



ICRC

ADVISORY SERVICE

ON INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

Means of Personal Identification

In order to apply international humanitarian law it is essential to identify combatants and protected persons. The 1949 Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocol I of 1977 contain appropriate provisions for achieving that purpose. Measures for personal identification provide a means of specifying the status of persons involved in or affected by an armed conflict and thus of indicating the protection to which they are entitled. However, the mere fact of possessing an identification document is not a criterion entitling the holder to protection (except in the case of military personnel posted to civil defence organizations) since it is the capacity or function of the person that is the determining factor. In the context of armed conflict, identification measures also help to prevent disappearances and to facilitate the tracing of missing persons. It is the States and parties to the conflict that must implement these measures, which enable the bodies for which international humanitarian law makes provision to function properly (such as national Information Bureaus and the Central Tracing Agency, whose mission is to inform States on the fate of their nationals and to inform families on what has become of their relatives).

The nature and significance of means of personal identification

Measures for identifying persons are closely connected with the concept of **protection**, which constitutes the very basis of the legal instruments of international humanitarian law. They are a means for the persons concerned to prove their status and thus claim the protection that is their due.

The 1949 Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocol I of 1977 specify the nature and minimum content of identification measures and propose a number of **models** in their annexes which States and the parties to a conflict are recommended to take as a basis (in particular for certain identity cards, capture cards and internment cards).

Using these models helps to **standardize** the various measures taken and facilitates the task of the States in the performance of their treaty-based obligations regarding identification.

In order to make these measures even more effective the parties to a conflict must ensure that they are easy to use. Following the models proposed, any documents that are issued will thus contain minimum

information allowing adequate identification. The authorities may, however, go further as long as the information provided does not place the person concerned or his family at risk.

Identification is in the **mutual interests** of the parties. It is because identification measures have been taken and used by a party that the adverse party can more effectively carry out its duty to identify the persons who have fallen into its hands, whether they be captured, wounded or deceased (GC I, Art. 16; GC II, Art. 19).

It is recommended that the implementation of the provisions concerning identification measures should not be limited solely to the situations in respect of which they apply. They should also be extended to non-international armed conflicts and to any situation in which it might prove useful to use them.

Categories

Identity card

This card is the basic document with which the status and identity of persons who have fallen into the hands of the adverse party can be determined, and it must be issued

by States to any person liable to become a prisoner of war (GC III, Art. 17).

It must contain at least the owner's surname, first names, date of birth, serial number or equivalent information, rank, blood group and rhesus factor. As further optional information, the identity card may also bear the description, nationality, religion, fingerprints or photo of the holder, or the date of expiry.

In parallel with this measure, the authorities are required to issue **specific identity cards** for military personnel carrying out special tasks or for certain categories of civilians, containing the basic information plus certain other particulars concerning the assignment (such as the distinctive emblem of the activity, the person's training or position, or the stamp and signature of the competent authority).

The categories concerned by these measures indicating entitlement to a specific form of protection are as follows:

- V *medical and religious personnel attached to the armed forces (GC I, Art. 40; GC II, Art. 42), civilian medical personnel and civilian religious personnel (AP I, Art. 18 para. 3), the permanent or temporary staff of*

civilian hospitals (GC IV, Art. 20);

- V *members of the armed forces specially trained for employment as hospital orderlies, nurses or auxiliary stretcher-bearers in the search for or the collection, transport or treatment of the wounded and sick (GC I, Art. 41);*
- V *persons who accompany the armed forces (GC III, Art. 4 para. A, no. 4);*
- V *members of the armed forces and military units assigned to civil defence organizations (API, Art. 67 para. 1), civilian civil defence personnel (API, Art. 66 para. 3);*
- V *the personnel engaged in the protection of cultural property (The Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict of 14 May 1954, Art. 17 para. 2, and the Regulation for the Execution of that Convention, Art. 21);*
- V *journalists engaged in dangerous professional missions, provided that they fulfil the conditions constituting that function (API, Art. 79 para. 3).*

Identity disc

The authorities may supplement the above measures by providing identity discs (GC I, Art. 16; GC II, Art. 19). The identity disc is worn permanently round the neck on a chain or strap. It can be a single or double disc made, as far as possible, of durable, stainless material which is resistant to battlefield conditions. The inscriptions it bears are similar to

those on the identity card and should be indelible and fadeproof.

Capture card

The parties to a conflict which are holding prisoners of war are required to enable the latter to write a card direct to their families and to the Central Tracing Agency informing them that they have been captured (GC III, Art. 70). An individual capture card will contain in particular information relating to the prisoner's surname and first names, his State of origin, rank, serial number and date of birth, his family's address, and his captivity, address and state of health. Should a prisoner wish to refrain from revealing certain information, however, this must be respected.

