



International Humanitarian Law

Youth Action Campaign

2025-2026

Journalism in Armed Conflict

Handbook for Youth Advocates



**American
Red Cross**

Int'l Humanitarian Law
Youth Action Campaign

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Module 1: What is the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement?

Thank you for joining the American Red Cross International Humanitarian Law (IHL) Youth Action Campaign (YAC)!

The IHL Youth Action Campaign is an American Red Cross program that encourages youth and young adults to learn about the rules of armed conflict and empowers them to explore IHL through peer-to-peer campaigns. Later, we will discuss the Youth Action Campaign and how to build your own campaign. For now, let us talk about the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and International Humanitarian Law.



The Story of Henry Dunant

On June 24, 1859, the Austrian and the French armies clashed at Solferino, a town in northern Italy. After only 16 hours, 36,000 men lay dead or wounded. On the evening after the battle, Henry Dunant, a young Swiss citizen, arrived in Solferino.

As Dunant wandered among wounded soldiers, he realized how little attention anyone was paying to them. He gathered a group of locals and organized them into teams to take food and water to the wounded. He organized a field hospital in a church, collected linen for bandages, brought food and medical supplies from neighboring towns, and directed volunteers to fetch water in buckets. He further recruited tourists, a journalist, a count, and a chocolate manufacturer, who soon were dressing wounds, carrying water and writing farewell letters to families of the dying men. All the helpers, Dunant observed, had forgotten the nationality of the men they tended.

Horrified by the condition of the soldiers and inspired by the actions of the volunteers, Dunant realized the importance of creating a neutral organization to tend to the wounded and sick during war. A few years later, Dunant helped to start the International Committee of the Red Cross and inspired the formation of The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. He said:



“Would it not be possible in time of peace and quiet to form relief societies for the purpose of having care given to the wounded in wartime by zealous, devoted and thoroughly qualified volunteers?”



Clara Barton and the American Red Cross



In 1859, while Dunant witnessed the scene of the Battle of Solferino, another humanitarian across the Atlantic in the United States was also confronting the suffering caused by war. Clara Barton was working as a recording clerk in the U.S. Patent Office in Washington, D.C. when the first units of federal troops began appearing in the city in 1861. The Civil War had just begun and, as the troops poured in, Clara Barton realized that she could not remain on the sidelines while wounded soldiers and military medical personnel were in desperate need of assistance.

She started by taking supplies to the young men of the Sixth Massachusetts Infantry who had been attacked in Baltimore, Maryland, by southern sympathizers. Barton provided clothing and assorted foods and supplies to the sick and wounded soldiers as well as personal support to the men in hopes of keeping their spirits up. She read to them, wrote letters for them, listened to their personal problems, and prayed with them. Knowing she was needed most on the battlefield she traveled to Virginia and became known as the “Angel of the Battlefield” as she risked her life to treat the sick and wounded.

In 1869, Clara Barton traveled to Europe where she was introduced to the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. When the Franco-Prussian War broke out in 1870, Barton was again called to action. Though not yet allied to the Red Cross, Clara Barton served with International Red Cross volunteers and even fashioned a cross with a red ribbon to protect herself with the newly recognized emblem.

Inspired by her experiences with the Red Cross in Europe, Barton traveled back to the United States of America and formed the American Red Cross. Clara Barton served as the president for thirteen years, working to alleviate human suffering in face of emergencies.

The Mission of the American Red Cross

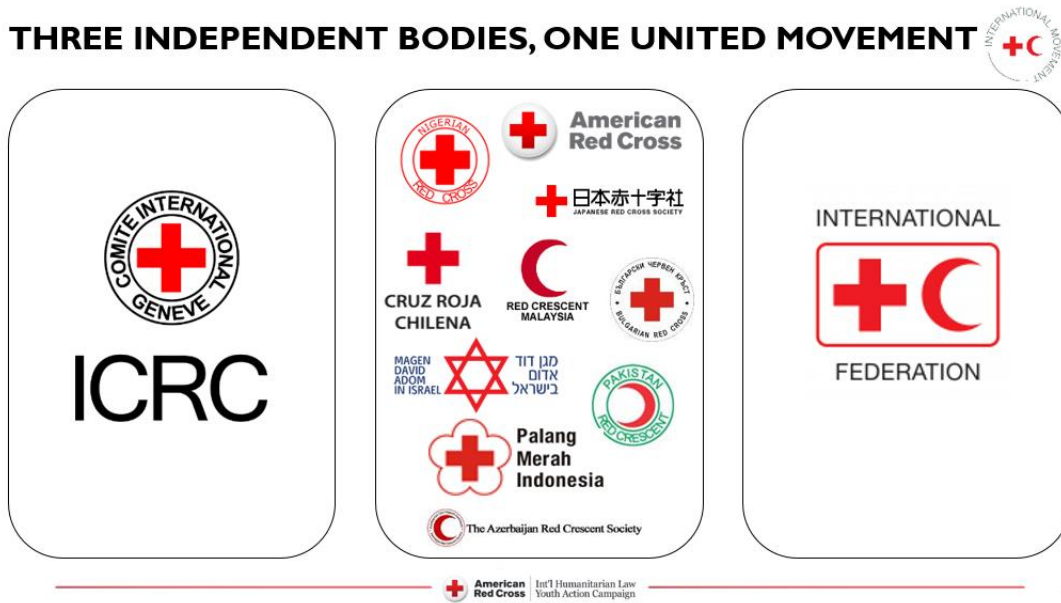
It often comes as a surprise that the American Red Cross was founded to address the humanitarian challenges faced in war. Clara Barton, our founder, was inspired to establish the American Red Cross in response to the clear needs she witnessed during the American Civil War. As a national society of the international Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the American Red Cross has a mandate to educate the public about International Humanitarian Law or IHL. As participants of the IHL Youth Action Campaign, you become our partners in promoting IHL and helping us to carry out this mandate.

