

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 Outcome Document

Global Initiative to Galvanize
Political Commitment to

International Humanitarian Law



Co-chaired
by Germany, Peru, the Philippines,
the United Kingdom and
the International Committee
of the Red Cross

Overview

Well-functioning national committees and similar entities on international humanitarian law (hereafter “national IHL committees” or “committees”) breathe life into the rules: they reaffirm their relevance, uphold their application and support the political will to respect them. The power of this workstream lies not just in collective reflection, but in our collective resolve to use these strategic tools to translate international commitment into concrete action – action to encourage all states to empower national mechanisms to promote coordination, dissemination, implementation and compliance with international humanitarian law (IHL). When empowered with political legitimacy, technical capacity and institutional continuity, national IHL committees can play a vital role in securing the protection of those most affected by armed conflict. National IHL committees should play a proactive and constructive role in helping to ensure compliance with IHL before, during and after armed conflict. There is strength in the diversity that exists between national IHL committees, but each committee should maximize its own potential and effectiveness within its unique domestic context.

As a means to strengthen national IHL committees and help them achieve their full potential, this document provides the following recommendations.

Outcome

1. Empowered national IHL committees

In a manner consistent with national frameworks, capacities and priorities, national IHL committees should be empowered to maximize their potential to advance the implementation of and respect for IHL. Similarly, states should support the work of their committees by strengthening the links between their committee and relevant governmental authorities.

It is therefore recommended that all states with a national IHL committee:

- a) support the sustainability of their national IHL committee by providing it with a clear formalized mandate appropriately integrated within relevant national institutional frameworks; the appropriate human and financial resources, including by ensuring transparent and predictable multi-year budgeting processes, subject to national capacities; the necessary political recognition and support; and access to relevant information through clear and predictable institutional channels, that can enable it to achieve its objectives.
- b) assess the mandate of their national IHL committee, in light of the annexed common purpose paper (Annex 1), and consider what recommendations may be appropriate to strengthen their national IHL committee and ensure it reaches its full potential.
- c) establish how the committee will facilitate the consideration and implementation of these recommendations.
- d) designate, as appropriate, a relevant government minister or high-level political entity with whom their national IHL committee will establish a channel of communication and to whom the committee can provide advice, periodic reports or regular briefings; the minister or high-level political entity will endeavour to guarantee appropriate follow-up channels for the committee. Such engagements should be managed in a way that does not overly burden the committee, minister or high-level political entity.
- e) task, as appropriate, the designated government minister or high-level political entity with overseeing the implementation of these recommendations and periodically reviewing, and where necessary ensuring the amendment of, the mandate of the committee.

2. Stronger together

Recognizing the collective expertise contained within national IHL committees, regular engagement within and across regions is encouraged, to enhance support, collaboration and capacity-building.

It is therefore recommended that all states with a national IHL committee:

- a) act to strengthen existing opportunities for regular structured peer-to-peer dialogue between their respective national IHL committees, as set forth in the annexed terms of reference (Annex 2)
- b) demonstrate commitment to the principle of international cooperation, peer learning and developing a universal culture of compliance with IHL by ensuring that relevant officials can participate in regular structured peer-to-peer regional, global and multilateral exchanges as provided for in Annex 2
- c) authorize their national IHL committee to cooperate with other national IHL committees to promote compliance with IHL by all states, enhance coordination and develop joint work plans
- d) based on needs, and in line with national capacities, on a voluntary basis, share experiences and technical, logistical and financial support with other states to advise on the establishment and functioning of national IHL committees and the implementation of the outcomes of this workstream
- e) join and actively participate in the online communication platform for national IHL committees and, where appropriate, submit proposals for improvement.

3. Effective expert advice or recommendations

A tangible way that national IHL committees can uphold IHL is by serving as a source of anticipatory and constructive advice to their governments in times of peace and armed conflict. National IHL committees may provide proactive expert advice, serving as an effective advisory board, early internal government alert and governmental coordination mechanism that helps enhance compliance with IHL obligations.

