



# THE ICRC AND UNIVERSITIES

**Working together to promote  
international humanitarian law**



**ICRC**

## THE ICRC AND UNIVERSITIES



For the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), partnerships with universities are vital in its efforts to foster respect for international humanitarian law (IHL). By encouraging universities to offer courses in IHL and by giving assistance to professors who teach this subject, the ICRC reaches out to the next generation of leaders. Today, students learn the rules applicable in times of armed conflict. Tomorrow, they will promote and apply them in their respective professions.

University professors are an important resource for the ICRC in its dialogue with political authorities, arms carriers and civil society. In addition, the ICRC regularly calls upon their expertise when organizing IHL-training events for a wide range of publics, including diplomats, military personnel, judges and humanitarian workers. Universities also offer a useful platform for discussing current challenges to IHL and exploring potential ways forward.

The ICRC supports IHL teaching and research around the world. It is committed to encouraging the integration of IHL into the curricula of universities. When that is not feasible, or when IHL is in fact already well-established in university curricula, the ICRC proposes a more ad hoc and event-focused type of collaboration to keep the subject on the agenda.

## TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROFESSORS

### Why?

By offering IHL training opportunities, the ICRC aims to stimulate IHL teaching and research.

### How?

Through a 'train the trainer' approach: the ICRC regularly organizes IHL courses to introduce professors to the subject and to explore ways of teaching it. The ICRC believes that the realities of contemporary armed conflicts should form the core of all instruction in IHL and that case studies make lectures more interesting and topical. Such courses are designed to enable professors teaching related subjects – international law, human rights law, political science, international relations or journalism – to include IHL in their curriculum.

For those who are already familiar with the subject matter, the ICRC organizes workshops, seminars and conferences that explore relevant contemporary issues. These events keep professors informed of recent developments and at the same time enable the ICRC to benefit from their views on IHL questions that are of concern to the organization.

The national, regional and international networks of academic expertise that are created in this way can be instrumental in the development, teaching and implementation of IHL.

*How Does Law Protect in War?* This ICRC publication contains a selection of over two hundred and thirty cases, together with a comprehensive outline of international humanitarian law that puts these cases in context. Order online at [www.icrc.org/eng/shop](http://www.icrc.org/eng/shop).



## STUDENT EVENTS

### Why?

Student events aim to create momentum for the integration of IHL in university curricula and generate interest in the subject. Such events also make it possible to assess the quality of IHL instruction in universities.

### How?

The ICRC organizes a number of student events in cooperation with universities, National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies or professional associations. At these occasions, the ICRC, as a humanitarian organization working in situations of armed conflict, can effectively contribute with its first-hand experience of IHL. Providing information about the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and about its own activities is another essential aspect of the ICRC's involvement in such events.

Role-playing competitions are among the most popular student events in academic circles around the world. During these competitions, students are expected to demonstrate their understanding of the law in practice: from the combat zone to the courtroom.

Other examples of ICRC events for students include essay-writing competitions as well as regional and international courses and conferences on IHL.



## INTEGRATION OF IHL

### Why?

When States ratify the Geneva Conventions, they expressly commit themselves to spreading knowledge of IHL, and one effective way of doing that is to teach the subject at universities.

### How?

Although IHL may be of particular relevance for law students, it can also be taught to those studying political science, international relations and journalism. Whether IHL is integrated into the curriculum as a separate subject or as part of an existing course, the ICRC aims to play a role in ensuring its sustainability and success.

*The High Contracting Parties undertake, in time of peace as in time of war, to disseminate the text of the present Convention as widely as possible in their respective countries, and, in particular, to include the study thereof in their programmes of (...) civil instruction, so that the principles thereof may become known to the entire population, the four Geneva Conventions of 1949, Articles 47, 48, 127 and 144 respectively.*

## ENCOURAGING RESEARCH

### Why?

One aspect of the ICRC's mandate is to spread understanding of IHL and to foster its development. The ICRC thus aims to stimulate advances in IHL by university professors and students.

### How ?

The ICRC provides professors and students with documents and teaching aids, mainly by making ICRC publications available to university libraries and by publishing IHL reference materials on its website.

In addition, the ICRC offers opportunities for researchers to participate in the various events it co-organizes on different aspects of IHL. It also supports the establishment of academic journals devoted to IHL and encourages contributions from promising researchers.



The ICRC builds on existing capabilities and teaching skills in supporting universities that wish to integrate IHL. Support includes providing professors with opportunities for training in IHL and tools for teaching the subject, distributing IHL-related publications to university libraries and co-organizing student competitions. To ensure the success of these activities, the ICRC works together with a broad range of partners, such as universities, National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, professional associations and national IHL commissions.

## MISSION

The International Committee of the Red Cross is an impartial, neutral and independent organization whose exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of war and internal violence and to provide them with assistance. It directs and coordinates the international relief activities conducted by the Movement in situations of conflict. It also endeavours to prevent suffering by promoting and strengthening humanitarian law and universal humanitarian principles. Established in 1863, the ICRC is at the origin of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.



ICRC

International Committee of the Red Cross  
19 Avenue de la Paix  
1202 Geneva, Switzerland  
T + 41 22 734 60 01 F + 41 22 733 20 57  
E-mail: [shop.gva@icrc.org](mailto:shop.gva@icrc.org)  
[www.icrc.org](http://www.icrc.org)  
© ICRC, February 2008

Cover photo: Fan Bao/ICRC