The mission of the American Red Cross is to prevent and alleviate human suffering in the face of emergencies by mobilizing the power of volunteers and the generosity of donors.

The Structure of the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement

Henry Dunant's commitment to humanitarian values inspired the creation of the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement.






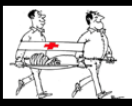

The Movement consists of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), over 190 national societies (including the American Red Cross), and the International Federation of the Red Cross. Though these organizations are separate, they remain equal partners in the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement.




The Seven Fundamental Principles of the Movement

The Seven Fundamental Principles of the Movement are the values that guide the Movement's missions to alleviate human suffering. As volunteers of the American Red Cross, it is important that we use these principles while implementing the campaigns. We can also practice these principles in our own lives.

7 FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

<p>Humanity Prevent human suffering wherever it is found</p> 	<p>Impartiality Relieve suffering based on needs without discrimination</p> 	<p>Neutrality Takes no sides in hostilities and controversies</p> 
<p>Independence Maintain autonomy from governments</p> 	<p>Voluntary Service Voluntary participation and not for personal gain</p> 	<p>Unity Only on Red Cross or Red Crescent society in each country, open to all</p> 
<p>Universality Red Cross and Red Crescent societies operate worldwide, and all societies are equal</p> 		

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Protection of the Emblems

To standardize a symbol for medical personnel and facilities, the Red Cross was the first distinctive emblem authorized in the original Geneva Conventions. It has no religious meaning but is the inverse of the Swiss flag which is a white cross on a red background. The standardization of this symbol did not last long, as some nations started to use other emblems. To stop this practice, the Movement has three globally recognized emblems—the Red Cross, the Red Crescent and the Red Crystal—a neutral emblem that is not linked to any one country or region. They are symbols of assistance in times of conflict and disaster and are some of the most widely recognized brand symbols globally.

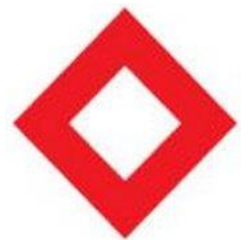


When you see the Red Cross or other affiliated symbols on a battlefield, they carry a special significance. These symbols represent immunity—they cannot be attacked, and those using them, like medics aiding an injured soldier, must be granted safe passage.



There are two uses for the emblems: The first is what we call 'Protective use.' It signals legal protection under International Humanitarian Law, ensuring that people, equipment, or locations marked with the emblem are safeguarded during armed conflict.

The second use of the emblem is to show who or what is connected to the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, like people, vehicles, or buildings, ensuring special protections. This is called 'Indicative use' and represents the marking of Red Cross buildings and people. In your work as an IHL YAC advocate, you are engaging in this indicative use when you wear a shirt, hat, or pins with the Red Cross. As such, you are now part of our network of Red Cross volunteers responsible for protecting the emblem and ensuring it is used to protect our principles.



Module 2: International Humanitarian Law (IHL) Basics



As long as there have been armed conflicts there have been rules that govern those armed conflicts. As armed conflicts have evolved, so have these rules. **International humanitarian law (IHL)** is a set of rules that seek, for humanitarian reasons, to limit the effects of armed conflict.

IHL acknowledges the reality of armed conflict. During armed conflicts, actions that would never be allowed in peacetime, like killing someone, suddenly become lawful. IHL attempts to protect lives and preserve humanity when it seems like all other rules have broken down. It protects people who are not or are no

longer participating in hostilities, like civilians or the sick and the wounded, and restricts the means and methods of warfare in order to limit certain weapons and strategies from causing unnecessary suffering.



IHL is made up of **international treaty law** and **customary international law**. International treaty law includes formal international agreements like the Geneva Conventions. Customary international law is developed when a significant number of nations consistently do a certain practice to the point that it is eventually recognized as an obligation on all nations, despite the fact that it is not written in a formal treaty. It is similar to the way that many people in the United States tend to walk on the right side of the sidewalk. People do this not because it is written law, but simply because it is a social norm that helps decrease confusion when two people are walking towards each other. When enough nations adhere to the same practice and that practice inspires a sense of obligation to comply with the practice, the practice becomes accepted as customary international law.

