

# IHL NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2020



**American  
Red Cross**

International  
Humanitarian Law

## HELLO EVERYONE,

We are happy to be able to reach out to you in the newsletter and I hope this finds each of you safe and well. The IHL team would like to start this end of the year newsletter by first extending our thanks to all the American Red Cross staff and volunteers who help make the IHL program as successful as it has been during the past few months. We wish each of you a safe and enjoyable holiday season and very Happy New Year!

-The NHQ-IHL Team

## IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENTS:

### EVENTS

The IHL webinar events hosted by the American Red Cross this past year have been a great success thanks to the help of all our volunteer presenters and participants. For those of you who were unable to attend some of our public events please go to [www.rulesofwar.org/webinars](http://www.rulesofwar.org/webinars) to watch the recordings. Webinars that were only made available to IHL Volunteers can be found in Volunteer Connection.

A special thanks to IHL Expert Dennis Mandsager of the North Central Division (Iowa/Nebraska Region) for helping us expand our webinar by organizing the “Introduction on the Law of Naval Warfare” which was taught by leading expert on the topic Prof. Dr. Wolff Heintschell von Heinegg of the European University Viadrina Frankfurt (Oder).

If any staff or instructor who has ideas for topics for future webinars please email Christian Jorgensen at [christian.jorgensen@redcross.org](mailto:christian.jorgensen@redcross.org).

## IHL MOVIE NIGHTS: An interactive way to learn, discuss, and disseminate IHL

Earlier this month Go Funai, at the Northern California region, shared with IHL-NHQ team innovative ways in which the Northern California region is propelling the IHL dissemination through “IHL Movie Nights”. This is a unique and innovative way to not only promote our IHL dissemination program but also a unique way to apply what has been learned through our IHL classes in a new way. We would therefore like to thank the amazing individuals who make up the Northern California region and who have made activities like this both successful possible, a special thank you to Hawley Rising from the Silicon Valley Chapter for taking the lead in developing these events. Below is a list of the movies that have been a part of the region’s IHL Movie Night series.

**No Fire Zone**, a production of Channel Four in Britain, documenting the final days of the Sri Lankan Civil War between the government and then Tamil Tigers (LTTE, Liberation Tigers of the Tamil Eelam), during which the

government, and then both sides, shelled civilians trapped in the middle.

## IN THIS EDITION

Page 1 – Announcements

Page 3 – Volunteer Spotlight

Page 4 – IHL YAC Updates

Page 5 – Special Topics:  
Education in War

Page 7 – IHL Conversations

Page 8 – IHL Dissemination

Page 9 -- IHL Essay Competition

**King of Hearts**, a 1966 French movie (French title, ***Le Roi de Coeur***) about an imaginary town that become the point of contention for the British and German Armies during World War I (although some features seem like World War II, the movie is a fiction).

**The Last Song Before the War**, This is a documentary by Kiley Kraskouskas and Leola Calzolari-Stewart of the 2011 Festival in the Desert, which was a yearly music festival attracting an international audience and international stars in the desert outside of Timbuktu, Mali. The festival originates from a local festival of the Tuareg people and features famous Griot and Tuareg musicians in a style which is called the roots of the Blues. Shortly after the 2011 festival, Tuareg separatists and then Salafist groups tore Mali apart in a civil war the remnants of which continue to this day. The film does some documentary work on the previous rebellions, and on what happened to the country and the people we see at the festival when the war started.

#### **Notable Mention from the NHQ team:**

**Land of Mine**, Based on a true events this Danish-German film tells the story of German POWs sent to clear land mines in Denmark after World War II. According to reviews on the film, “it is estimated that over two thousand German soldiers, including numerous teenagers, under the command of German officers but against the Geneva Conventions, removed mines, nearly half of them being either killed or wounded. The removal was part of a controversial agreement between the German Commander General Georg Lindemann, the Danish Government and the British Armed Forces, under which German soldiers with experience in defusing mines would be charged with clearing the mine fields.” This film, although at times depressing, provides an excellent opportunity to discuss the larger protections of POWs and an opportunity to discuss what IHL says about certain weapons such as land mines.

