the Global Initiative to Galvanize Political Commitment to IHL” (in partnership with Paris Peace Forum)

**Workstream: Upholding IHL in the Use of Information and Communication Technologies During Armed Conflict**

Thursday

30

Bogotá | In person

Workshop on IHL in post-conflict transitions

**Workstream: IHL and Peace**



## October 2025

Thursday–Friday

Geneva | In person

30–31

Expert workshop on the protection of hospitals in armed conflict

Workstream: Achieving Meaningful Protection for Hospitals  
in Armed Conflict

## November 2025

Wednesday–Thursday (date TBC)

Cairo | In person

Thirteenth Meeting of Arab National Committees on IHL

Workstreams: Prevention Good Practices, National IHL Committees,  
IHL and Peace, Protecting Civilian Infrastructure, Naval Warfare

Thursday–Friday

Bruges | In person

13–14

Colloquium “Standing up for IHL: Building a common understanding around  
the law that protects in war” (in partnership with the College of Europe)

Workstreams: IHL and Peace, Protecting Civilian Infrastructure, Achieving  
Meaningful Protection for Hospitals in Armed Conflict, Upholding IHL in  
the Use of Information and Communication Technologies During Armed  
Conflict, Naval Warfare

## December 2025

Date TBC late November/early December

Amman | In person

High-Level Meeting with Secretaries-General of Arab Foreign Ministries

**Workstreams: Protecting Civilian Infrastructure, Achieving Meaningful Protection for Hospitals in Armed Conflict**

Tuesday–Friday

Pretoria | In person

02–05

Regional IHL Seminar for Southern Africa and Indian Ocean Island States

**Workstreams: National IHL Committees, IHL and Peace**

Monday–Wednesday

Geneva | In person

08–10

Expert workshop on the concept of “military objective” under IHL (in partnership with Oxford University)

**Workstream: Protecting Civilian Infrastructure**

# Annex – Participants

This annex lists states and other entities represented during the first round of consultations; many, but not all, made statements from the floor. Statements shared in writing with the ICRC may be found at [www.upholdhumanityinwar.org](http://www.upholdhumanityinwar.org).

## Workstream 1

### Prevention Good Practices

#### Consultation moderated by:

- **H.E. Ms Emily Roper**  
Ambassador, Deputy Permanent Representative and chargée d'affaires ad interim of Australia to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva
- **H.E. Dr Désirée Schweitzer**  
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva
- **H.E. Mr James Ndirangu Waweru**  
Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva
- **Dr Cordula Droege**  
Chief Legal Officer and Head of the Legal Division, International Committee of the Red Cross

#### States participating in the consultation

- |                                       |                     |                        |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| ▪ Argentina                           | ▪ Indonesia         | ▪ Palestine            |
| ▪ Armenia                             | ▪ Iraq              | ▪ Paraguay             |
| ▪ Australia                           | ▪ Ireland           | ▪ Philippines          |
| ▪ Austria                             | ▪ Israel            | ▪ Poland               |
| ▪ Brazil                              | ▪ Italy             | ▪ Portugal             |
| ▪ Brunei Darussalam                   | ▪ Japan             | ▪ Russian Federation   |
| ▪ Canada                              | ▪ Jordan            | ▪ Rwanda               |
| ▪ Chile                               | ▪ Kazakhstan        | ▪ Slovakia             |
| ▪ Costa Rica                          | ▪ Kenya             | ▪ South Africa         |
| ▪ Cyprus                              | ▪ Republic of Korea | ▪ Spain                |
| ▪ Democratic Republic<br>of the Congo | ▪ Kuwait            | ▪ Sri Lanka            |
| ▪ Djibouti                            | ▪ Latvia            | ▪ Sudan                |
| ▪ Egypt                               | ▪ Malawi            | ▪ Switzerland          |
| ▪ El Salvador                         | ▪ Malaysia          | ▪ Thailand             |
| ▪ France                              | ▪ Mauritius         | ▪ Timor-Leste          |
| ▪ Germany                             | ▪ Netherlands       | ▪ Tunisia              |
| ▪ Guatemala                           | ▪ Monaco            | ▪ Türkiye              |
| ▪ Haiti                               | ▪ Morocco           | ▪ Ukraine              |
| ▪ Honduras                            | ▪ Myanmar           | ▪ United Arab Emirates |
| ▪ Hungary                             | ▪ Nauru             | ▪ United Kingdom       |
| ▪ Iceland                             | ▪ Nigeria           | ▪ United States        |
|                                       | ▪ Pakistan          |                        |