IHL has been at the heart of the International Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement since its inception. The Movement has a mandate to educate the public about IHL which is continues to do in many ways including through the IHL Youth Action Campaign!

The Geneva Conventions

A year after the International Committee of the Red Cross was founded in Switzerland, the first treaty that championed its ideas was signed by twelve governments in the first Geneva Convention in 1864.

The Geneva Convention of 1864 contained ten brief articles that protect medical personnel and wounded combatants during armed conflicts. After this convention, additional treaties in The Hague and Geneva were developed to offer further protections applicable in armed conflicts.

The next major development in IHL occurred after the atrocities of World War II. The Geneva Conventions of 1949 aimed to prevent the atrocities of World War II from ever occurring again by providing the first universally accepted codification of laws that govern armed conflicts. Every nation in the world has signed the 1949 Geneva Conventions and has adopted them as law. These treaties became the cornerstone of modern International Humanitarian Law. The Additional Protocols of 1977 are two additional documents that added to the 1949 Geneva Conventions and further developed the laws that govern armed conflict. However, unlike the 1949 Geneva Conventions, they have not been as widely accepted. Some countries, including the United States, have not ratified them.

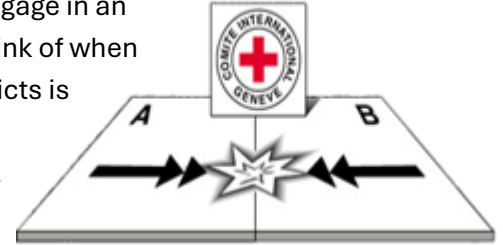
These are only a few of the international agreements that make up international humanitarian law. Other treaties and customary international law contribute to a robust body of law that protects the victims of armed conflict.



Types of Armed Conflict

In IHL, armed conflicts can be categorized into different classifications. The type of classification for a conflict is important as it determines what rules of IHL apply, or if IHL applies at all.

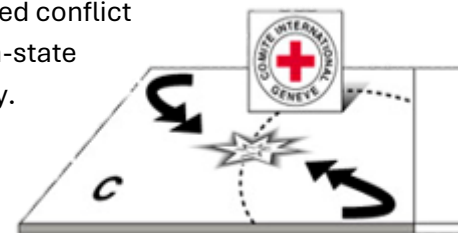
An **International Armed Conflict (IAC)** is when two or more nations engage in an armed conflict. International Armed Conflicts are what most people think of when they hear the term “war.” IHL that applies in International Armed Conflicts is very robust; it includes all four Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocol I. In total there are over 600 articles that apply to International Armed Conflicts.



There are a few other situations that are considered to be International Armed Conflicts even though it may not be two countries fighting each other.

1. The first situation is when one country occupies another, even if there is no resistance to the occupation. While there may not be a fight occurring in occupied country B, the rules from Geneva Convention IV and Additional Protocol I still apply.
2. The second situation is during national liberation wars. In Article 1 of Additional Protocol I, the definition of International Armed Conflicts includes conflicts where people are fighting against colonial domination and racist regimes. This applies even though the fighting is all taking place inside one country. (This is one of the articles in AP I that the U.S. objects to as it does not define the conflict based on geography, but rather motive to fight.)

Non-International Armed Conflicts (NIACs) occur when there is an armed conflict between a country and a non-State armed group or between multiple non-state armed groups and the fighting is contained within the borders of a country. Examples of non-state armed groups would be militias or terrorist groups that are fighting the state. During Non-International Armed Conflicts only Common Article 3 and Additional Protocol II apply. It is called a common article because it is found in --or common to -- all four of the 1949 Geneva Conventions. In total, there are just 29 articles that apply to Non-International Armed Conflicts.



In internal tensions or disturbances that occur within a country that do not rise to the level of armed conflict, IHL does not apply. In these situations, domestic criminal law applies and law enforcement within the country handles the issue.

The Tadic definition of an armed conflict:

“An armed conflict exists whenever there is a resort to armed force between states or protracted armed violence between governmental authorities and organized armed groups or between such groups within a state.”



Four Core Principles of IHL

Although international humanitarian law is quite expansive, there are four principles that form the foundation upon which IHL is built. Sometimes there are clearly right and wrong military actions, but often decisions become difficult in the fog of war. These four principles are at the heart of IHL and guide the decisions parties to a conflict make.

Principle of Military Necessity



Combatants can engage in military acts necessary to defeat the enemy, provided their actions are not otherwise unlawful under IHL. If achieving a legitimate military objective is not the purpose of their actions or if their actions violate other provisions of IHL, then their actions do not adhere to the Principle of Military Necessity.

Put another way, combatants cannot just attack anyone or anything for no reason. Their actions must have a purpose, and the outcome must create a military advantage. They must make the case that the outcome will lead to a military advantage and that the actions are legal under IHL. For example, if during an armed conflict the enemy is just a few miles away, then destroying a bridge to keep the enemy from crossing would probably be in alignment with the Principle of Military Necessity. On the other hand, there is likely no military advantage to destroying a bridge when the enemy is a thousand miles away and is in no danger of crossing it anytime soon, or even at all. That act would be in violation of the Principle of Military Necessity.