Internment card

The internment card is modelled on the capture card and is adapted to the situation of civilian internees. It is also intended for the families and Central Tracing Agency, and clearly identifies the general circumstances of the civilian internee by providing information notably on his internment, address and state of health, provided that the internee considers it appropriate to reveal these details (GC IV, Art. 106).

Identification of children

In view of the fact that, depending on their age, children are unable to take care of themselves and are extremely vulnerable in time of armed conflict, international humanitarian law has provided specific measures for their identification.

The authorities could thus provide children under 12 years of age with *identity discs* adapted to their status and similar to those described above (GC IV, Art. 24).

In the special circumstances of occupation, the authorities are required to take steps to identify children (GC IV, Art. 50), such as providing them with an *identity card* or an *identity disc* that they wear all the time.

And finally, if children have been evacuated to a foreign country for compelling reasons of health or safety, the State arranging for the evacuation and, where appropriate, the authorities of the host country must draw up an *information card* and send it to the Central Tracing Agency with a view to facilitating the children's return to their families (AP I, Art. 78 para. 3).

Availability of means of identification and training

Since means of personal identification should be available at all times, the authorities must make preparatory arrangements in peacetime. It is also their responsibility to ensure that the persons concerned are carrying their identity documents should an armed conflict break out.

If the means of identifying individuals are to play their role to the full, the usefulness and importance of these measures should be explained in particular in the course of training for military personnel and other categories of persons specifically concerned. Special attention should also be devoted to this aspect when international humanitarian law is being disseminated to a wider public.

02/2003

Front

(Space reserved for the name of the country and military authority issuing this card)

IDENTITY CARD
for members of medical and religious personnel attached to the armed forces

Surname

First names

Date of Birth

Rank

Army Number

The bearer of this card is protected by the Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field of August 12, 1949, in his capacity as

Date of issue Number of Card

Reverse side

Photo of bearer

Signature of bearer or fingerprints or both

Embossed stamp of military authority issuing card

Height	Eyes	Hair
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Other distinguishing marks

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First Geneva Convention 1949 – wounded and sick on land – Annex II

Front

(Space reserved for the name of the country and military authority issuing this card)

IDENTITY CARD
for members of medical and religious personnel attached to the armed forces at sea

Surname

First names

Date of Birth

Rank

Army Number

The bearer of this card is protected by the Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded, Sick and Shipwrecked Members of Armed Forces at Sea of August 12, 1949, in his capacity as

Date of issue Number of Card

Reverse side

Photo of bearer

Signature of bearer or fingerprints or both

Embossed stamp of military authority issuing card

Height	Eyes	Hair
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Other distinguishing marks

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Second Geneva Convention 1949 – wounded, sick and shipwrecked at sea – Annex I

FRONT

(space reserved for the name of the country and authority issuing this card)

IDENTITY CARD
for PERMANENT civilian medical personnel
TEMPORARY religious personnel

Name

Date of birth (or age)

Identity No. (if any)

The holder of this card is protected by the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and by the Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I) in his capacity as

Date of issue No. of card

Signature of issuing authority

Date of expiry

REVERSE SIDE

Height	Eyes	Hair
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Other distinguishing marks or information:

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PHOTO OF HOLDER

Stamp	Signature of holder or thumbprint or both
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Additional Protocol I of 1977 – international armed conflicts – Annex I, Art. 2

Photograph of the bearer (Name of the country and military authority issuing this card) IDENTITY CARD FOR A PERSON WHO ACCOMPANIES THE ARMED FORCES Name First names Date and place of birth Accompanies the Armed Forces as Date of issue Signature of bearer	Hair	Official seal imprint
	Eyes	Blood type Religion
Weight	Fingerprints (optional) (Left forefinger) (Right forefinger)	
Height	Any other mark of identification	

Remarks. – This card should be made out for preference in two or three languages, one of which is in international use. Actual size of the card: 13 by 10 centimetres. It should be folded along the dotted line.

Third Geneva Convention
1949 – prisoners of war –
Annex IV A.