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## **IHL OFFICE HOURS**

The IHL NHQ team will be hosting “IHL Office Hours” for the month of January with our first two sessions on Tuesday, January 19th at 10 AM (EST) and Thursday January 20th at 6 PM(EST). In these office hours we will focus on “Effective and Innovative Strategies for Promoting IHL Programs, Engaging Remote Audiences, and Learning IHL.”

This is also an opportunity for our IHL community to learn and grow from each other’s knowledge and experience. Please see the below information and register for the session that best fits your schedule.

*These classes will be recorded and uploaded to Volunteer Connection following the second IHL Office Hours session.*

### **IHL Office Hours Schedule (ALL TIMES IN EST)**

**January 19<sup>th</sup> at 10 AM (EST)**

[https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZApcumvqj0qE9Wt5uzSrO\\_foZm3buZbVvjJ](https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZApcumvqj0qE9Wt5uzSrO_foZm3buZbVvjJ)

**January 20<sup>th</sup> at 6 PM (EST)**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZEkcemsqDkjEtcSG3Bpr0Vw25WXh0c28ggc>





## **A FAREWELL TO MOLLY KOVITE**

Senior Legal Advisor Molly Kovite left the IHL team earlier in November for an exciting and new opportunity in the non-profit sector. After two years, Molly had become an integral figure at National Headquarters and as a representative of the American Red Cross IHL team throughout the IHL world. Her intellect, kindness, as well as her passion for IHL will be missed, and her contributions will not be overlooked. The team would like to thank Molly for her time and dedication over the last couple of years and wish her well on her future endeavors, legal and otherwise.

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## **VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT**

Fundamental to the successful realization of the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement is the volunteer. To all the volunteers we say thank you, your demonstration of selfless service is inspiring and the positive impact that you have made for so many cannot be emphasized enough. Over the past few months, it has been truly remarkable to witness the dedication of many of our volunteers, each sharing their expertise in a variety of areas which has greatly propelled the success of our IHL Dissemination efforts. At this time the IHL-NHQ team wants to recognize an exceptional volunteer and express our gratitude to Jess Bonnan-White from the Northeast Division's New Jersey Region.



### **Jess Bonnan-White**

Jess Bonnan-White is one of our many dedicated IHL instructors and whose expertise in the area of higher education and curriculum development has greatly impacted our programs outreach. Outside of her general responsibilities as an educator while still assisting her region in holding remote IHL classes, Jess took the initiative and developed a template letter (this can be found in Volunteer Connection) that can be used by ARC IHL team members to promote our IHL classes as opportunities for educators who have had to transfer their instruction being remote. Jess was also directly involved in adapting our Born on the Battlefield course from in-person to being able to be done remotely both efficiently and effectively. Without Jess' hard work and dedication to our organization's IHL mission our program would not have been as effective in its transition to remote learning. Thank you Jess!

## IHL YOUTH ACTION CAMPAIGN UPDATES

If you are interested in learning more about the IHL Youth Action Campaign or how to get involved. Please email [IHLyouth@redcross.org](mailto:IHLyouth@redcross.org) to learn more.

### DISPATCHES FROM THE IHL YAC DESK

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#### Reaching More Youth: Expanding the International Humanitarian Law Youth Action Campaign's Partnership with the Army JROTC

By Paul Jang and Liana Plotch, YAC Interns

This year, the American Red Cross is expanding its International Humanitarian Law Youth Action Campaign program (IHL-YAC) with the U.S. Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (JROTC). The American government is required to educate the public about the rules of war, with which most American youths are unfamiliar. The American Red Cross and the JROTC are uniquely situated to work together to raise awareness on this important issue. This partnership is a natural fit based on mutual values to empower youth to become confident young adults who lead by example and treat others with dignity and respect.

The IHL YAC Program is not only a fun and engaging way for cadets to learn about IHL with their peers, but it is also one where youth are encouraged to take the initiative in building effective campaigns. To promote IHL, teams of cadets from JROTC Battalions worldwide will join global discourse by conducting outreach in their communities. Competing against other JROTC YAC teams, the best campaigns will receive prizes, and the Red Cross will invite winners to a fully funded summer trip to the IHL Youth Action Campaign Summit in Washington D.C. From simulations, scavenger hunts, and movie nights to tracking metrics of their campaigns, cadets have the unique opportunity to practice teamwork, compete, and gain valuable project management skills — all the while earning volunteer hours.