The reason that the Principle of Military Necessity is discussed first is because if a military action does not adhere to this principle, there is absolutely no reason to move forward with a military action. There must be an anticipated military advantage to be gained by the action, otherwise the military action is unlawful.

Principle of Distinction

The Principle of Distinction states that all parties to a conflict must distinguish between civilians and combatants and also between military objectives and civilian objects.



In armed conflict, there are three categories of people to help distinguish who should be attacked and who should be protected:

- **Combatants** are members of a state's armed forces. They can legally engage in the fighting and can be lawfully targets. If captured, they must be treated as Prisoners of War and cannot be criminally charged for this lawful military actions. Combatants are required to distinguish themselves from civilians, for example by wearing uniforms.
- **Non-combatants** are members of armed forces who are medical personnel and chaplains. They may not engage in the fighting and cannot be intentionally targeted. If captured, they must be returned to their side unless they stay to attend to the Prisoners of War from their own countries.



- **Civilians** include everyone else. In fact, everyone must be assumed to be a civilian, unless there is evidence otherwise. Civilians cannot be directly targeted by parties to a conflict. If civilians participate in an armed conflict, such as participating in a rebel group, they lose their protections as civilians for such time as they directly participate in hostilities.

IHL also divides objects into categories:

- **Military Objectives** are objects which by their “nature, location, purpose, or use make an effective contribution to military action and whose total or partial destruction, capture, or neutralization, in the circumstances ruling at the time, offers a definite military advantage.”
- **Civilian Objects** are all objects unless they are distinctly military objectives.

When parties to a conflict conduct an attack, they must distinguish between civilians and combatants and civilian objects and military objectives. Only combatants and military objectives may be deliberately attacked. To use indiscriminate weapons or strategies that cannot distinguish between the status of people or objects is strictly prohibited under IHL.

The Principle of Proportionality

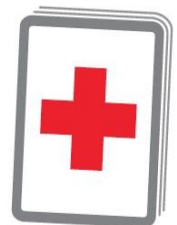


Combatants must not engage in an attack where the anticipated loss of civilian life, injury to civilians, or damage to civilian objects is excessive in relation to the direct and concrete military advantage that is anticipated by conducting the attack. Even though civilians cannot be targeted purposefully, IHL recognizes that civilians and civilian objects may be inadvertently harmed. This is often referred to as **collateral damage**. Parties to a conflict are obligated to take measures to minimize collateral damage.

The Principle of Proportionality requires parties to a conflict to consider if the collateral damage expected to be caused by a military attack is excessive in relation to the anticipated military advantage. Proportionality is one of the hardest principles to understand and apply because it is a judgement call. There is no recognized metric of the worth of a military advantage in relation to the loss of civilian lives and property.

The Principle of Limiting Unnecessary Suffering

The Principle of Limiting Unnecessary Suffering prohibits means and methods of warfare that would cause unnecessary suffering to combatants or civilians. Means of warfare include tools or weapons used to carry out military attacks. Methods of warfare are the strategies and tactics used when carrying out an attack. This principle recognizes that in armed conflicts a certain amount of suffering will necessarily take place. The idea behind this principle is that the means and methods of warfare should not be designed to cause more suffering than necessary to accomplish military goals.





For example, to shoot a combatant with a normal bullet will cause suffering and maybe even death. While unfortunate, this is permissible under IHL. However, to shoot a combatant with a bullet that is designed to break apart into tiny fragments that are impossible for medical personnel to remove just so that the person will suffer in pain for years, is impermissible. If the only reason to use this type of bullet is to make people suffer more than if they were shot with a regular bullet, then it violates the Principle of Limiting Unnecessary Suffering.

Parties to a conflict should uphold the Principle of Limiting Unnecessary Suffering by conducting reviews of their methods and means of warfare.

Feasible Precautions

The four principles of IHL are implemented by taking feasible precautions to avoid violating IHL during military operations. To be feasible, precautions must be practicable considering the circumstances ruling at the time.

Precautions when conducting an attack may require that the attacker consider:

1. Cancelling an attack when it is clear the attack will result in a violation of IHL.
2. Choice of military objectives to attack—the objective that results in the least danger to civilians should be chosen.
3. Timing of the attack.
4. Types of weapons used to carry out the attack.

Precautions against the effects of an attack may require that the attacker consider:

1. Removing the civilian population and civilian objects from the vicinity of military objectives.
2. Avoiding placing military objectives near or within densely populated areas.
3. Conducting certain attacks at night to reduce casualties.
4. Publishing a warning of an impending attack via social media or SMS to residents of the target zone.

What Happens When IHL Is Violated?

States must incorporate the Geneva Conventions into domestic law so violations of IHL can be handled domestically. In the U.S., most of these cases are handled internally through military courts.