FRONT



 (space reserved for the name of the country and authority issuing this card) 	
IDENTITY CARD for civil defence personnel	
Name	
Date of birth (or age)	
Identity No. (if any)	
The holder of this card is protected by the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and by the Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I) in his capacity as	
Date of issue	No. of card
Signature of issuing authority	
Date of expiry	

REVERSE SIDE

Height	Eyes	Hair
Other distinguishing marks or information:		
Weapons		
PHOTO OF HOLDER		
Stamp	Signature of holder or thumbprint or both	

Additional Protocol I of 1977
– international armed conflicts – Annex I, Art. 15

FRONT

 	
IDENTITY CARD for personnel engaged in the protection of cultural property	
Surname	
First names	
Date of birth	
Title or rank	
Function	
is the bearer of this card under the terms of the Convention of The Hague, dated 14 May 1954, for the Protection of Cultural Property in the event of Armed Conflict.	
Date of issue	Number of card

REVERSE SIDE

Photo of bearer	Signature of bearer or finger-prints or both	
Embossed stamp of authority issuing card		
Height	Eyes	Hair
Other distinguishing marks		

The Hague Convention of
1954 – protection of cultural property – Regulations for the execution of the Convention, Annex

FRONT

<p style="text-align: center;">NOTICE</p> <p>This identity card is issued to journalists on dangerous professional missions in areas of armed conflicts. The holder is entitled to be treated as a civilian under the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and their Additional Protocol I. The card must be carried at all times by the bearer. If he is detained, he shall at once hand it to the Detaining Authorities, to assist in his identification.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ملحوظة</p> <p>تصرف هذه البطاقة للصحفيين المكلفين بمهام مهنية خطيرة في مناطق النزاعات المسلحة ويجب لصاحبها أن يعامل معاملة الشخص المدني وفقاً لاتفاقيات جنيف المؤرخة ١٢ آب / أغسطس ١٩٤٩ ولحفظها (بروتوكولها) الإضافي الأول. ويجب أن يحتفظ صاحب البطاقة بها دوماً وإذا اعتقل فيجب أن يسلمها فوراً إلى سلطة الاعتقال لتساعد على تحديده هويته.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">NOTA</p> <p>La presente tarjeta de identidad se expide a los periodistas en misión profesional peligrosa en zonas de conflictos armados. Su titular tiene derecho a ser tratado como persona civil conforme a los Convenios de Ginebra del 12 de agosto de 1949 y su Protocolo adicional I. El titular debe llevar la tarjeta consigo, en todo momento. En caso de ser detenido, la entregará inmediatamente a las autoridades que lo detengan a fin de facilitar su identificación.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">AVIS</p> <p>La présente carte d'identité est délivrée aux journalistes en mission professionnelle périlleuse dans des zones de conflit armé. Le porteur a le droit d'être traité comme une personne civile aux termes des Conventions de Genève du 12 août 1949 et de leur Protocole additionnel I. La carte doit être portée en tout temps par son titulaire. Si celui-ci est arrêté, il la remettra immédiatement aux autorités qui le retiennent afin qu'elles puissent l'identifier.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ПРИМЕЧАНИЕ</p> <p>Настоящее удостоверение выдается журналистам, находящимся в опасных профессиональных командировках в районах вооруженного конфликта. Его обладатель имеет право на обращение с ним как с гражданским лицом в соответствии с Женевскими Конвенциями от 12 августа 1949 г. и Дополнительным Протоколом I к ним. Владелец настоящего удостоверения должен постоянно иметь его при себе. В случае задержания он немедленно вручает его задерживающим властям для содействия установлению его личности.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">(Name of country issuing this card) (اسم القطر المصدر لهذه البطاقة) (Nombre del país que expide esta tarjeta) (Nom du pays qui a délivré cette carte) (Название страны, выдавшей настоящее удостоверение)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">IDENTITY CARD FOR JOURNALISTS ON DANGEROUS PROFESSIONAL MISSIONS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">بطاقة الهوية الخاصة بالصحفيين المكلفين بمهام مهنية خطيرة</p> <p style="text-align: center;">TARJETA DE IDENTIDAD DE PERIODISTA EN MISION PELIGROSA</p> <p style="text-align: center;">CARTE D'IDENTITÉ DE JOURNALISTE EN MISSION PÉRILLEUSE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">УДОСТОВЕРЕНИЕ ЖУРНАЛИСТА, НАХОДЯЩЕГОСЯ В ОПАСНОЙ КОМАНДИРОВКЕ</p>
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REVERSE SIDE

