



ICRC

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

an independent, impartial and neutral organization ensuring humanitarian protection and assistance for victims of armed conflict

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The ICRC seeks to preserve a measure of humanity in the midst of war. Its guiding principle is that even in war there are limits: limits on how warfare is conducted and limits on how combatants behave. The set of rules established with this in mind and endorsed by 194 states is known as International Humanitarian Law (IHL), of which the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 are the bedrock. In order for this law to be respected in armed conflict, however, it must first be in place and known to all in time of peace already.



Translation of *Respect for International Humanitarian Law*.

IHL Handbook Presented to Montenegrin Parliamentarians



(PHOTO: © POBEDA)

Ranko Krivokapic, Montenegrin Parliament Speaker, and Christian Brunner, head of ICRC Regional Delegation, present the Handbook in the Parliament.

On March 26, the ICRC officially presented a translation of the *Respect for International Humanitarian Law* handbook to the Montenegrin Parliament, its Speaker and deputies. This publication is specially designed to familiarise members of parliament with International Humanitarian Law (IHL). Its objective is to heighten the MPs' awareness of the key role they, as legislators and political leaders, can play in promoting IHL implementation by adopting appropriate national legislation related to it. This useful publication also serves as a step-by-

step guide through the measures that States, and in particular parliaments and their members, must take to respect and ensure respect for IHL. The handbook is the result of cooperation between the ICRC, in its capacity of the guardian and promoter of IHL, and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the world organisation of Parliaments. The presentation of the handbook received extensive affirmative coverage in the Montenegrin national media, both printed and electronic ones.

Becoming party to IHL conventions and agreements is only a first step towards their implementation. Efforts must be made by both legislative and executive bodies of a state to turn IHL rules into action, first and foremost through the adoption of appropriate legislation or regulations. This is made clear in the Geneva Conventions, which oblige states „to enact any legislation necessary to provide effective penal sanctions for persons committing, or ordering to be committed, any of the grave breaches“ defined in the Conventions. (Article 49, 1st Geneva Convention of 1949)

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Exploring Humanitarian Law

In 2003, the presidency of the EU Council accepted a pledge, urging all EU members and prospective candidates to implement International Humanitarian Law (IHL) in their formal school curricula. The ICRC EHL programme was proposed as a possible tool for such implementation. Its integration in schools would mean that the countries of the Western Balkans are also fulfilling one of their obligations on their way to becoming full EU members. EHL is not endemic to the EU, however, as it is currently implemented in some 70 countries worldwide. An exhaustive online resource centre for EHL can be found at www.ehl.icrc.org

THE MISSING

the right to know

Action to resolve the problem of people gone missing as a result of armed conflict or internal violence and to assist their families.

The aim of this major ICRC initiative is to heighten awareness among governments, the military, international and national organisations, and the general public about the tragedy of the missing. Among other things, it strives to achieve this by creating and making available tools for action and communication, a typical example of which is this Book of Missing.

Exploring Humanitarian Law in Western Balkans

Designed for teenagers, Exploring Humanitarian Law (EHL) is an international educational programme, helping both teachers and students to develop a basic understanding of humanitarian law and respect for human dignity in situations of conflict and violence. The education authorities of the Western Balkan countries have promptly recognized the need for this kind of a programme. After testing it in schools and evaluating it with the teachers who have piloted the EHL, they started to integrate it into standard school curriculum across the region.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Zenica-Doboj canton was the first to fully integrate Exploring Humanitarian Law in its curriculum, with other cantons following suit. In Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, education professionals have already defined the place of Exploring Humanitarian Law within their school systems, while the relevant institutions in Slovenia, Kosovo and Albania are about to do



(PHOTO: © ICRC)

Future EHL trainers in an exercise.

the same. Regular exchanges of experiences among all of them have greatly contributed to the process.

States party to the Geneva Conventions have an obligation, in times of peace as in times of war, to spread the knowledge of IHL as widely as possible, including civilian population, and, if possible, to include the study of it in civil instruction (Article 144, 4th Geneva Convention of 1949). The role of the national Red Cross societies is to “disseminate and assist their governments in disseminating IHL,” with the ICRC having a complementary role “to work for the understanding and dissemination of knowledge of IHL applicable in armed conflict.” (Articles 3.2 and 5.2 respectively, Red Cross Movement Statute).

Book of Missing in Croatia Released

In February this year, the ICRC, together with the Croatian authorities and the Croatian Red Cross, launched the *Book of Missing Persons on the territory of the Republic of Croatia*. The book lists the names of 2,384 persons still unaccounted for after the 1991-95 conflict in Croatia and is an essential tool in tracing missing persons and establishing their fate. Eleven years on, it is important to keep reminding the authorities of their permanent obligation to provide answers to the families of missing persons. The ICRC has already published Books of Missing persons in relation to conflicts in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo. According to ICRC's records, the fate of over 16,000 persons gone missing in the conflicts of the past decade in former Yugoslavia has remained unknown to this day.

The release of the book also coincided with the closure of the ICRC office in Zagreb. Even though the ICRC handed over the data on the



Cover of the Book of Missing Persons on the territory of the Republic of Croatia.

missing persons in Croatia to the national Red Cross, it will nevertheless continue supporting the process of clarifying the fate of the missing both in Croatia and throughout the region.

The Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 safeguards “the right of families to know the fate of their relatives.” (Article 32) It also stipulates that “each Party to the conflict shall search for the persons who have been reported missing by an adverse Party.” (Article 33) All the countries in the region are party to the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their two Additional Protocols of 1977.

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IHL Centre Opens in Belgrade

The Centre for International Humanitarian Law and International Organisations was officially opened at the Belgrade Faculty of Political Science (FPS) on December 7, 2006, with two panels reflecting the Centre's character and objectives.

IHL and contemporary wars, different actors in conflict and their responsibilities, as well as war crimes and their repression were topics debated with journalists and facilitated by FPS professor Vesna Knezevic-Predic (Director of the Centre), Prof. Miodrag Starcevic (Serbian Red Cross), Bruno Vekaric (War Crimes Prosecutor's Office) and Djordje Vlajic (BBC). In another panel, representatives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence, academic lecturers and experts analysed the heritage and challenges of



Facilitators at the Panel for Journalists.

IHL in the country and the region, welcoming the creation of the Centre as a reference institution. The ceremony was attended by numerous international representatives, national authorities and academic experts from across the region.

To reach tomorrow's decision-makers and opinion-leaders, the ICRC targets leading universities to encourage the inclusion of humanitarian law in courses offered in particular by the faculties of law, political science and journalism. As with the military, the ICRC's approach is to work with the authorities concerned, train trainers, produce resource materials, help establish IHL reference libraries and maintain a network of contacts within the academic world.

The Centre was established at FPS initiative, following years of steady development of various ICRC-supported IHL activities since 2001. Among them were: Specialised IHL Studies launched in 2002, hosting of the first regional students competition in IHL in 2002, participation in all national and regional, as well as some international, IHL contests for students, and organisation, together with the Serbian Red Cross, of the annual Regional IHL Course since 2004. The setting up of the Centre was also assisted by the ICRC, which has donated a substantial IHL library to it and supported the creation of its website at www.fpn.bg.ac.yu



Integration of IHL into Army Training



One of the main aspects of ICRC's cooperation with the armed forces in the region is integration of IHL into military training and education.

This was the topic of a round-table organised in February at the Peace-Support Operations Centre in Belgrade, where representatives of the Serbian Armed Forces, Ministry of Defence, Defence Attachés, academic circles, Serbian Red Cross and the ICRC agreed on steps to be taken to better position IHL within the military training and education system in Serbia.

Another way of promoting IHL integration in the training is through participation in military exercises, such as the *Cooperative Longbow-Lancer 07*, an exercise of the NATO / Partnership for Peace / Mediterranean Dialogue countries, which is being organised this year in Albania, and the trilateral military drill *Danube Guard 07*, which will involve Bulgarian, Romanian and Serbian armed forces.

Army officers study IHL from textbooks and CDs supplied by the ICRC.

The ICRC assists armed forces in training International Humanitarian Law (IHL) or, as armed forces call it, Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC). The past few years of fruitful cooperation with Serbia's Ministry of Defence have seen dozens of courses organised by the ICRC for the country's military, while some 25 Ministry professionals took part in different courses organised abroad, mainly in the San Remo Institute for International Humanitarian Law in Italy. In order for the IHL training in Serbia to achieve full autonomy, more of these activities need to be organised by the army itself, with the ICRC support and participation, which is the main goal of the 2007 cooperation agreement with the Ministry.

States party to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 take upon themselves to include the study of IHL "in their programmes of military and, if possible, civil instruction, so that the principles thereof may become known to all their armed forces..." (Article 127, 3rd Geneva Convention of 1949)

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

ICRC Mission: The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) 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.



What the ICRC does in the region:

Protection of Persons Protected by International Humanitarian Law (IHL):

Traces missing persons and assists their families to clarify the fate of their relatives gone missing in armed conflicts in the region.

Offers legal advice to the governments in the region on how to legislate in favour of the families of missing persons so that the legal obstacles caused by the absence of a missing person can be overcome, allowing the family to get on with their lives.

Visits persons detained in relation to security and war crimes.



Preventive Action:

Promotes the knowledge and implementation of International Humanitarian Law (IHL), especially with the armed and security forces, and national authorities responsible for integrating IHL into national legislation.

Introduces IHL and humanitarian values into the curricula of public education with its Exploring Humanitarian Law (EHL) and Promotion of Human Values (PHV) programmes for adolescents.

Supports academic institutions in promoting IHL and international exchange of IHL experiences.



Cooperation with National Red Cross Societies:

Contribute to building and maintaining the capacity of the National Red Cross Societies to promote International Humanitarian Law (IHL), the principles and humanitarian values of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

Consolidates the National Red Cross Societies capacity to restore family links as part of the worldwide Red Cross and Red Crescent tracing network.

Maintains its preparedness to assist victims of armed conflict or natural disaster.

Assists the National Red Cross Society in coping with other humanitarian activities, such as problems posed by the still present risk of mines and explosive remnants of war.

Red Cross Principles

HUMANITY
IMPARTIALITY
NEUTRALITY
INDEPENDENCE
VOLUNTARY SERVICE
UNITY
UNIVERSALITY

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is composed of 184 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. It aims to prevent or alleviate human suffering, to protect life and health, to ensure respect for human dignity (especially in times of armed conflict), to work for the prevention of disease and the promotion of health and social welfare, to encourage voluntary service and a constant readiness to help and, finally, to foster a universal sense of solidarity towards all those in need of its protection and assistance.



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For more information, please consult our website or pay us a visit

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