It is therefore recommended that all states with a national IHL committee consider:

- a) reviewing and, if necessary, appropriately amending the mandate of their national IHL committee to enable the proactive provision of advice on its own initiative, to its government, on any matter relevant to upholding IHL obligations
- b) enabling their national IHL committee to take appropriate steps, through established government channels, to proactively alert the designated government minister or entity to concerns related to their state's compliance with IHL
- c) enabling their national IHL committee to actively contribute to national IHL policy, discussion and decision-making forums and processes, as appropriate, in order to share specialized, technical inter-institutional perspectives
- d) reviewing and, if necessary, amending the mandate of their national IHL committee to enable the provision of technical advice to the military, to ensure that all military action taken by their state complies with IHL during armed conflict, while respecting military command structures and operational decision-making authorities.

4. Empower members

National IHL committees that add value to a state are comprised of committed and motivated experts from across government and relevant institutions. To ensure success, states must invest in their membership and in processes that support the continuity of their national IHL committee.

It is therefore recommended that all states with a national IHL committee consider:

- a) ensuring that official national IHL committee functions are prioritized: committee members should be allocated sufficient time and institutional support by their respective agencies to achieve committee objectives
- b) to the greatest extent feasible, minimizing member turnover in their national IHL committee wherever possible
- c) putting in place arrangements to preserve the institutional memory and continuity of their national IHL committee
- d) actively supporting the continuing professional development of committee members, as required, and ensuring the appropriate onboarding of new members
- e) making the annexed toolkit (Annex 3) available to their national IHL committee.

5. National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

The unique mandate of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to cooperate with their public authorities on humanitarian issues means that they can provide vital support and additional expertise to the work of a national IHL committee.

It is therefore recommended that all states consider:

- a) the role that their National Society may play in the work and activities of their national IHL committee before, during and after armed conflict, preferably as a full member in line with national arrangements and considerations
- b) the support their National Society can provide in the establishment of a national IHL committee, where one has not yet been established
- c) utilizing the expertise of their National Society to build the capacity of the members of their national IHL committee and to develop pools of IHL trainers who may be deployed by the national IHL committee
- d) benefiting from their National Society's membership of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to support their involvement in the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent and to exchange information on relevant IHL meetings or initiatives supported by the Movement that may be of interest to their national IHL committee.

Common purpose paper: Guidance for states and national IHL committees

Purpose statement

National IHL committees embody a state's commitment to ensuring mechanisms are in place that promote the domestic implementation of, and respect for, IHL in all circumstances. National IHL committees serve as an intra-governmental expert advisory and coordinating platform to support states in fulfilling their IHL obligations before, during and after armed conflict. National IHL committees have an impact by promoting the domestic implementation of IHL, coordinating national efforts to integrate these rules into legislation, policy and military doctrine, ensuring widespread dissemination of the law and promoting a culture of compliance with IHL through the provision of proactive technical advice and informed opinions.

While national IHL committees share a common purpose, there are various ways to achieve that purpose. Committee mandates and modalities need to be contextualized to their respective national realities and constitutional and administrative frameworks, recognizing the varying responsibilities that committees may have. Guidance on potential ways to action the common purpose are set out below for states to consider. It is also recommended that states keep the mandate of their national IHL committees under review in order to facilitate an agile approach to operating that enables continuous improvement and maximizes potential. In many instances, a phased approach, based on institutional capacities and readiness, to implementing the guidance below may be appropriate.

1. Status

National IHL committees should be established under a lead government ministry, or relevant entity, and serve as a permanent, state-mandated coordination and advisory body on IHL. It is important that committees have a strong legal and institutional basis with a clear mandate and sustained inter-agency participation. While it is important that committee membership primarily includes government officials, there is value in granting committees a degree of autonomy, within the national legal and governmental framework, to enable them to support state compliance with IHL.