## National Societies represented in the consultation

Kenya Red Cross Society

## Other entities represented in the consultation

- Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack
- Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
- Save the Children
- Sovereign Order of Malta

## Resource person

**Dr Fiona Terry**

Head of the Centre for Operational Research, ICRC

## Workstream 2

# National IHL Committees

## Consultation moderated by:

- **H.E. Ms Kristine Leilani Salle**  
Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative of the Philippines to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva
- **Mr Paul Berman**  
Legal Director of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, United Kingdom
- **Mr Markus Mayr**  
First Secretary, Permanent Mission of Germany to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva
- **Mr Walter Moscoso Rios**  
Second Secretary, Permanent Mission of Peru to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva
- **Dr Cordula Droege**  
Chief Legal Officer and Head of the Legal Division, International Committee of the Red Cross

## States participating in the consultation

- |                          |                                    |                     |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------|
| ▪ Algeria                | ▪ Cyprus                           | ▪ Ireland           |
| ▪ Angola                 | ▪ Czech Republic                   | ▪ Israel            |
| ▪ Argentina              | ▪ Democratic Republic of the Congo | ▪ Italy             |
| ▪ Armenia                | ▪ Djibouti                         | ▪ Japan             |
| ▪ Australia              | ▪ Dominican Republic               | ▪ Jordan            |
| ▪ Austria                | ▪ Ecuador                          | ▪ Kenya             |
| ▪ Bahrain                | ▪ Egypt                            | ▪ Republic of Korea |
| ▪ Bangladesh             | ▪ Eswatini                         | ▪ Kuwait            |
| ▪ Belarus                | ▪ Finland                          | ▪ Lesotho           |
| ▪ Belgium                | ▪ France                           | ▪ Lithuania         |
| ▪ Bosnia and Herzegovina | ▪ Gabon                            | ▪ Luxembourg        |
| ▪ Brazil                 | ▪ Germany                          | ▪ Malawi            |
| ▪ Cabo Verde             | ▪ Greece                           | ▪ Malaysia          |
| ▪ Cameroon               | ▪ Guatemala                        | ▪ Mexico            |
| ▪ Canada                 | ▪ Guinea-Bissau                    | ▪ Moldova           |
| ▪ Chile                  | ▪ Honduras                         | ▪ Mongolia          |
| ▪ China                  | ▪ Hungary                          | ▪ Montenegro        |
| ▪ Colombia               | ▪ Indonesia                        | ▪ Morocco           |
| ▪ Costa Rica             | ▪ Iraq                             | ▪ Mozambique        |
| ▪ Cuba                   |                                    | ▪ Nepal             |

- Netherlands
- New Zealand
- Nigeria
- Pakistan
- Palestine
- Paraguay
- Peru
- Philippines
- Poland
- Qatar
- Russian Federation
- Samoa
- Saudi Arabia
- Slovakia
- Slovenia
- South Africa
- Spain
- Sri Lanka
- Sudan
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- Syrian Arab Republic
- Thailand
- Türkiye
- Ukraine
- United Arab Emirates
- United Kingdom
- United States
- Uruguay
- Viet Nam

### National Societies represented in the consultation

- Bahrain Red Crescent Society
- Belgian Red Cross
- British Red Cross
- Cameroon Red Cross Society
- Red Cross Society of China
- Gabonese Red Cross Society
- German Red Cross
- Honduran Red Cross
- Japanese Red Cross Society
- Kenya Red Cross Society
- Malawi Red Cross Society
- Mongolian Red Cross Society
- Nigerian Red Cross Society
- Moroccan Red Crescent

### Other entities represented in the consultation

Organisation internationale de la Francophonie

## Workstream 3

## IHL and Peace

### Consultation moderated by:

- **H.E. Mr Álvaro Enrique Ayala Meléndez**  
Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva
- **H.E. Mr Reta Alemu Nega**  
Ambassador Extraordinary, Plenipotentiary and Special Envoy, Ethiopia
- **Dr Cordula Droege**  
Chief Legal Officer and Head of the Legal Division, International Committee of the Red Cross