Only grave breaches of IHL are considered war crimes, and the Geneva Conventions require that states prosecute war crimes. If states are unwilling or unable to hold a trial for a war crime, and have ratified the Rome Statute, the International Criminal Court could try the case. The United States has signed but not ratified the Rome Statute, so Americans that commit war crimes are not tried by the International Criminal Court.



Key IHL Accountability Terms

These key terms are important when understanding how accountability takes place under IHL.

- **War Crimes** are serious or grave violations of IHL, committed against persons or objects in connection to an armed conflict.
- **Crimes Against Humanity** are certain inhumane acts committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against a civilian population
- **Genocide** are acts committed with the intent to physically destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group. This would be considered a crime against humanity.



International Criminal Law and IHL

International criminal law (ICL) is a field of last resort that focuses on rendering individual criminal responsibility. IHL is enforced through courts' use of ICL.

Domestic and international courts both prosecute war crimes but in different ways.

Domestic courts are the most common venue for prosecution of war crimes. The country where a war crime was committed can prosecute the individuals responsible. Countries can also prosecute their own citizens for war crimes committed abroad in certain circumstances. A country's national laws would be applied in prosecution.



International criminal courts are used as a last resort and only used if domestic or military courts are unwilling or unable to prosecute. Courts apply international criminal law in the prosecution of war crimes. Jurisdictions for international courts are set forth in the court's governing statute which establishes a court's power and what laws they need to apply. The most well-known international court is The International Criminal Court (ICC).

Module 3: Annual Theme: Journalism in Armed Conflict

What Is a journalist?

Journalists are storytellers who venture into areas inaccessible to most, documenting events and relaying them to the public. Their work ensures that societies remain informed, enabling individuals to make educated decisions. In conflict zones, journalists play a critical role in exposing atrocities, influencing public opinion, and holding power to account. They also make complex information digestible and engaging, often at great personal risk.

What Do Journalists Do?

The journalistic process in conflict zones involves three key stages:

1. **Gathering Information:** Often spontaneous and dangerous, this stage involves collecting facts from conflict environments.
2. **Analyzing and Processing:** Journalists verify the accuracy of information, assess its relevance, and shape it into a coherent narrative.
3. **Disseminating:** Stories are shared through various platforms—from major outlets like The New York Times to independent blogs and social media.



Types of Journalists in Armed Conflict

There are three categories of journalist present in conflict settings:

- **Freelance Journalists:** Freelance journalists are not a part of the military itself. They also do not work for a specific news outlet. They act on their own, choosing to report on war and the military. They may get paid by news organizations or other groups to report if their stories are deemed worthy of publishing.
- **War Correspondents:** War correspondents accompany the military, but they are not members of the military itself. They are generally employed by news organizations and have been approved to accompany the military. They are issued special identification in the form of an ID card.
- **Military Press:** Members of the military press are active-duty military personnel who report on military activities. These journalists are actual members of the armed forces that serve primarily in a non-combat role, writing articles about and taking photographs of the military. They are considered combatants and are subject to different legal standards.

These distinctions are crucial for understanding the rights, responsibilities, and risks associated with each role.

Historical Context and Legal Frameworks

A Brief History of Military Journalism

Military journalism has ancient roots. Homer's Iliad is one of the earliest examples of war storytelling. Julius Caesar documented his campaigns in *Bellum Gallicum*, while Dutch naval battles were immortalized in paintings. During the Napoleonic Wars and the American Civil War, journalists began to accompany armies more formally. In the 20th century, war reporting evolved significantly including some notable historic progressions:

- **World War I:** Journalism was heavily censored.
- **World War II:** Lee Miller, a Vogue correspondent, covered the London Blitz and the liberation of Paris.
- **Vietnam War:** Television coverage brought the war into American living rooms, influencing public opinion.
- **Iraq War:** Journalists were embedded with military units, offering real-time coverage.

These developments illustrate the growing influence and complexity of war reporting.

Why Do We Need Journalism in Conflicts?

War and conflict impact our lives and society and it is important that the public is able to have knowledge of what is happening so that they can make informed decisions. As a result, we rely on journalists to provide accurate and truthful accounts of what is going on during conflict. Furthermore, military journalism has a role in influencing public opinion about the armed conflicts, which in turn can even impact the outcomes of the conflicts or, maybe more



importantly, hold various parties accountable for their actions during wartime. Journalism can be fundamental for maintaining military integrity. This is seen directly through the work of Associated Press Photojournalist and war correspondent Eddie Adams. Adams is best known for his work during the Vietnam War, and whose photography influenced public opinion in the United States.

International Law and Journalism

Several international legal instruments provide protections for journalists:

- **Geneva Convention III (1949): Article 4(A)(4)** grants POW status to war correspondents accompanying armed forces, even though they are civilians.
 - These protections apply widely to persons who accompany armed forces but are not actually members of those forces. This section explicitly includes “war correspondents”, as long as they have received permission from the armed forces that they accompany.



