TEACHING
DEBATING
RESEARCHING

INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW,
ACTION AND POLICY IN ACADEMIA
THE ROLE OF ACADEMIA VIS-À-VIS INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW, ACTION AND POLICY

Today’s armed conflicts take a heavy toll on civilians, detainees, the wounded, medical staff and essential infrastructure. To prevent unfettered violence, international humanitarian law (IHL) establishes limits on the behaviour of belligerents, and states are primarily responsible for implementing and enforcing those limits.

Academics play a crucial role in supporting this effort by ensuring that IHL is taught to current and future leaders, arms carriers, magistrates and lawyers, as well as humanitarian professionals, for knowledge of the law is absolutely necessary – though not in itself sufficient – to ensure it is respected. Academics also make an essential contribution to the legal and humanitarian debate, helping shape laws and policies that comply with international obligations. Their work can help governments to implement IHL through national laws, policies and practical measures, and raise the awareness of civil society through the media and public conferences.

Finally, academics are at the forefront of research on new topics. They can highlight emerging humanitarian issues, propose innovative ideas and solutions to address them, and provide constructive analyses to improve legal and humanitarian responses. For these reasons, partnering with academia is a key part of the efforts of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to foster respect for IHL and impartial humanitarian action.

LEARNING AND TEACHING IHL

Free digital tools in various languages are available on the ICRC’s website, such as an offline IHL app with over 80 treaties and documents, a self-paced IHL e-learning course, an IHL introductory handbook and many other pedagogical resources.

Consult the digital hub for learning and teaching IHL: www.icrc.org/en/learning-teaching-ihl
TEACHING INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

Why?
When states ratify the Geneva Conventions, they expressly commit to spreading knowledge of IHL. One effective way of doing that is to teach the subject at universities. Apart from being a legal obligation, teaching IHL helps generate respect for this body of law and enhance people’s understanding of armed conflicts in today’s world.

How?
The realities of contemporary armed conflict should form the core of all instruction in IHL and humanitarian action. For this reason, professors and lecturers are encouraged to teach IHL interactively, using case studies and a variety of media and tools. They should also consider involving their students in “out-of-the-classroom” events, such as role-play competitions, moot courts, debating tournaments and essay competitions. These events aim to generate momentum for integrating IHL in university curricula and to elicit interest in IHL and related matters more generally. Professors and lecturers are also welcomed to take part in ICRC “train the trainer” courses and seminars worldwide to be introduced to the subject, receive updates on the latest developments, and explore ways of teaching it.

The High Contracting Parties undertake, in time of peace as in time of war, to disseminate the text of the present Convention as widely as possible in their respective countries, and, in particular, to include the study thereof in their programmes of (...) civil instruction, so that the principles thereof may become known to the entire population (...).

The four Geneva Conventions of 1949, Articles 47, 48, 127 and 144 respectively.

HOW DOES LAW PROTECT IN WAR?
This online reference casebook contains over 400 case studies, a comprehensive outline of IHL and pedagogical resources for lecturers.

Browse the online platform: www.icrc.org/casebook
DEBATING IHL, HUMANITARIAN ACTION AND POLICY

Why?
Professors, lecturers and researchers ensure that relevant expertise is brought into the legal and humanitarian debate worldwide and enrich that debate thanks to their diverse fields of competence and perspectives. International and humanitarian actors can benefit from their knowledge to update legal positions and policies, thereby reinforcing the protection of people affected by armed conflict and other violence.

How?
Throughout the world, academics and other experts are invited to contribute to ICRC workshops, seminars and conferences that explore contemporary issues. The national, regional and international networks of academic expertise that are created in this way can be instrumental in the development, teaching and implementation of IHL, and generate more support for neutral and impartial humanitarian action.

Professors, lecturers and researchers are also invited to participate in the debate through other channels, whether online by submitting posts to the ICRC’s Humanitarian Law & Policy blog, through articles in the International Review of the Red Cross or by submitting IHL monographs for the Paul Reuter Prize, which rewards particularly remarkable work every three years.
RESEARCHING LEGAL AND HUMANITARIAN ISSUES

Why?
Promoting knowledge and ownership of relevant norms and values is an effective way to create an environment conducive to respect for human dignity, IHL and neutral and impartial humanitarian action. Researchers contribute to that conducive environment by working on topical legal and humanitarian issues. This in turn helps clarify and develop the law and enhance humanitarian policy and action.

How?
Researchers who want to know more about reference publications in the field of IHL, humanitarian action and policy are encouraged to contact the ICRC or browse www.icrc.org. Publications can be made available to university libraries upon request. Most publications are also available in electronic format and free of charge on https://shop.icrc.org. Researchers are also invited to submit articles to the International Review of the Red Cross, which regularly explores contemporary issues in the field of IHL, humanitarian action and policy. For any submission to the Review or any other academic journal supported by the ICRC, researchers are invited to consult our website or contact their closest ICRC office.

Leading academics are invited to partner with the ICRC on research projects and compatibility studies between IHL and domestic law. Such projects generally focus on current legal and policy trends and challenges and help provide the ICRC with useful analyses to tackle them. Project proposals can emanate from both potential academic partners and the ICRC. Partnerships follow a precise time frame and agenda with a view to producing tangible results, such as research papers, training tools, updated databases, joint events, academic centres, etc. Academics interested in submitting a proposal are invited to contact their closest ICRC office.

Contact our offices worldwide: www.icrc.org/eng/who-we-are/contacts

THE INTERNATIONAL REVIEW OF THE RED CROSS
Established in 1869, the International Review of the Red Cross is a quarterly journal published by the ICRC and Cambridge University Press. It is a forum for debate on IHL and humanitarian action and policy related to armed conflict and other situations of violence.

Consult and submit to the journal: https://international-review.icrc.org
VISITING THE ICRC

Why?
Professors, researchers and students are encouraged to visit the ICRC to learn more about its role as the “guardian of IHL” and its humanitarian work to alleviate suffering in armed conflict and other situations of violence as well as to discuss possible collaborations.

How?
Some ICRC offices have public conference and documentation centres, where visitors can consult reference publications on IHL and humanitarian action. At the ICRC’s headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum welcomes visitors who want to know more about the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, humanitarian work and IHL. The library at headquarters contains comprehensive collections on IHL and the ICRC’s activities, and its core collections can be consulted directly online at https://library.icrc.org. We look forward to meeting you!

Contact our offices worldwide: www.icrc.org/eng/who-we-are/contacts
Visit the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum: https://redcrossmuseum.ch/visit/?lang=default