### States participating in the consultation

- Algeria
- Argentina
- Armenia
- Australia
- Austria
- Bangladesh
- Bhutan
- Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Brazil
- Brunei Darussalam
- Canada
- China
- Colombia
- Costa Rica
- Croatia
- Cyprus
- Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Denmark
- Djibouti
- Egypt
- Ethiopia
- Finland
- France
- The Gambia
- Germany
- Guatemala
- Holy See
- Honduras
- Hungary
- Indonesia
- Iraq
- Ireland
- Israel
- Italy
- Jordan
- Kazakhstan
- Republic of Korea
- Latvia
- Lithuania
- Malaysia
- Mauritius
- Mexico
- Monaco
- Morocco
- Myanmar
- Netherlands
- Nigeria

- Norway
- Pakistan
- Palestine
- Papua New Guinea
- Paraguay
- Philippines
- Romania
- Russian Federation
- Rwanda
- Saudi Arabia
- Slovakia
- South Africa
- Spain
- Sri Lanka
- Sudan
- Switzerland
- Syrian Arab Republic
- Thailand
- Timor-Leste
- Tunisia
- Türkiye
- Ukraine
- United Arab Emirates
- United States
- Viet Nam

## National Societies represented in the consultation

Red Cross Society of China

## Other entities represented in the consultation

- Interpeace
- Sovereign Order of Malta
- Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue
- Geneva Peacebuilding Platform
- Swisspeace

## Resource person

**Mr Pierre Hazan**

Senior Fellow, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva

## Workstream 4

# Protecting Civilian Infrastructure

## Consultation moderated by:

- **H.E. Mr Rachid Bladehane**  
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary and Permanent Representative of Algeria to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva
- **H.E. Mr Christian Guillermet Fernandez**  
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva
- **H.E. Mr Samuel Housman Buggie Saffa**  
Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva
- **H.E. Ms Anita Pipan**  
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary and Permanent Representative of Slovenia to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva
- **Dr Cordula Droege**  
Chief Legal Officer and Head of the Legal Division, International Committee of the Red Cross

## States participating in the consultation

- Algeria
- Argentina
- Armenia
- Australia
- Austria
- Azerbaijan
- Belarus
- Belgium
- Bhutan
- Brazil
- Canada
- China
- Colombia
- Costa Rica
- Côte d'Ivoire
- Cuba
- Cyprus
- Czech Republic
- Dominican Republic
- Ecuador
- Egypt
- Ethiopia
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Guatemala
- Holy See

- Honduras
- Hungary
- Iceland
- Indonesia
- Iraq
- Ireland
- Israel
- Italy
- Japan
- Jordan
- Kazakhstan
- Kuwait
- Latvia
- Libya
- Lithuania
- Malaysia
- Mexico
- Morocco
- Nauru
- Netherlands
- Oman
- Palestine
- Panama
- Paraguay
- Poland
- Portugal
- Romania
- Russian Federation
- Saudi Arabia
- Sierra Leone
- Slovakia
- Slovenia
- South Africa
- Spain
- Sri Lanka
- Sudan
- Switzerland
- Syrian Arab Republic
- Tajikistan
- Thailand
- Türkiye
- United Kingdom
- United States
- Uruguay
- Viet Nam

## National Societies represented in the consultation

Red Cross Society of China

## Resource persons

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## Workstream 5

# Achieving Meaningful Protection for Hospitals in Armed Conflict

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## States participating in the consultation

- Algeria
- Argentina
- Australia
- Austria
- Belarus
- Belgium
- Brazil
- Bulgaria
- Canada
- Colombia
- Costa Rica
- Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Djibouti
- Egypt
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Guatemala
- Guyana
- Holy See
- Honduras
- Hungary
- Indonesia
- Iran
- Iraq
- Ireland

- Israel
- Italy
- Japan
- Jordan
- Kazakhstan
- Kuwait
- Latvia
- Lebanon
- Malawi
- Malaysia
- Monaco
- Montenegro
- Morocco
- Nauru
- Netherlands
- New Zealand
- Nigeria
- Norway
- Pakistan
- Palestine
- Paraguay
- Philippines
- Poland
- Portugal
- Romania
- Russian Federation
- Saudi Arabia
- South Africa
- South Sudan
- Spain
- Sri Lanka
- Sudan
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- Syrian Arab Republic
- Thailand
- Ukraine
- United Arab Emirates
- United Kingdom
- United States
- Uruguay
- Venezuela
- Viet Nam