- **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR, 1966):** An example of International Human Rights Law (Not IHL), Article 19 protects freedom of expression, including the right to seek and share information.
 - This distinctly includes the freedom to provide and seek information through writing in print or any other media form, such as through journalism.
 - This is not an absolute right, as it is subject to restrictions as necessary or under applicable law including the protection of national security.
- **Additional Protocol I (1977): Article 79** affirms that journalists on dangerous missions are civilians and must be protected unless they directly participate in hostilities.
 - This explicitly states that journalists who are engaged in dangerous missions in armed conflict areas are considered civilians for all intents and purposes and therefore remain protected as civilians.
 - It also notes that journalists can obtain an identification card to mark them as a journalist when they engage in their war reporting.
- **UN Security Council Resolution 1738 (2006):** Condemns attacks on journalists and calls for accountability.

Although these laws cover more than just Journalists in conflict, these laws form a legal framework for protecting journalists in conflict zones.

Distinctions in Protections

Civilian vs. Combatant Status

Under IHL, journalists are presumed to be civilians unless they take direct part in hostilities. This distinction is critical:

- **Freelance Journalists & War Correspondents:** Considered civilians and protected under Article 79 of Additional Protocol I.
- **Military Press:** As members of the armed forces, they are combatants and can be lawfully targeted.

However, Journalists can lose their protected civilian status... Additional Protocol Article 79 states, journalists are protected until they take action adversely affecting their civilian status. Article 51(3) provides insight into this, stating that civilians enjoy protection unless they take direct part in hostilities.

The **International Committee of the Red Cross** defined active participation in hostilities to require all three of the following:

1. The act adversely affects military operations or capacity to a party of the conflict
2. There is a direct causal link between the act and the harm.
3. The act was designed to cause the required threshold of harm intentionally to benefit a party to the conflict.



POW Status and Detention

Another important IHL principle for journalists to keep in mind is prisoner of war (POW) status. A prisoner of war is someone who is captured by opposing forces in an international armed conflict and is afforded certain protection under Article 13 of the Third Geneva Convention.

- **Freelance Journalists:** Not entitled to POW status but protected as civilians from arbitrary detention under Geneva Convention IV.
- **War Correspondents:** Eligible for POW status if captured while embedded with military units.
- **Military Press:** Entitled to POW status as members of the armed forces.

Distinction and Targeting

Civilian vs Military Objects

The principle of distinction applies to both objects and people. Military objects can be targeted under IHL. A military object makes an effective contribution to military action by its nature, location, purpose, or action.

Objects that are for civilian use are protected from deliberate targeting or indiscriminate attack. Media facilities, like radio stations, television studios, newspaper offices, and more, are generally considered civilian objects, unless they're used for military purposes such as in the cases of Rwanda (1994) and Yugoslavia (1999) discussed in your module training.

Ethical Dilemmas and Emerging Challenges

Balancing Information and Security

Journalists must navigate the tension between the public's right to know and national security. While transparency is essential, revealing sensitive information can endanger lives or compromise military operations.

Social Media

The rise of social media has blurred the lines between professional journalists and civilians. Civilians using apps to report enemy movements may unintentionally become participants in hostilities, potentially losing their protected status. Additionally, the rapid spread of misinformation poses new challenges for IHL and journalistic ethics.

Gender and Journalism in Conflict

Although IHL uses gender-neutral language, it often fails to address the specific vulnerabilities of women in conflict. Women journalists face unique challenges, including harassment, discrimination, and safety risks.





Module 4: Building Your IHL YAC Campaign for Advocates

The IHL Youth Action Campaign informs youth and young adults (ages 13-24) about the rules of armed conflict and empowers them to educate their community about international humanitarian law through peer-to-peer campaigns.

What is the Goal of the IHL YAC?

To raise awareness in your community about the rules of war and special theme for the year.

Roles of the YAC Team

There are various roles within the YAC team that might be helpful to assign when building your campaign. The campaign coordinator and campaign team are automatic roles of the program since the campaign must have both of these but there are other roles that can be helpful to use within your campaign.

The Campaign Team

A Campaign team is made up of up to 10 students between 13-24 years old who are interested in community service and IHL.

The IHL Advocate

The role of an IHL Advocate in the Youth Action Campaign is to build awareness in your community about IHL and the annual theme through your campaign activities.

The IHL Event Lead

They are responsible for ensuring that their specific event runs smoothly, has team members in attendance, and any materials that are needed. This role is not mandatory but can be helpful.

The IHL Lead Advocate

They are responsible for ensuring that the IHL team stays on track with the timeline and goals of the campaign. They are responsible for communicating consistently with the coordinator.