2. Competence and responsibilities

- a) **Compliance with IHL** is a state obligation, and national IHL committees have a special role to play in taking appropriate action to support their state in complying with this obligation.
- b) National IHL committees should serve as an intra-governmental **coordination platform** for national authorities on all matters relating to compliance with IHL.
- c) National IHL committees should be competent to proactively **advise and cooperate with their government** in times of peace and in times of armed conflict, on all matters relevant to respecting and ensuring respect for IHL. To complete this task, national IHL committees could be provided with access to relevant national discussion and decision-making forums and be enabled to actively contribute to these forums.
- d) As appropriate, national IHL committees could provide advice or recommendations to their government if there are concerns that their state's actions may encourage, aid or assist IHL violations by another state or party to an armed conflict; or concerning questions of promoting compliance with IHL by another state or party to an armed conflict. To this end, a national IHL committee could be empowered, where appropriate, to provide advice or assistance to its government, as set out in the 34th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Resolution 1 (2024) on "**Building a universal culture of compliance with international humanitarian law**", 34IC/24/R1 paragraph 10, on:
 - i) convincing parties to armed conflicts to put an end to IHL violations
 - ii) seeking the commitment of states at the highest levels of civilian and military leadership to comply with IHL
 - iii) helping states build their capacity to implement IHL through the development of military doctrine, training and mentoring, and other appropriate means
 - iv) assisting states in ensuring that their judicial and administrative bodies are capable of effectively addressing IHL violations committed by their own forces and holding persons accountable in accordance with applicable requirements of international law

- v) assisting states in strengthening their national IHL committees, and, for those who have not already done so, assisting them in the establishment of such committees
- vi) complying with their own obligations under applicable international treaties and law regulating the use and transfer of arms
- vii) using diplomatic dialogue, humanitarian diplomacy and other appropriate measures to promote compliance by other states
- viii) where appropriate, promoting compliance with IHL by non-state armed groups.
- e) National IHL committees should have the ability to **conduct studies, draft reports and submit recommendations** on their state's compliance with, and implementation of, IHL. Such reports should be for governmental advisory purposes and be subject to national procedures on classified information. These reports may take the form of a voluntary report on the implementation of IHL or a compatibility study. National IHL committees should also monitor the implementation of their recommendations.
- f) National IHL committees should advise and take measures to assist the **ratification** of, and adherence to, relevant IHL instruments. National IHL committees should be consulted, and provide advice, on all matters relevant to joining IHL-related treaties. Similarly, they should also be consulted, and provide advice, in the exceptional case when their state is considering withdrawing from or denouncing an IHL-related treaty it has joined.
- g) National IHL committees should advise and assist their respective governments to prepare IHL-related **implementing legislation**, with a view to ensuring compliance with IHL obligations. In particular, it is advisable that a national IHL committee supports its government to adopt all necessary legislative, regulatory, policy and other measures, including, where appropriate, criminal sanctions, to prevent and suppress IHL violations.
- h) National IHL committees should consider advising, or facilitating the provision of advice, to their state on integrating gender, age-sensitive, culturally sensitive and disability-**inclusive approaches** into national IHL frameworks and operational practices.
- i) National IHL committees should be involved in the development of a Global Initiative to Galvanize Political Commitment to IHL (hereafter "Global IHL Initiative") strategy to **implement relevant outcomes of all the workstreams** accepted by their government, support their governments and relevant domestic institutions that are involved in implementing those outcomes and monitor and report on such implementation.
- j) National IHL committees should encourage and support the domestic **dissemination** of IHL, among the armed forces, military academies, educational institutions, relevant professional training institutions and the public at large, including by making recommendations as to how the state can best meet its responsibilities for the dissemination and promotion of IHL. In some contexts, the national IHL committee may take the lead in coordinating training initiatives. To build awareness of, and support for, its activities it is also important that the national IHL committee make the public and relevant actors aware of its role.
- k) National IHL committees should have the capability, in accordance with national frameworks, to **maintain relations** and exchange information on their activities and experiences with similar entities in other countries. This may involve concluding bilateral agreements and participating in activities and training that foster greater cooperation between committees.
- l) National IHL committees could **support their state's involvement in global and regional initiatives** aimed at strengthening IHL and developing national positions on relevant matters. Support may include contributing to reporting processes relevant to IHL.
- m) National IHL committees may support their state to develop or update national positions, policies, legislation or knowledge through commissioning or undertaking **thematic studies** on relevant aspects of IHL, including on contemporary challenges, and make recommendations accordingly.
- n) National IHL committees should be able to exercise any **other function** that is necessary to fulfil the mandate of the committee.
- o) In order to ensure that national IHL committees remain relevant, committees should undertake a **periodic review** of their mandate and, if necessary, make proposals for amendments.

