



# ICRC

## WHAT IS THE NATIONAL COMPETITION ON INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW IN ISRAEL?

### A FIRST IHL COMPETITION IN ISRAEL

In 2003, the Tel Aviv Delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) boosted its cooperation with Israeli academic institutions and Law Faculties in particular. The ICRC and its partner institutions developed and implemented various projects aimed at improving and expanding knowledge of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) among Israeli teachers, students and the professional legal community. In this framework, in the spring of 2007, the ICRC Delegation in Israel, the Occupied and Autonomous Territories invited a number of Israeli academic institutions to have their students participate in the first annual edition of a National Competition on International Humanitarian Law.

While international law competitions are common in the experience of many Israeli law schools, no such competition at a national level, has ever been focused on International Humanitarian Law – despite the fact that IHL takes a prominent part in the country's academic, political and judicial agendas. 2007 will be the first time that the International Committee of the Red Cross – or anyone else – holds a national IHL Competition in Israel. Teams from various Israeli law schools will train and compete with each other. The idea is to develop a competition which will be held annually, and that the participants in the upcoming 2007 edition will ultimately set the standard for the future.

### INTERNATIONAL LAW COMPETITIONS

In general, leaving aside essay competitions, international law competitions take two forms. The first, more common, is the moot court, in which participating students prepare written submissions and plead on this basis in front of judges. This kind of competition enables the students to develop their research and written abilities, but mostly their courtroom skills. Many international law careers, however, do not include litigation or necessitate such skills. The second form of international law competitions – which characterize many IHL competitions – seek therefore to develop, train and test different sets of skills. Such competitions typically test knowledge of IHL *but also the ability to apply the law in a practical manner*. Rather than creating a simulation of a courtroom, such competitions create a series of simulations of real-life situations in which the students are tested on their knowledge of the law *and* their ability to apply it in the given situation. This is achieved by *role-playing*. In each test, the students (and the jury who assess their performance) play an assigned role: they may be legal representatives of government Ministries, the armed forces, international organizations or NGOs. Other roles may include decision-makers, journalists and so forth. During each test, the students are expected to demonstrate a *relevant knowledge of the law* and an *ability to apply* it to the specific role they play within their instructions. The philosophy underlying this type of competition is based on tested pedagogic theories, according to which the law is best taught by using practical examples and simulations.

Moreover, such pedagogical methods considerably improve skills expected from practitioners in their professional career. Needless to say, the Israeli IHL Competition will follow the second form.

Such competitions help train better practitioners. Moreover, graduates of such competitions – whether nationally, regionally or internationally – often find that their mere participation in high quality IHL competitions and the skills they acquire during their participation, can give them a serious advantage over other job applicants.

### **INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW COMPETITIONS**

In recent years, a number of prestigious IHL competitions took place at national, regional and international levels, imbuing participants with a sense of belonging to the global professional community – and often giving them the record, experience and opportunity to pursue their careers within that community. Participation in an IHL competition is often what distinguishes a *résumé* and paves the way for an IHL career. First among those is the *Jean Pictet IHL Competition* – in 2008, the 20<sup>th</sup> edition of the Jean Pictet IHL Competition will be held! The Annual IHL Competition to be held in Israel in December 2007, extensively builds on the experience and achievements of its precursors. Moreover, the winning team of the National IHL Competition will be encouraged to apply to regional and international IHL competitions, and if admitted, the ICRC may sponsor their participation (subject to Competition Regulations).

### **THE ICRC AND IHL COMPETITIONS**

As an organisation mandated by international law to promote respect for and help States disseminate knowledge of IHL, the ICRC has both the IHL expertise and the practical experience to develop national, regional and international IHL competitions. The ICRC has acquired vast experience in organising and supporting such competitions worldwide. Such events are becoming increasingly popular, with more than a dozen national events and almost ten regional or international competitions (including the prestigious *Jean Pictet IHL Competition*, which is supported by the ICRC). These were created primarily to enhance and emphasize the teaching of IHL in universities around the world.

### **TRAINING**

Naturally, the IHL Competition puts an emphasis on training. To this end, teams admitted to the Competition will participate in 2 ICRC training days during the summer. Moreover, once the Autumn Term starts, teams will receive regular training in their respective institutions from a coach designated by the academic institution, acting under the supervision of a member of the academic staff and trained by the ICRC. Moreover, training sessions by world-renowned experts will compose an integral part of the Competition itself.

### **WHERE AND WHEN?**

In order to create ideal conditions for the students to train, learn and compete, the competition will be held during four full days on 3-7 December, 2007, at the Belmont Hotel in Kibbutz Tzuba (in central Israel). The venue will include full board, covered by the ICRC. Participants are expected to stay on the premises during all four days and nights (and the last morning).