



# ICRC

## International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

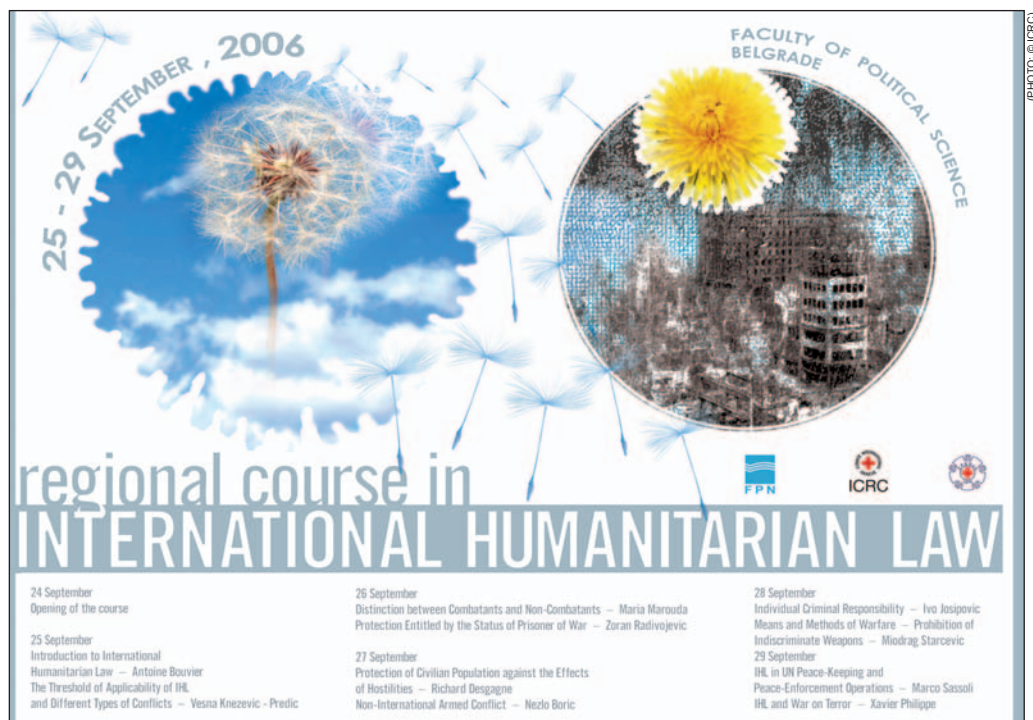
an independent, impartial and neutral organization ensuring humanitarian protection and assistance for victims of armed conflict

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Ksenija Franovic, participant from Podgorica: "As much as it was a sort of an emotional burden, the experience of 10 years of hostilities on the territory of former Yugoslavia also made it easier for us to arrive at legal qualifications of other conflicts used as examples at the Course. I am also very glad we are all here together, joining our efforts to discuss these subjects, which is anything but an easy task."

## Students from Region Study International Humanitarian Law (IHL)



Poster of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Regional IHL Course

The Regional Course in International Humanitarian Law (IHL) was held for the third year running at the Belgrade Faculty of Political Science in September. In the course of one week, lecturers from Zagreb, Sarajevo, Geneva, Budapest, Moscow, Nis and Belgrade and fifty students of law, political science, and military and police academies from Ljubljana (Slovenia), Zagreb and Osijek (Croatia), Sarajevo, Banjaluka, Mostar and Tuzla (Bosnia-

Herzegovina), Skopje (Macedonia), Podgorica (Montenegro), Nis, Novi Sad and Belgrade (Serbia) combined legal theory of International Humanitarian Law with case studies. The students showed great commitment and enthusiasm to relate IHL not only to the historical contexts, but also to the current challenges such as the global "war on terror". As before, the course has been supported by the Red Cross of Serbia and the ICRC.

International Humanitarian Law (IHL) puts limits on the means and methods of warfare and protects certain categories of persons and objects during armed conflict. The most universal and one of the best known IHL-treaties are the Geneva Conventions of 1949. They define mainly the protection of civilians, prisoners and the wounded during armed conflict. Their provisions have become part of national law worldwide.

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, 4<sup>th</sup> Geneva Convention of 1949), while the role of the ICRC is "to work for the understanding and dissemination of knowledge of International Humanitarian Law applicable in armed conflict." (Article 2.2, RC Movement Statute).



Badge of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Regional IHL Course in Belgrade

## International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

Throughout the territory of former Yugoslavia, there remain over 18,000 missing persons - most of them in Bosnia-Herzegovina (B-H) - whose fate remains unknown to their families. Some of these families live in Serbia and are looking for 1,450 of their relatives still unaccounted for following the conflicts in B-H, Croatia and Kosovo. The ICRC continues to address the authorities throughout the region, urging them to fulfil their responsibilities in providing answers to families, and speeding up the search for the mortal remains of their loved ones.

### THE MISSING

the right to know

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

The ICRC assists Armed Forces and Peace Support Operations in training of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) or, as Armed Forces call it, the Law of Armed Conflict. It also makes its humanitarian mission known, which takes place under the protection of distinctive emblems, such as the Red Cross, as mandated by the Geneva Conventions and its Additional Protocols. The wounded, prisoners and civilians are protected, as well as the mission of the ICRC and the volunteers of the National Red Cross Societies.