3. Role during an armed conflict

In addition to their peacetime responsibilities, which could include efforts geared towards preventing IHL violations or operational preparedness to comply with IHL in any possible future armed conflict, the role of national IHL committees in the event of an armed conflict, including situations of occupation, should also be clear. During an armed conflict, a national IHL committee should endeavour to have an advisory function, providing expert advice and recommendations to the government on the application of IHL, including on the safeguards owed to all protected persons and objects. National IHL committees could also give legal advice and recommendations concerning the provision of humanitarian assistance, for example, by identifying the needs of victims of armed conflict, for the government's consideration. Throughout the armed conflict, national IHL committee functions could include assessing legal and humanitarian developments and evolving risks; advising the highest levels of government on allegations of violations of the law and emerging challenges; making recommendations to their government on necessary legal or practical actions and, as far as possible, monitoring the implementation of those recommendations; and promoting awareness of IHL with all parties to the armed conflict. It may also be relevant to solicit the advice of the national IHL committee on certain aspects of peace negotiations and agreements. National IHL committees can also play an important role advising and supporting their state with post-conflict responses.

4. Structure and composition

- a) It is vital that the membership of a national IHL committee incorporate relevant ministries and actors within the state.
- b) National IHL committees should be chaired at a sufficiently senior level to ensure access to high-level political decision makers. Members should have the knowledge to appropriately represent the positions of, and the authority to make commitments on behalf of, the entity they represent. It is essential that when nominating representatives, ministries strike the right balance between hierarchical level, availability and competence to represent their ministry.
- c) In some contexts, it may be appropriate for the chair of the committee to rotate between ministries, as this may enhance the commitment of those ministries to advancing respect for IHL.
- d) To ensure continuity and to maintain sufficient monitoring and follow-up, it is advisable that the chair be supported by a secretariat.
- e) Depending on the national context, national IHL committees may benefit from the inclusion of:
 - i) representative(s) of the ministry of defence/defence forces
 - ii) representative(s) of the ministry of foreign affairs
 - iii) representative(s) of the ministry of justice
 - iv) representative(s) of the ministry of home affairs/police services
 - v) representative(s) of the ministry of health
 - vi) representative(s) of the ministry of education
 - vii) representative(s) of the ministry of culture
 - viii) representative(s) of the ministry of finance
 - ix) representative(s) of ministries responsible for groups who face specific risks and have distinct needs during armed conflict – including, among others, age, gender and disability
 - x) representative(s) of the ministry for the environment
 - xi) representative(s) of the parliament
 - xii) representative(s) of the judiciary (individual capacity)
 - xiii) representative(s) of the National Red Cross or Red Crescent Society.
- f) In some contexts, a model encompassing independent experts and civil society members may be appropriate. Such models may enhance available expertise and the independence of the committee. Where civil society representatives are included, care should be taken to preserve the committee's connection with the relevant national authorities and political decision makers. Where non-governmental representatives are included, it will also be important to ensure processes are in place for enabling the committee to continue to function when effectiveness is dependent on access to confidential material.
- g) National IHL committees should have the power to amend their composition to include additional government representatives, pertaining to the national context, and/or other representatives of entities whose activities are connected with their mandate. National IHL committees should also have the power to consult, on an ad hoc basis, individuals, experts, research institutions or humanitarian organizations with demonstrated relevant expertise, including on gender, age-sensitive and disability-inclusive approaches to humanitarian protections.
- h) Efforts should be made to ensure a reasonable level of continuity of membership. Turnover in representatives, and participation by proxy, should be avoided unless absolutely necessary.

