

# 1977-2017

## THE ADDITIONAL PROTOCOLS AT 40 AS RELEVANT AS EVER

Adopted on 8 June 1977, Additional Protocols (APs) I and II, together with the Geneva Conventions of 1949, form the foundations of international humanitarian law (IHL) and are the cornerstone for the protection and respect of human dignity in armed conflicts. They significantly improve the legal protection covering civilians and the wounded and sick, among others. Importantly, Protocol II is the first universal treaty devoted exclusively to non-international armed conflicts, complementing Article 3 common to the Geneva Conventions.

174  
STATES HAVE  
RATIFIED **API**



168  
STATES HAVE  
RATIFIED **APII**

## WHY THE NEED FOR API & APII?

- Reaffirm existing principles of IHL, which were already part of international law but had been negotiated before the era of decolonization and the resultant tripling in the number of States
- Codify and develop essential rules on the conduct of hostilities, which had not undergone any significant revision since 1907
- Recognising the increased number of non-international armed conflicts, agree on a greater number of rules for the protection of civilians from the effects of hostilities within these conflicts
- Take account of new realities of warfare by including rules relevant to guerrilla tactics and acts of terror

[bit.ly/2qNzDyA](http://bit.ly/2qNzDyA)



ICRC

# TO MARK THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY, THE ICRC CALLS ON STATES TO:

- Adhere to the APs if they have not done so already and encourage other States to do so
- Work to fully implement, apply and enforce the APs at the domestic level
- Speak up for the APs – for their very practical relevance to today’s conflicts and for the humanitarian impact they have on people affected by armed conflict every single day



Despite the geopolitical landscape, States in the 1970s worked hard to clarify the principles of IHL in practice. The Protocols are not the product of humanitarian idealism – they strike a balance between military necessity and humanity – and remain very much relevant today.

PHILIP SPOERRI, PERMANENT OBSERVER OF THE ICRC TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
MARCH 2017

The full statement by Philip Spoerri is available online as well as ICRC’s manual and toolbox offering guidance to help States implement IHL. Updated information about ICRC’s upcoming publication on “The 1977 Additional Protocols – 40 years of practice” and special multimedia content on the Anniversary will also be added throughout the year.

**CHECK OUT ALL THESE RESOURCES  
ONLINE: [bit.ly/2qNzDyA](https://bit.ly/2qNzDyA)**