The Team Lead Advocate is in charge of working with their team to complete various IHL Youth Action Campaign forms such as:

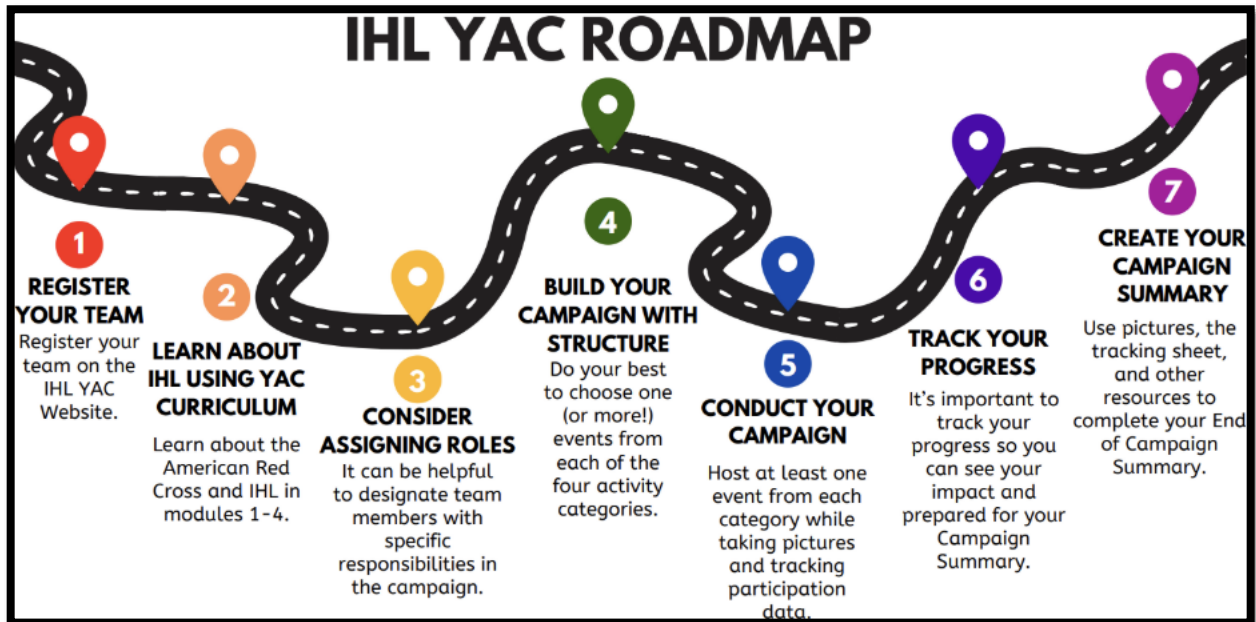
- Building Your Campaign Guide
- Step-by-Step Activity Plan
- Volunteer hours log
- End of Campaign Summary Project

The Campaign Coordinator

The Coordinator leads the IHL YAC training, is the main point of contact for the team when planning events or for questions as they come up. The coordinator is generally older than the Advocate range of 12-24 years old but can be a student with previous experience in IHL YAC.

Steps to Create a Campaign

We have provided a detailed YAC Roadmap of steps to complete in creating and conducting your campaign. This roadmap is a step-by-step guide to help your team build and conduct a successful campaign!



Step 1: Register Your Teams

The first step once you have formed your team is to register your YAC team. This is important as it allows the American Red Cross to better understand the reach of campaigns each year. The Coordinator or Lead Advocate can register the team.

Step 2: Learn about IHL Using the YAC Curriculum

Your Coordinator will use our standard IHL curriculum consisting of four modules to train you and your team on the Youth Action Campaign. Modules 1 through 4 are opportunities for you and your team to learn and familiarize yourselves with the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, IHL basics, the annual theme, and how to build and conduct your IHL YAC Campaign.

Step 3: Consider Assigning Roles in Your Campaign

We have discussed the various roles within the YAC campaign—campaign team, IHL advocate, IHL event lead, IHL lead advocate, campaign coordinator. Sometimes it can be helpful to assign these roles to people within you team. The campaign team, campaign coordinator, and IHL lead advocate are all automatic roles since these are required to conduct a campaign. IHL event lead and IHL lead advocate are both optional roles that can assign responsibility to certain team members to ensure that tasks for activities are completed in a timely manner.

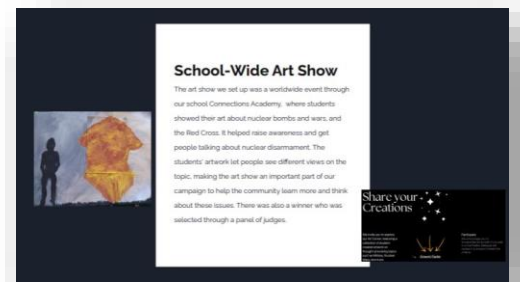
Step 4: Build Your Campaign & Step 5: Conduct Your Campaign

To build your campaign, try using the Four Category Structure. These categories are: In Person, Live Virtual, Social Media Promotional, & Social Media Informational. Events in each of these categories can help your team educate your community about IHL in different ways. Throughout your campaign you should aim to host at least one event from each category, although much more is always encouraged!

Category 1: In Person Activities

In Person Activities are events that include you and your team (or just a few advocates!) going out in person and hosting an event. Examples are but not limited to:

- Hosting a scavenger hunt
- Hosting a movie screening with a discussion
- Holding a panel discussion or debate
- Engaging your peers through IHL simulation activities
- Conducting a school survey



Your campaign should aim to include at least one, or more, in person activities. Each year the YAC has an annual theme, so some activities that work well within the theme should also be hosted.