5. Methods of operation

- a) To strengthen collaboration and function as an effective platform for open governmental discussion and coordination, it may be advisable for national IHL committees to be able to operate **confidentially** when necessary. It is recommended to consider whether discussions, minutes, reports and recommendations should be exempt from public disclosure, in accordance with domestic law and policy, balancing confidentiality requirements with transparency considerations.
- b) National IHL committees should hold **regular meetings** to maintain momentum and to monitor the progress of objectives. It is advisable that committees aim to meet at least twice a year, with established means for members to communicate with each other between committee meetings. Subcommittees or working groups could be established to meet on a more regular basis to advance specific objectives.
- c) In order to enable the national IHL committee to carry out its mandate, it is advisable to consider establishing clear institutional channels for it to **access information** from ministries, armed forces, appropriate agencies and national humanitarian bodies. It is also advisable to consider establishing procedures for organizing, analysing and documenting sources of information.
- d) The work of national IHL committees should be structured around domestic needs and capabilities. It is advisable that national IHL committees identify measures to be taken at the national level, potentially by conducting an IHL **compatibility study**, or a similar review of their state's participation in IHL treaties, relevant legislation, policies and practice. An example could be voluntary reports on the domestic implementation of IHL. Such studies or reviews could facilitate the agreement of priorities and objectives. These agreements could form the basis of a plan of action, with clear objectives, allocation of responsibilities and monitoring frameworks that include clear indicators, timelines and periodic reviews.
- e) In furtherance of the function to provide effective expert advice, national IHL committees should be able to **communicate their views** to the relevant decision makers of their state in the event of concerns related to the state's compliance with its IHL obligations. In the exercise of this function, national IHL committees could:
 - i) share their concerns and recommendations with the relevant government minister or entity
 - ii) participate in, or feed into, relevant discussion spaces where the matter is being addressed
 - iii) monitor the implementation of their recommendations.
- f) In furtherance of the suggested functions to coordinate, share information and provide expert technical advice on IHL to government, it is advisable that the national IHL committees be represented by at least one member in **internal governmental discussions and decision-making forums** where matters of IHL and IHL compliance are discussed. Where they exist, and pertaining to the national context, this may include:
 - i) discussions on extending or limiting the state's IHL commitments (e.g. ratifications or endorsement of documents)
 - ii) legal review processes for new weapons
 - iii) working sessions where IHL policy, or policy with implications for IHL compliance, is formulated
 - iv) decision-making forums on arms transfers
 - v) after-action review processes.
- g) It is advisable that a state and its national IHL committee consider how they will **operate in the event of an armed conflict**. Particular attention should be paid to the specificities of situations of occupation, high intensity, large-scale and protracted armed conflict. In order to fulfil its mandate under such circumstances, a national IHL committee may require greater flexibility of working methods. This may include agility with regards frequency, format and procedures for calling meetings; ability to form small working groups; flexibility regarding modalities of communication; processes for issuing advice in a time-sensitive manner; and systems for managing and documenting the sources of large volumes of information.