### National Societies represented in the consultation

- Costa Rica Red Cross
- German Red Cross
- Honduran Red Cross
- Moroccan Red Crescent
- Palestine Red Crescent Society

### Other entities represented in the consultation

- Médecins Sans Frontières
- Sovereign Order of Malta
- World Health Organization

### Resource persons

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## Workstream 6

# Upholding IHL in the Use of Information and Communication Technologies During Armed Conflict

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Ambassador and Vice-Director, Directorate of International Law, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Switzerland
- **Dr Cordula Droege**  
Chief Legal Officer and Head of the Legal Division, International Committee of the Red Cross



## States participating in the consultation

- Algeria
- Argentina
- Armenia
- Australia
- Austria
- Azerbaijan
- Belarus
- Belgium
- Bhutan
- Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Brazil
- Bulgaria
- Canada
- Chile
- Colombia
- Costa Rica
- Cuba
- Cyprus
- Czech Republic
- Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Djibouti
- Ecuador
- Egypt
- Estonia
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Ghana
- Guatemala
- Guyana
- Holy See
- Honduras
- India
- Indonesia
- Iraq
- Ireland
- Israel
- Japan
- Jordan
- Kazakhstan
- Kenya
- Republic of Korea
- Kuwait
- Latvia
- Luxembourg
- Malaysia
- Mauritius
- Mexico
- Monaco
- Morocco
- Myanmar
- Netherlands
- Nigeria
- Norway
- Pakistan
- Palestine
- Philippines
- Poland
- Portugal
- Romania
- Russian Federation
- Saudi Arabia
- Sierra Leone
- Singapore
- Slovakia
- Slovenia
- South Africa
- Spain
- Sri Lanka
- Sudan
- Switzerland
- Syrian Arab Republic
- Thailand
- Tunisia
- Ukraine
- United Arab Emirates
- United Kingdom
- United States
- Uruguay
- Viet Nam

## Other entities represented in the consultation

- Access Now
- Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization
- Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue
- Cooperazione Internazionale Sud Sud
- CyberPeace Institute
- European Union
- Inter-Parliamentary Union
- League of Arab States
- Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
- Organisation internationale de la Francophonie
- Sovereign Order of Malta
- Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
- Tsinghua University
- United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research
- United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs

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### States participating in the consultation

- |                     |               |                        |
|---------------------|---------------|------------------------|
| ■ Algeria           | ■ Indonesia   | ■ Saudi Arabia         |
| ■ Argentina         | ■ Iran        | ■ Singapore            |
| ■ Australia         | ■ Ireland     | ■ South Africa         |
| ■ Austria           | ■ Israel      | ■ Spain                |
| ■ Belgium           | ■ Japan       | ■ Sri Lanka            |
| ■ Brazil            | ■ Jordan      | ■ Sudan                |
| ■ Brunei Darussalam | ■ Kazakhstan  | ■ Switzerland          |
| ■ Chile             | ■ Latvia      | ■ Thailand             |
| ■ Colombia          | ■ Malaysia    | ■ Tunisia              |
| ■ Djibouti          | ■ Morocco     | ■ Türkiye              |
| ■ Egypt             | ■ Netherlands | ■ Ukraine              |
| ■ Finland           | ■ New Zealand | ■ United Arab Emirates |
| ■ France            | ■ Pakistan    | ■ United Kingdom       |
| ■ Germany           | ■ Palestine   | ■ United States        |
| ■ Guatemala         | ■ Philippines | ■ Viet Nam             |
| ■ Honduras          | ■ Poland      |                        |
| ■ Hungary           | ■ Romania     |                        |

### National Societies represented in the consultation

- Red Cross Society of China
- Honduran Red Cross

### Other entities represented in the consultation

- Conflict and Environment Observatory
- International Chamber of Shipping
- North Atlantic Treaty Organization
- Organisation internationale de la Francophonie
- Sovereign Order of Malta
- United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research

### Resource persons

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