## Pain and Anger Eleven Years after Conflict in B-H

Representatives of 233 families living in Serbia, who are looking for their relatives still missing in relation to the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina, were invited by the ICRC and the Serbian Red Cross to an information session on the efforts undertaken by the different actors involved in this painstaking process. As these families are not organised in associations, they remain without systematic support in their search for their missing members. Many of them are bitter and some expressed anger at the lack of progress in receiving news regarding the fate of their next of kin gone missing more than a decade ago. Taking part in the sessions and answering questions posed by the families were also representatives of the Serbian Commission on the Missing, the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP), a family association of the missing in Croatia, a lawyer dealing with the legal and administrative issues encountered by the families and a pathologist involved in the forensic process. With



Families attend the Belgrade session at the Serbian Red Cross.

many of the needs of these families remaining unaddressed, the ICRC reaffirmed its commitment to continue supporting their plea and taking up their concerns with the relevant authorities.

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.

## Red Cross Takes Part in Civil-Military Relations Exercise



Army and Red Cross take part in Pancevo exercise.

A total of 26 military officers from Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Finland, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia gathered for a three-week Regional Course for Military Observers in

Peace-Support Operations, organised by the Finnish Defence Forces International Centre (FINCENT). In a practical military exercise in the area of Pancevo, near Belgrade, the ICRC and the Red Cross of Serbia (RCS) took care of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in an IDP camp, as they would in a real conflict situation. The role of military observers was to establish contact with the camp management, get acquainted with the situation of the IDPs and discuss protection issues with the Red Cross tracing service. The RCS was also ready to intervene with a fully equipped first-aid team.

At the Serbian Armed Forces Peace Support Operations Centre in Belgrade, the venue of the course, the officers were reminded of the role of the Red Cross organisations regarding protection of and assistance to the wounded, prisoners and civilians, all protected under the Geneva Conventions.

"The Parties to the conflict shall grant to the International Committee of the Red Cross all facilities, within their power, so as to enable it to carry out the humanitarian functions assigned to it by the Conventions and this Protocol in order to ensure protection and assistance to the victims of conflicts." (Article 81.1 of the Additional Protocol I of 1977 to the Geneva Conventions of 1949).



## International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

### Geneva Conventions Achieve Complete Universality

After Montenegro regained independence in May 2006, it acceded to the 1949 Geneva Conventions. Although Montenegro had been party to earlier Geneva Conventions over a century before, it was necessary for the newly independent state to accede to the treaty and its Additional Protocols of 1977 and 2006. The 1949 Geneva Conventions were for many years the most universal international treaty and the Montenegro accession makes it the first international treaty ever to achieve full universality. As the guardian of international humanitarian law (IHL), the ICRC welcomed this historic day and once again



*An ICRC-sponsored local translation of the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols*

reminded all parties at war throughout the world of their obligation to abide by the laws of war. "Armed conflicts continue to take their toll on human lives and on material means of survival, it is important to reaffirm the contribution of international humanitarian law to the protection of human dignity and the preservation of humanity in the midst of war,"

stressed Jean-Philippe Lavoyer, head of the ICRC legal division.

The Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols of 1977 and 2006 constitute the fundamental law protecting victims of armed conflict and governing the conduct of hostilities in wartime. With Montenegro's accession, the number of States party to the Geneva Conventions has been brought to 194.

### PHV Youth Programme Introduced in Serbia



PHV pilot session in Zajecar.

After stunning popularity with teenagers in Macedonia, the Promotion of Human Values (PHV) programme is now starting implementation in Serbia too. A series of introductory sessions carried out in seven key branches of the Red Cross of Serbia mark the first phase of the pilot PHV programme, targeting 140 junior Red Cross volun-

teers. Its main purpose is to get them acquainted with a new, fresh approach to promoting essential humanitarian values through practical humanitarian-action projects. These projects, developed and carried out by the young volunteers themselves, are designed in such a way that they are not only useful to the community, but are also interesting and appealing enough for the youngsters to maintain their enthusiasm for doing them. Encouraging young people's interest in PHV projects is instrumental in spreading the volunteer base of the Red Cross and the promotion of International Humanitarian Law and the Red Cross principles among them

and their peers.

The project's second phase shall enable 35 participants, five from each of the seven branches mentioned above, to acquire the knowledge and skills required to run small projects on their own for the benefit of the community and further reinforcement of the Red Cross image in Serbia.

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 States is known as International Humanitarian Law (IHL), of which the Geneva Conventions are the bedrock.

First launched by the Norwegian Red Cross in 1996, the Promotion of Human Values (PHV) programme has been developed further by the Macedonian Red Cross, with the support of ICRC Skopje. It aims to promote positive human values, voluntary humanitarian action and the principles of the Red Cross Movement among secondary school students and the Red Cross youth. Besides Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armenia and Azerbaijan also showed much interest in PHV and are exploring possibilities to introduce it in their own countries.

The first of the seven Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross Movement is Humanity. It says that, in both its international and national capacity, the Movement endeavours to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation and lasting peace amongst all peoples.

# 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:

Contributes 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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