6. Institutional memory

Effective knowledge capture is important if national IHL committees are to operate successfully. Transitioning from ad hoc to permanent bodies supports the process of capturing long-term institutional memory. It is also important to ensure systematic documentation of committee records, through the maintenance of regular reports and/or other tracking documents as appropriate. Resource mapping can also be a helpful tool for ensuring that committees have access to necessary legal and technical information. It is recommended that committees establish dedicated communication chains, such as committee-specific email addresses, to facilitate the retention of knowledge captured through communications and the maintenance of external contacts. It may also be advisable to maintain a dedicated public or private website or archiving system.

7. Communications

To build support for national IHL committees, it is essential that they make their objectives and achievements known within government and to the wider public. To that end, national IHL committees should adopt and implement appropriate communication measures.

8. Resources

- a) It is desirable that national IHL committees have the means to cover their own running expenses. Ideally, as soon as a committee is set up, the national authorities, as far as possible, should grant it logistical resources and a predictable multi-year working budget. Concerning ministerial representatives, an internal sharing of working expenses could be organized.
- b) National IHL committees must ensure that their members have the necessary knowledge of, and information about, IHL. Sufficient budget and time must be allocated to building, or maintaining, the knowledge of members. Similarly, new members should be effectively onboarded regarding committee processes, achievements, challenges and IHL. One way of ensuring this is to put a committee member in charge of internal training and information management.

9. Relations with national stakeholders

In order to ensure IHL is complied with, it is essential that national IHL committees maintain structured engagement with a range of actors. Subject to the government system, the following links could be considered:

- a) **Parliament:** In some contexts, it may be appropriate to engage with parliamentarians to provide technical IHL advice, and to support decision-making regarding the ratification of IHL instruments. Similarly, it may be appropriate to provide expert briefings and reports on compliance with IHL obligations. It may also be appropriate to provide advice to parliament on specific budget allocations to encourage parliament to ensure that relevant actors, such as the armed forces and judiciary, receive high-quality IHL training, and to encourage parliament to ensure that national institutions that support the application of IHL are allocated sufficient resources.
- b) **Civil society, academics, humanitarian actors and other relevant stakeholders:** In some contexts, it may be appropriate to engage national experts or organizations to support IHL dissemination, independent research on IHL and to receive their technical advice on legal and policy matters relating to IHL.
- c) **The media:** In some contexts, it may be appropriate to use the committee's publications and public events to make journalists and the general public more aware of IHL.
- d) **Regional organizations:** In some contexts, it may be appropriate to engage regional organizations to support coordination and collaboration between national IHL committees and to increase political support for IHL and the work of the committees.

10. Monitoring and evaluating

To maintain momentum, assess progress, capture information, retain institutional memory and increase visibility, in line with national frameworks, it is recommended that national IHL committees consider submitting regular progress reports to a designated minister, government entity or parliament, as appropriate. These reports could include an evaluation of the committee's work, noting that the contents of such reports will vary according to national circumstances. The evaluation could be based on pre-agreed clear and objective performance indicators. As an illustration, the reports could provide details of the committee's activities and their impact, processes the committee engaged with, advice or recommendations provided, any legislative progress, the training sessions conducted, any challenges faced and any planned future actions. A helpful format to follow may be that of a voluntary report on the domestic implementation of IHL. It is recommended that the reporting process be used as a tool for increasing ministerial awareness and support for the work of the committee and identifying areas where the committee could be strengthened.

Terms of reference for enhancing regional and global national IHL committee platforms

In recognition of the importance of international solidarity and the value of structured peer support to increase capacity and overcome challenges, a system of voluntary and regular engagement between national IHL committees will be facilitated. To this end, every national IHL committee will be provided with the opportunity to participate in ad hoc multilateral meetings, regional meetings, periodic universal meetings and an online communication platform for national IHL committees. Bilateral engagement between committees will also be encouraged. To facilitate such engagement, a national IHL committee steering group will be established.