<p>Issued by (competent authority) (صدرت من (السلطة المختصة)) Expedida por (autoridad competente) Delivree par (autorité compétente) Выдано (компетентными властями)</p> <p>Photograph of bearer (صور صاحب البطاقة) Fotografía del titular Photographie du porteur Фотография предъявителя</p> <p>Place (المكان) Lugar Lieu Mesto Date (التاريخ) Fecha Date Дата</p> <p>(Official seal imprint) (الختم الرسمي) (Sello oficial) (Timbre de l'autorité délivrant la carte) (Official stamp)</p> <p>(Signature of bearer) (توقيع صاحب البطاقة) (Firma del titular) (Signature du porteur) (Подпись владельца)</p> <p>Name (اسم الشهرة) Apellidos Nom Фамилия First names الاسم Nombre Prénoms Имя, Отчество Place & date of birth (مكان وتاريخ الميلاد) Lugar y fecha de nacimiento Lieu & date de naissance Дата и место рождения Correspondent of (مرسل) Corresponsal de Correspondant de Корреспондент Specific occupation (المهنة المحددة) Categoría profesional Catégorie professionnelle Prof. заняття Valid for (ينتهي الصل بها في) Válido por Durée de validité Действительно</p>	<p>Height (الطول) Estatura Taille Рост</p> <p>Weight (الوزن) Peso Poids Вес</p> <p>Blood type (صفة الدم) Grupo sanguíneo Groupe sanguin Группа крови</p> <p>Religion (optional) (الديانة (اختياري)) Religion (optativo) Religion (facultatif) Религия (факультативно)</p> <p>Fingerprints (optional) (البصمة (اختياري)) Huellas dactilares (optativo) Empreintes digitales (facultatif) Отпечатки пальцев (факультативно)</p> <p>(Left forefinger) (الإصبع اليسرى) (Dedo índice izquierdo) (Index gauche) (Палец указательный левый)</p> <p>(Right forefinger) (الإصبع اليميني) (Dedo índice derecho) (Index droit) (Палец указательный правый)</p> <p>Special marks of identification (العلامات المميزة لتعريف الهوية) Señas particulares Signes particuliers Особые приметы</p>
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Front

PRISONER OF WAR MAIL	Postage free
CAPTURE CARD FOR PRISONER OF WAR	
<p style="text-align: center; margin: 0;">IMPORTANT</p> <p style="font-size: small; margin: 0;">This card must be completed by each prisoner immediately after being taken prisoner and each time his address is changed (by reason of transfer to a hospital or to another camp). This card is distinct from the special card which each prisoner is allowed to send to his relatives.</p>	<p style="margin: 0;">CENTRAL PRISONERS OF WAR AGENCY</p> <p style="font-size: x-small; margin: 0;">INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS</p> <p style="margin: 10px 0 0 0;"><u>GENEVA</u> SWITZERLAND</p>

Reverse side

Write legibly and in block letters		1. Power on which the prisoner depends _____
2. Name _____	3. First names (in full) _____	4. First name of father _____
5. Date of birth _____	6. Place of birth _____	
7. Rank _____		
8. Service number _____		
9. Address of next of kin _____		
*10. Taken prisoner on: (or) Coming from (Camp No., hospital, etc.) _____		
*11. (a) Good health—(b) Not wounded—(c) Recovered—(d) Convalescent—(e) Sick—(f) Slightly wounded—(g) Seriously wounded.		
12. My present address is: Prisoner No. _____ Name of camp _____		
13. Date _____		14. Signature _____
*Strike out what is not applicable—Do not add any remarks—See explanations overleaf.		

Remarks. – This form should be made out in two or three languages, particularly in the prisoner's own language and in that of the Detaining Power. Actual size: 15 by 10.5 centimetres.

Third Geneva Convention 1949 – prisoners of war – Annex IV B.

Front

CIVILIAN INTERNEE MAIL	Postage free
POST CARD	
<p style="text-align: center; margin: 0;">IMPORTANT</p> <p style="font-size: small; margin: 0;">This card must be completed by each internee immediately on being interned and each time his address is altered by reason of transfer to another place of internment or to a hospital. This card is not the same as the special card which each internee is allowed to send to his relatives.</p>	<p style="margin: 0;">CENTRAL INFORMATION AGENCY FOR PROTECTED PERSONS</p> <p style="font-size: x-small; margin: 0;">INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS</p>

Reverse side

Write legibly and in block letters—1. Nationality _____		
2. Surname _____	3. First names (in full) _____	4. First name of father _____
5. Date of birth _____	6. Place of birth _____	
7. Occupation _____		
8. Address before detention _____		
9. Address of next of kin _____		
*10. Interned on: (or) Coming from (hospital, etc.) on: _____		
*11. State of health _____		
12. Present address _____		14. Signature _____
13. Date _____		
*Strike out what is not applicable—Do not add any remarks—See explanations on other side of card		

(Size of internment card – 10 x 15 cm)

Fourth Geneva Convention 1949 – protection of civilian persons – Annex III I.