In a challenging year where many of the JROTC National Events that require in-person contact face cancellation or reduction, we believe that instructors will find the YAC Program a great option because teams can compete virtually. Furthermore, JROTC teams can choose the Hybrid Track to work with their local Red Cross; an IHL YAC Coordinator will implement the program and register the team in the Red Cross Volunteer Connection (VCN). The Hybrid Track carries numerous advantages, such as aiding instructors who are too busy to learn and facilitate new material, streamlining communications, and offering community service and volunteer hours.

For the 2020-2021 academic year, the IHL YAC's annual theme is "Education in War" and explores how armed conflict damages educational systems and how the law protects them. For more information, the program is now listed as a [JROTC National Event](#) on the official Army JROTC website where battalions can [register their teams](#) for the competition. We are excited to work with the JROTC in raising awareness about International Humanitarian Law. We look forward to helping to expand the partnership in reaching more youth as we are seeing a growing interest from instructors and cadets.

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## ***Special Topics in IHL: Education in War***

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For this edition, we had the opportunity to interview ICRC's Geoff Loane to learn more about the importance of protecting education during armed conflicts and other emergencies. Geoff is currently the Head of Education at the ICRC and has spent more than thirty years in a variety of operational positions in the field and at the ICRC headquarters.

**IHL Team: Thank you for taking time out of your day to talk to us today. Our first question is, why should education be a priority during emergencies?**

**Geoff:** I'd start off very strongly with the fact that pretty much any community you talk to that is affected by humanitarian crisis will talk very quickly about education for their children. The more middle-income country, the more you get this set at the top of the list. Education is really a priority for communities and households in many places. As humanitarians we have an obligation to respond to needs expressed by affected populations, so this is what they're looking for. Second one is obviously that international humanitarian law provides some very strong obligations on the authorities of states to ensure continuity of education. Certainly, for us in the Red Cross Red Crescent movement it becomes an obligation for us to ensure that aspect of IHL is being respected the best way possible. Third one is the notion of deficits in education being a humanitarian need. And we buy it when it comes to healthcare, water, electricity, possibly broadband. It's much slower the acceptance that education is also a humanitarian need, which means that for many children they are denied that option being victims of crisis. But that is something we are correcting, and I think we need to correct.

**IHL Team: In your opinion what can we do to promote better compliance with IHL when it comes to the protection of schools?**

**Geoff:** Primarily, what the ICRC can do better is talk more to the belligerents, to the states and to parties to a conflict. The more we talk to them and the more we remind them of these obligations, the greater the chances we have that, overtime, there will be more compliance. Like everything else, in education you have to repeat it ten times before the learner learns and during conflicts, we have to repeat maybe 50 or 100 times because conflict with trump education any day of the week. I think that's number one. Number two is, let's say for those of us who are more removed from the actual

frontlines, the ways we can assist are through advocacy, to communication, through rising the issue and talking about talking. And gathering the experiences and demonstrating what happens when you close an education system for longer periods of time. Because when that happens, you're removing hope and choice and moral values from children who are the next generation of leaders, and who are the ones who will pick up the guns if needed.

**IHL Team: What are some of the challenges you faced to respond to the current COVID-19 crisis and how is the ICRC overcoming them?**

**Geoff:** The whole education cycle got badly disrupted because of COVID and the world shifted over to this online learning platform as the way to do it. All of which is fine if you have the facilities necessary. Unfortunately, in many of the places where we work, we have challenges around broadband, wi-fi, around the devices that are needed, so this has been a major problem. In some places we've ended up distributing tablets, paying for broadband, implementing wi-fi protocols so that children and their families can have access to some kind of online learning platforms, because that really is the way which it's being done. This online form of instruction works for a good number of people. Let's say it works for most people, most children, most of the time. But many of the places that we work are often the opposite and online learning works for a few children and not all of the time, so we found ourselves involved in these initiatives in a number of places.

