American Red Cross Presents the 2026 International Humanitarian Law Youth Action Campaign Pop-Culture and IHL Presentations

IHL YAC Advocates presented on the connections and examples of IHL in modern-day pop-culture media.

July 17th, 2026, 12-1 PM ET and 8-9 PM ET
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On July 17th, the American Red Cross 2026 International Humanitarian Law Youth Action Campaign Pop-culture and IHL Presentations took place over Zoom. In the first session, IHL YAC advocates Isis Chand, Ellie Fernando, and Charlie Ha presented, with Seren Sparling as the MC. In the second session, advocates London Jordan, Caleb Medley, and Vibha Sivakumar presented with Sadie Davis as the MC. In both sessions, the advocates presented on IHL references and connections in modern movies and shows, showing that IHL is prevalent in daily life more than we realize.

International Humanitarian Law is what the advocates studied over the past few months as part of the Youth Action Campaign. Through these presentations, the advocates presented on IHL's importance and prevalence in modern-day media to a greater audience of fellow Red Cross youth volunteers and advocates. International Humanitarian Law, also known as the "law of war," rests on four main principles: military necessity, distinction, proportionality, and limiting unnecessary suffering. Although these rules typically apply on the battlefield, the pop culture and IHL presentations show that the implications reach farther than just war; instead, they show up in people's daily lives, in the culture they live in, and in the media they consume.

In the first session, which happened from 12-1 PM ET, the presenters started off by defining IHL and introducing the history of the Geneva Conventions, along with defining the distinctions between combatants, non-combatants, and civilians. The first case-study, presented

by Charlie Ha, was on *Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse* (2023). Ha introduced the context of the movie and the main conflict between the Spider-Society and Miles Morales: the leader of the Spider-Society, Miguel O' Hara, believes in preserving the Multiverse even when it leads to civilian deaths, while Miles Morales stands on a strict humanitarian policy. Ha connected this main conflict to the four principles of IHL. Next, Ellie Fernando presented on IHL references within the movie *Hunter x Hunter* (2011). In this movie, there is a war between the Chimera ants and the human elite hunters. The main point of contention, however, is the detonation of the Poor Man's Rose, a lethal weapon similar to a nuclear weapon used by the hunters to cause great destruction and pain. Fernando posed a question of the ethical implications of its use and emphasized that IHL makes sure that war does not erase human dignity and morality. Lastly, Isis Chand presented on *Desert Flower* (2009). This film retold the story of Waris Dirie, from her childhood in Somalia to her adulthood as a model in London and New York. Chand spoke about how this film showed that humanitarian tragedies were subject to IHL with the goal of preserving humanity and protecting the vulnerable.

In the second session, which took place from 8-9 PM ET, following a brief introduction on IHL and its main principles, Vibha Sivakumar referenced this year's IHL YAC theme, journalism in armed conflict, through *The Lego Movie* (2014). In Bricksburg, the fictional city setting of the movie, the news media pushes a misleading narrative that encourages its citizens to stay obedient and unquestioning of their surroundings. Sivakumar explains that journalists are civilians and protected under IHL as long as they do not participate in hostilities. She emphasized how bias, propaganda, or criticism alone does not automatically turn a media facility into a military objective, and she left the audience with the key takeaways of distinguish, protect, and verify. Next, Caleb Medley presented on IHL in the movie *Venom* (2018). In *Venom*, Eddie Brock, an investigative journalist, and Venom, an alien symbiote, inhabit the same body. Carlton Drake, the main antagonist, wants to use the alien symbiote as a biological weapon to take over the world, which violates IHL, and commits human rights violations by testing symbiote compatibility with a homeless man without his consent. Medley determined that Eddie Brock is protected as a civilian under IHL, but when Venom takes over his body and participates in hostilities, he is no longer protected. Lastly, London Jordan spoke about how IHL principles are present in the show *Avatar: The Last Airbender* (2005). Jordan pointed out that the show addresses many themes related to war, genocide, and imperialism, making IHL of particular relevance. Additionally, the show addresses protection of cultural property, which is a law declared by the ICRC. After both the afternoon and evening presentations, the presenters held a Q&A session for the audience to ask questions ranging about topics from the best representation of IHL in media to the experience of researching and presenting.

Overall, the presenters spoke about how IHL permeates and intersects with the media that people of all ages consume every day. It serves as a reminder that IHL is relevant to much more than just war; instead, it is present in the choices people make to preserve humanity and morality for all.

Warm Regards,
International Humanitarian Law Youth Action Campaign Summit Representatives

SYNOPSIS: The American Red Cross IHL YAC Pop-Culture and IHL Presentations were held on July 17th, 2026. The presentations, hosted by Isis Chand, Ellie Fernando, Charlie Ha, London Jordan, Caleb Medley, and Vibha Sivakumar and MC-ed by Seren Sparling and Sadie Davis were about how IHL is present in pop-culture and modern media. These engaging presentations referenced the shows *Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse* (2023), *Hunter x Hunter* (2011), *Desert Flower* (2009), *The Lego Movie* (2014), *Venom* (2018), and *Avatar: The Last Airbender* (2005). Audience members got to participate, engage, and ask questions throughout the presentations, and were left with an important note that IHL is present in everyone's daily lives.