Category 2: Live Virtual Activities

Live virtual activities are online gatherings where people can be educated about IHL through live activities where discussion can occur. Examples are but not limited to:

- Online webinar/presentation
- Online movie night with discussion
- Panel discussion
- Virtual guest speaker
- Interactive games or activities
- Online IHL bingo night



Category 3: Social Media Promotion

This category is when the team uses social media platforms to promote in person and live virtual events. Examples are but limited to:

- Posting flyers on platforms about an in person movie night
- Posting reminders about upcoming events



not

Category 4: Social Media Informational

This category is when teams use social media to educate the public about IHL.

Examples are but not limited to:

- Posting informational flyers about IHL
- Posting creative videos teaching about why IHL matters

This can be an easy way to help others understand what IHL truly is and how the Red Cross helps with that.



Step 6: Track Your Progress

A big part of your duties as a team of advocates is not only advocating for IHL but remembering to track your progress and what types of advocacy you have been working on. Tracking your progress helps you and the Red Cross see the impact of your campaign in your community. There are some things to keep in mind and keep track of throughout your campaign...

- How many events and what kind of events did you host?
- How many active participants are there?
- How many engagements and views on social media?

Although not a requirement, conducting a post event survey for some events can be helpful in seeing your impact and how to improve other events.

Tracking your progress will also be important after your campaign is over and you put together your campaign summary project.

How to Track Your Progress

For in person and live virtual events, we want to count active participants as engagements. During each event, someone should take note of how many people participate and are engaged.

For social media promotion and informational, likes and views would count as engagements. These are the people who like, view, interact, and comment on your social media posts.

For social media promotional and informational, original seed posts are the media posts originally created and posted. Reposts are when the original seed posts are reshared to others' social media. When logging your information into the tracking sheet, you will need to count the original seed posts and reposts separately in the same column although they will both be used to count views.

Log this data into your tracking sheet consistently throughout the campaign.

Photography and Photo Release

Throughout your campaign, taking photos of your events helps document your campaign, see the impact you make, and are useful in the End of Campaign Summary.

Photo releases MUST be signed by anyone photographed. A signed photo release gives permission for a person to be photographed and the photos to be used.

Social Media Guidelines

Using social media in your campaign can be a great way to promote your campaign events and inform your community about IHL but there are some important best strategies and things to avoid doing.

Social media best strategies:

- Use your own personal pages and profiles
- Check social media content with your Coordinator
- Use the Seven Fundamental Principles to guide your posts
- Follow the American Red Cross Social Media Guidelines
- Provide accurate facts and information from sources like the ICRC or American Red Cross
- Report abusive or bullying comments to your Coordinator

Social media things to avoid GUIDELINES:

- **DO NOT** create a new American Red Cross page or profile
- **DO NOT** create content and post it without checking with your Coordinator
- **DO NOT** post interpretations or call out specific armed groups of violations of IHL
- **DO NOT** post opinions or personal beliefs
- **DO NOT** respond aggressively or defensively if you receive a negative or uninformed comment

Campaign Resources: Educational Materials

The Red Cross provides a variety of educational resources that can help you throughout your Youth Action Campaign. These can be found on Groupshare. To find these on Groupshare, login to Volunteer Connection, go to your Homepage—My Groups—and then IHL YAC Groupshare. Some materials include:

- Activity guides
- YAC Roadmap
- Curriculum training slides
- Previous thematic learning materials
- Advocate Brochure



Campaign Resources: External Resources

As for other resources, we have various materials that can be helpful that are outside Groupshare. These are...

- The American Red Cross YouTube Channel
- The Geneva Conventions & the Additional Protocols
- The IHL YAC Website



Volunteer Connection

Volunteers need to have a Volunteer Connection profile with an active position of either advocate or coordinator.

Throughout the campaign, volunteers need to log their hours for the time they are participating in events and working on things related to the campaign,

Also, resources are available in your Groupshare File Library. National updates and opportunities will be sent out through this platform as well.

What to do after your campaign?

So, now that all of your campaign activities have been finished and you are nearing the deadlines of the campaign season, what are your next steps?

Step 7: Campaign Summary Projects

Once your campaign is completed for the year's theme, it is time to complete the campaign summary project that must be submitted by May 1st.

This project is basically your team outlining and sharing the story of how your campaign went. The campaign summary template is available in Groupshare and is an outline you can use to create your PowerPoint. It describes the information that you MUST include such as the activities you hosted and the information from your tracking sheet, but you have full creative ability to make the PowerPoint yours. This can include any design format, any colors, and any additional slides that you would like. Be sure to include any pictures or videos from throughout your campaign to really showcase the impact of your campaign.

The IHL YAC Summit

Once your campaign is over and your team is wrapping up their campaign summary project, advocates are eligible to apply as individuals to the IHL Youth Action Campaign Summit.

This is a fully funded opportunity that takes place over the summer and includes several weeks of virtual teamwork activities and three days of in-person activities in Washington D.C.