1. National IHL committee steering group

A national IHL committee steering group, comprising an appropriate number of states of sufficient geographical diversity and the ICRC, will be established to advance regional and global cooperation among national IHL committees during and between formal gatherings of committees. Adequate time during the universal meeting of national IHL committees in 2027 will be dedicated to developing and agreeing detailed terms of reference and operating procedures for the steering group, with due regard for transparency, inclusivity and diversity. Initial thinking for the steering group is as follows:

- a) it could be the responsibility of the steering group to identify technical needs of national IHL committees in order to facilitate the sharing of relevant technical support, expertise or resources
- b) the steering group could operate in a facilitative and non-supervisory capacity
- c) the tenure of a steering group member could be four years, with the possibility of extension
- d) members of the steering group could be selected at the universal meeting of national IHL committees
- e) the ICRC could be a permanent steering group member
- f) the steering group could meet virtually at least two times per year to discuss and advance progress towards objectives and ensure effective transitions between members.

2. Regional meetings of national IHL committees

- a) With the support of the ICRC, the steering group will be responsible for ensuring that all national IHL committees have the opportunity to participate in a regular regional meeting for national IHL committees. Where such opportunities do not currently exist, they will be created. To support continuity and political support, partnerships with relevant regional organizations are encouraged.
- b) Where possible, and in accordance with their means, states can demonstrate their commitment to international solidarity and help their national IHL committee reach its full potential by ensuring the availability of sufficient resources to facilitate the participation of their national IHL committee in the regional meetings. Similarly, where possible, and in accordance with their means, states may, on a voluntary basis, encourage, support and facilitate the participation of other states in the regional meetings. No state will be required to participate in regional meetings as a precondition for fulfilling any other obligation or as a condition for any form of political or practical benefit.
- c) Where possible, the hosting of the regional meetings will rotate within the region.
- d) Participation should normally include the chairs of the national IHL committees.
- e) The objectives of the regional meetings may include:
 - i) the promotion of the domestic implementation of and respect for IHL
 - ii) the development of peer-support networks
 - iii) the establishment of national IHL committee mentoring and partnership initiatives
 - iv) peer updates and reviews of the progress and activities of the national IHL committees, including on progress made in relation to implementing relevant outcomes of the Global IHL Initiative
 - v) agreeing and reporting on regional action plans
 - vi) the development of regional positions and joint initiatives
 - vii) the development of possible public communications on the activities of the national IHL committees
 - viii) regional preparation for the universal meeting of national IHL committees
 - ix) the discussion of topical issues for national IHL committees

- x) peer support to overcome challenges
- xi) capacity-building for the members of national IHL committees.

3. Ad hoc multilateral meetings of national IHL committees

On the initiative of the steering group or a national IHL committee, and with the support of the ICRC, ad hoc multilateral meetings of national IHL committees may be convened to promote ongoing dialogue and collaboration, particularly among committees that, owing to their geographic proximity or a shared geopolitical context, face similar challenges. These meetings, held either in person or virtually, will be open to any national IHL committee that wishes to participate. They will provide a forum for more in-depth exchanges on shared experiences, common challenges, emerging issues and good practices. States that do not yet have a national IHL committee may also participate in these meetings.

4. Universal meetings of national IHL committees

- a) The national IHL committee steering group will work with the ICRC to ensure that a universal meeting of national IHL committees will take place every four years.
- b) Where possible, and in accordance with their means, states may demonstrate their commitment to supporting their national IHL committee to reach its full potential by ensuring the availability of sufficient resources to facilitate the participation of their national IHL committee in the universal meetings. Similarly, where possible, and in accordance with their means, states should also take all feasible measures to encourage, support and facilitate the broadest possible participation from other states.
- c) Participation at the universal meetings should include the chairs of national IHL committees where possible. Where relevant, a state may also decide to include their National Society in their delegation.
- d) Following its establishment, the steering group will preside over subsequent universal meetings and will report any progress made towards its objectives.
- e) At the first universal meeting following the conclusion of the Global IHL Initiative, a template plan of action will be presented to help national IHL committees support their state in implementing relevant outcomes of the Global IHL Initiative. This template may be modified to select workstreams and outcomes relevant to state priorities and the national context. At subsequent universal meetings, national IHL committees will have the opportunity to voluntarily report on their progress towards implementing those outcomes.
- f) The objectives of the universal meetings may include:
 - i) the promotion of the domestic implementation of and respect for IHL
 - ii) the development of peer-support networks
 - iii) the establishment of cross-regional national IHL committee mentoring and partnership initiatives
 - iv) regional updates and a review of regional action plans and progress
 - v) the development of shared commitments to advance respect for IHL and the agreement of joint work plans
 - vi) the discussion of topical issues for national IHL committees
 - vii) peer support to overcome challenges
 - viii) capacity-building for the members of national IHL committees
 - ix) the identification of areas where national IHL committees would benefit from further support.

