



**American
Red Cross**

Int'l Humanitarian Law
Youth Action Campaign

Presenting the 2026 Student Art & Essay Competition: Exploring Journalism in Armed Conflict

The American Red Cross is proud to announce the 6th Annual International Humanitarian Law (IHL) Student Art and Essay Competition. This annual event challenges participants to thoughtfully apply IHL, the body of international law governing armed conflict, to a specific theme.

**This year, participants are invited to explore the theme of
Journalism in Armed Conflict.**

Why IHL?

As armed conflicts continue to plague our world, the Art and Essay competition aims to promote understanding of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and the critical role it plays in mitigating the destructive impacts of war and in safeguarding the innocent during times of armed conflict. International Humanitarian Law (IHL) is the body of international law that governs how armed conflicts are fought. It is based on an extensive set of international treaties, agreements, and long-standing customs, all of which aim to protect people and places in armed conflict by regulating the weapons and tactics in war.

Competition Age Categories

The competition is open to all U.S. citizens, regardless of location, and foreign nationals residing in the United States, overseas U.S. military bases or U.S. territories. Art and Essay entries will be accepted from the following categories:

- 1) Junior High (8th grade)
- 2) High School I (Grades 9-10)
- 3) High School II (Grades 11-12)
- 4) Undergraduate Students
- 5) Law school and Graduate School Students (Masters, L.L.M., PhD, etc.)



Deadlines

- Submissions will be accepted **beginning on Saturday, November 1, 2025.**

The deadline for submission is 11:59pm (Eastern Standard Time) on Saturday, January 3, 2026.

Competition Theme

Each year, entrants are challenged with creating thoughtful and insightful entries around a specific IHL theme. This year's theme is **Journalism in Armed Conflict** including the role of IHL in helping protect journalists who are working in conflict settings. Although the nature of each essay or art submission is up to the creator, entrants are asked to explore topics within the theme including how journalism and information intersect with international law.

Potential topics to consider:

- How are different types of journalists protected under IHL in settings of armed conflict?
- What responsibilities do Journalists have to avoid becoming targets when reporting from the frontlines of war?
- In what ways can journalism help uphold international humanitarian law — and where might it unintentionally cause harm?
- What protections exist for local reporters and citizen journalists who risk their lives to document conflicts in their own communities?
- How have new technologies, like drones and social media, changed the way wars are reported — and what ethical challenges come with that?
- What international laws or agreements aim to protect journalists in war zones, and how are they working in practice?
- In the digital age, when everyone can share information online, where is the line between journalism and participation in information warfare?



Essay Competition

Guidelines

- Maximum word count of 1,500 words; excluding title page, footnotes, and bibliography.
- Essays must be written solely by the candidate and cannot have been previously published. **AI generated works will NOT be accepted and will result in disqualification.**
- Only one essay submission will be accepted per person. Essay entrants may submit a separate entry for the art portion of the competition (art competition entries must adhere to the art competition standards).
- Essays must be written in English, typed with 12pt font, and uploaded as a PDF. We encourage you to keep an original in an editable file (word doc, etc.) just in case.
- Submissions must include proper, consistent citations and a bibliography in MLA or APA style.

Submission

Entries must be submitted through the online form at the competition website here:

- www.redcross.org/humanityinwar/ihl-competitions/ihl-yac-art-and-essay-competition



The competition committee reserves the right to disqualify any entry that does not meet the competition requirements.

Evaluation & Prizes

Winning entries will be chosen by a panel of IHL experts selected by the American Red Cross. **Essays will be evaluated on the following criteria:**

Critical Thinking and Analysis (25%)

Presentation and Clarity (25%)

Evidence Supported Argument (25%)

Relevance to the Theme (25%)

First place entries from each age category will receive a \$100 gift card and an American Red Cross recognition certificate for their efforts. Additionally, **winners and finalists will be eligible to have their entry published in the annual American Red Cross digital magazine** that is published widely to the public.



Art Competition

Guidelines

- Pieces must be in the mediums of visual art within the following categories: drawing, painting, prints, mixed media, collage, photography, or digital art. **Do not use any copyrighted images or elements in your piece.**
- Must include a **brief written description** of the piece no longer than 150 words, which explains the entry and how it relates to the theme.
- Submit, in PDF, or digital image file format (e.g. PNG or JPEG) either the art itself or a clear photo of the piece (for non-digital submissions.)
- Pieces must be created solely by the candidate and cannot have been previously published. **AI generated works will NOT be accepted and will result in disqualification.**
- Only one art submission will be accepted per person. Entrants **may not** submit entries for multiple art mediums. Art competition entrants may submit a separate entry for the essay competition (essay competition entries must adhere to the essay competition standards).

Submission

Entries must be submitted through the online form at the competition website here:

- www.redcross.org/humanityinwar/ihl-competitions/ihl-yac-art-and-essay-competition



The competition committee reserves the right to disqualify any entry that does not meet the competition requirements.

Evaluation & Prizes

Winning entries will be chosen by a panel of IHL experts selected by the American Red Cross and its co-sponsors. **Art will be evaluated on the following criteria:**

Creativity and Originality (25%)

Overall Composition (25%)

Quality of Artistic Composition (25%)

Interpretation And Relevance to Theme (25%)

First place entries from each age category will receive a \$100 gift card and an American Red Cross recognition certificate for their efforts. Additionally, **winners and finalists will be eligible to have their entry published in the annual American Red Cross digital magazine** that is published widely to the public.