



**American
Red Cross**

**Int'l Humanitarian Law
Youth Action Campaign**

American Red Cross Presents the 2025 International Humanitarian Law Youth Action Campaign on Pop Culture

This presentation by American Red Cross Summit Representatives showcases popular cinematic clips from various movies and series that demonstrate the different principles of International Humanitarian Law.

July 16th, 2025, 4 PM-6 PM ET

Written by: Sophia Lee

SUMMARY:

On July 16, 2025, the American Red Cross hosted a dynamic presentation as part of its International Humanitarian Law Youth Action Campaign, where youth Summit Representatives explored the role of IHL in pop culture. Using cinematic clips from titles like *Interstellar*, *Fallout: New Vegas*, *Squid Game*, and *Divergent*, they highlighted key IHL principles such as distinction, proportionality, and the protection of civilians during conflict. The event underscored how popular media can be a powerful tool to engage youth in understanding humanitarian law and its relevance in both current and future conflicts—including those in outer space.

As part of the American Red Cross 2025 International Humanitarian Law Youth Action Campaign (IHL YAC), a select group of talented youth advocates and interns presented the relevance of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) in pop culture events. Youth Summit

Representatives Danielle Choi, Leela Mallya, Nadia Mohli, Dana Kim, Mahathi Tallapragada, Christopher Kirkland, and Takumi Chung showcased popular cinematic clips from various movies and series that demonstrate the different principles of IHL. The team from a variety of divisions within the Red Cross organized and presented films such as *Interstellar*, *Squid Games*, and *Divergent*, educating viewers on the influence of IHL in the world of cinema and other pop culture events.

The IHL and Pop Culture team utilized cinema, an emblem of pop culture that often reflects the societal issues and concerns of its time, to showcase the importance of IHL through climactic scenes in which the core principles are highlighted. IHL is a set of universal rules that place basic limits on how war is waged. They protect people who are not fighting, like civilians, and people who can no longer fight, like sick and wounded soldiers or those who surrender (American Red Cross). This set of laws is paramount in understanding issues related to international affairs and conflict, helping preserve humanity during conflict. The 2024–2025 fiscal year’s IHL theme, *Space Law and Armed Conflict*, is increasingly relevant as technological advancements and international tensions raise the possibility of armed conflict beyond Earth. With nations expanding space programs and relying heavily on satellite infrastructure for communication and defense, the necessity of clear legal protections in space is paramount in saving civilian lives and critical systems. IHL addresses these emerging threats, ensuring humanitarian protections apply even in outer space.

In the IHL and Pop Culture event, participants engaged in an interactive exploration of IHL through movie clips and guided discussions that tied fictional narratives to real-world legal principles. The event opened with an overview of IHL and its relevance in pop culture, which was covered by Mahathi Tallapragada. This was followed by a deep dive into *Fallout: New Vegas*, led by Danielle Choi, where attendees examined different factions and their war tactics.

Caesar's Legion was used to highlight violations such as torture, enslavement, and chemical warfare—clear breaches of IHL. The New California Republic (NCR), while claiming legitimacy, was scrutinized for failing to protect civilians and committing massacres in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

The event also explored broader implications of space conflict and nuclear warfare through films like *Interstellar* and *Parmanu: The Story of Pokhran*. Leela Mallya emphasized the blurred lines between civilian and military space assets, like the dual-use TARS robot and Endurance spacecraft, connecting them to the Outer Space Treaty, which bans military sovereignty over celestial bodies. A memorable quote from *Interstellar*—"Love is the one thing that transcends time and space"—helped reframe the conversation around humanity's role in future warfare. Nadia Mohli expanded on the concept of *perfidy*—the betrayal of trust during war—using *The Circle* and *Squid Game* as case studies of psychological manipulation and violations of good faith. Dana Kim presented *Divergent* as a dystopian warning of what happens when IHL principles like distinction, proportionality, and military necessity are ignored, leaving civilians vulnerable to indiscriminate violence.

The IHL and Pop Culture event not only deepened participants' understanding of IHL, but it also demonstrated how pop culture can be a powerful educational tool for engaging youth in global humanitarian issues. By connecting cinematic narratives to real-world legal principles, the event fostered critical thinking about accountability, ethical warfare, and the future of conflict—on Earth and beyond. As emerging technologies and evolving battlegrounds continue to challenge existing legal frameworks, youth advocacy and education remain vital in shaping a more humane approach to international conflict.