5. Cooperation agreements

To complement other forms of collaboration, cooperation agreements between national IHL committees are encouraged. Such cooperation may include joint work plans, mentorship, member capacity-building and the sharing of advice, experiences, tools and technical or financial resources. On request, and with the support of the ICRC, the steering group will be available to support the establishment of a connection between relevant committees.

6. Online communication between national IHL committees

Taking into account communication security considerations, an online communication platform for national IHL committees will be launched by the ICRC. Committees should ensure that any information shared online by its members is in line with their own information classification policies. In order to facilitate the creation of the new platform, the national IHL committee steering group will provide advice, guidance and feedback to the ICRC on necessary improvements and actions. In recognition of the value of learning from states with or without a national IHL committee, states without a committee will also be provided with access to the platform.

7. Participation of states without a national IHL committee

States without a national IHL committee will be invited to nominate a main point of contact for the implementation of IHL in their state. Communications, updates and resources produced by the steering group will also be communicated to those contact points. The contact points will be invited to actively participate in regional and universal meetings and will have the same opportunities to benefit from the online communication platform as representatives from states with national IHL committees.

Toolkit for national IHL committees

To support the work of national IHL committees, a practical toolkit has been developed. To ensure that the toolkit continues to be useful and relevant, the national IHL committee steering group may be responsible for updating and further developing this resource as required.

1. [Table of National Committees and other national bodies on international humanitarian law, International Committee of the Red Cross](#)
2. [Factsheet: National committees for the implementation of international humanitarian law](#)
3. Model terms of reference (Annex 7 in the [Guidelines for Success](#))
4. [National IHL Committees: Guidance on composition and roles](#)
5. [Guiding Principles Concerning the Status and Methods of Operation of National Bodies for the Implementation of International Humanitarian Law](#)
6. [Practical advice to facilitate the work of National Committees on international humanitarian law](#)
7. [National Committees and Similar Entities on International Humanitarian Law: Guidelines for Success – Towards Respecting and Implementing International Humanitarian Law, International Committee of the Red Cross](#)
8. [Open Pledge to Promote the Establishment, Enhancement and Effective Functioning of National Committees or similar entities on IHL \(2024–2028\) – Statutory Meetings](#)
9. Training module – Introduction to IHL ([ICRC e-learning](#))
10. [IHL App](#)
11. [ICRC IHL Toolkit](#)
12. Model compatibility study (Annex 3 in the [Guidelines for Success](#))
13. Model annual report (Annex 6 in the [Guidelines for Success](#))
14. [Sample voluntary report toolkit](#)
15. [National implementation of IHL: Documentation, ICRC](#) (contains ratification templates, model laws, factsheets and other relevant guidance)

Potential resources that the steering group may wish to develop include:

- a compilation of national IHL committee terms of reference
- a compilation of national IHL committee action plans and current areas of focus
- a template for developing an onboarding module for new members of national IHL committees
- step-by-step guidance for establishing or reactivating a committee
- guidance on preserving institutional memory
- guidance for inter-agency coordination
- sample action plans
- dissemination guidance.

Humanity In War

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