American Red Cross Presents the 2026 International Humanitarian Law Youth Action Campaign Virtual Summit Reflection

The International Humanitarian Law Youth Action Campaign Virtual Summit is the portion leading up to the highly anticipated in-person summit in Washington, DC. Selected representatives got to meet each other, organize educational presentations, and showcase their incredible work throughout the past school year.

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From putting together presentations on pop-culture in IHL, to revealing next year's campaign theme (Healthcare in Armed Conflict) or presenting each division's accomplishments at the National Showcase, the month of July 2026, has been nothing short of excitement for Youth Action Campaign advocates.

Across the globe, high school and college students initiated and expanded campaigns to educate their communities on IHL. The focus of the 2025-2026 campaign season was *Journalism in Armed Conflict*. What is the role of a journalist in armed conflict? How does IHL protect journalists? Why must IHL protect journalists? These are three of the fundamental questions advocates explored and encouraged others to do the same. From the hundreds of students engaged with this movement, 26 were selected to represent their respective divisions at the National Youth IHL Summit, based on their clear passion and commitment to making change. The summit included online meetings and activities throughout July, culminating in an all-expense trip to the National Red Cross Headquarters in DC. This select group was brought together for the first time, virtually, on July 1, and again on July 2, for several hours full of introductions, fun activities, and pent-up excitement for the next four weeks.

Advocates were then divided into subgroups for the month: Writing Team, Resource Development Team, Event Host Team, Pop Culture Team, and the Political Discourse Team. Within these groups, everyone worked on unique projects, such as writing press releases in the Writing Team and presenting the intersection of IHL and media in the Pop Culture Team. Outside of subgroup activities, representatives were invited to a presentation on engaging audiences, where they learned about the importance of effective public speaking. Shruthi Sankuratri, a representative from the Southeast and Caribbean Division, commented on how both the Engaging Audiences and Pop Culture presentations were some of the most notable because of how they "incorporated IHL into topics which could be used to connect with a wide audience"; they were both "accessible to everyone."

Everyone also attended a webinar to reveal next year's campaign theme, *Healthcare in Armed Conflict*. Many of these virtual events were also opened up to general youth and young adult Red Cross volunteers to help continue spreading the message of IHL.

The virtual summit wrapped up with the National Showcase, an annual tradition where representatives present to highlight the metrics and overall accomplishments seen in their divisions. Many found the Showcase to be one of the most rewarding parts of the virtual summit, with JROTC representative Sadie Davis emphasizing how important it was for everyone to be able to "see the hard work [representatives] and their peers put into getting to this point in the program."

Overall, the virtual portion of Summit was widely recognized by representatives as an amazing opportunity to make meaningful contributions toward IHL advocacy and the American Red Cross Youth Action Campaign Program. As representatives packed their bags to leave for the in-person portion of Summit, they were proud of the work they had already accomplished and were excited for the next adventure in Washington, D.C.

Warm Regards,
International Humanitarian Law Youth Action Campaign Summit Representatives

SYNOPSIS: The American Red Cross IHL YAC Summit Representatives spent the month of July working in their subgroups to contribute to the Youth Action Campaign on a new level. Representatives participated in their division's presentation during the National Showcase and one of the other subgroups (Writing Team, Resource Development Team, Event Host Team, Pop Culture Team, and the Political Discourse Team). By the end of the virtual portion of Summit, the advocates were extremely excited to participate in the in-person portion of Summit in Washington, D.C.