**IHL Team: How helpful are alternative methods of instruction such as using radio and TV?**

**Geoff:** We would definitely support the idea of using radios. Also, in places like Azerbaijan, we can use televisions because their Ministry of Education broadcasts all the lessons on TV. The radio and television option I think is one that works better. But it depends because the government would make decisions to suit the majority, and the majority are never the ones in conflict zones, they are in stable environments. In some contexts, nobody uses



any of these devices. When choosing how and where to intervene you have to analyze the context so you're not setting up a complete schism of hierarchy of needs, of hierarchy of service.

**IHL Team: Can you share a success story from your years working in the field?**

**Geoff:** So we worked in Udier village, in South Sudan, where the parents in the village were sending their children on a 7 day walk to Ethiopia so they could register as refugees. The reason the parents were sending the children is because, once they were in the refugee camp

they could register in school and be educated. And then six or seven years later they could leave the camp and, with an education, return back to their village and have a better chance in life. All of this because in their own village there was no school, no education, and the choices for their future were so limited so parents were ready to make the sacrifice. So what we did in this village, we actually built a school. And then we trained teachers, we bought tables and desks and blackboards, printed copy books and textbooks, and we paid teachers incentives to work in the village.

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## PERSONAL ANECDOTE

### Bio:

Ola was born and raised in Baghdad, Iraq. She lived through the economic sanctions of the 1990's and the war of 2003. She experienced the ramifications of conflict through deteriorating infrastructure and limited access to basic services like clean water and electricity and basic human rights like safety and security. Ola came with her family to the U.S. as refugees and were resettled in California. She works with the Refugee and Asylum Seeker Health Initiative (RAHI)-UCSF focusing on research, education, and community engagement. She is a current AmeriCorps working in the Northern California Coastal Region as an SAF/IS Coordinator. Ola holds a B.A in Cell Biology, a minor in Global Poverty and Practice from UC Berkeley and an M.S. in Global Health Sciences from UCSF.

### Education in war: a personal experience

By Ola Alani

I was 11 years old when the conflict in Iraq started in 2003. It took several months after the initial fighting took place, before I (and many other students) were able to resume schooling. My school was close to the Green Zone in Baghdad, it was an old church-turned high school. The first weeks were terrifying as the commute to school was hampered by constant explosions and road closures. During class, at any time, suddenly the chalk board would flip up, windows fling open ramming into the walls, screams erupt, and heads lowered and shielded with our hands as to not get hit. The sheer power of the explosion would stop the class into a still state, we would wait a couple of minutes to collect ourselves and then continue the class. This would not stop for the next couple of years I was at school, during exams, lunch breaks, the teacher explaining a concept, there is no waiting for us to be prepared. Strangely we got used to it, we became numb, it wasn't until I resettled in the U.S. and started realizing how terrified I become at the sound of fireworks and sudden loud noises. I was lucky in many ways having the support of family and teachers who despite

everything kept coming to school to educate. Some were not so lucky; I know friends who died due to explosions and stray bullets and some who just gave up on their education. Infrastructure destruction, lack of safety, brain-drain, teachers and professors getting killed, and students dropping out of school to support their families; the cumulative impact for the last 17 years on the education system in Iraq caused a dip in efficacy with no sign of recovery. Many families who are internally displaced (after the rise of more internal armed conflict in the country) do not have a place to stay let alone get a proper education for their children.

As I mentioned, I was lucky, I got to continue my education in Jordan and then the U.S. making it all the way to graduate school. My thesis work took me back to the Middle East in 2017, working to assess healthcare access among Syrian refugees living in Beirut. Suddenly I was faced with images of my own experience, as families were telling me about their issues including education. Refugees were having a hard time securing an education for their children, some couldn't afford it, some couldn't make the cut to have their kids in school that year, and some had to make the difficult decision to pull their children out of school and have them work to support their families. I had families crying wanting a chance for their children to continue their education. Many in conflict

areas are forced out of their homes and stable lives, they become nomads without homes. They are forced into poverty and their chances of breaking out diminishes as adequate education opportunities dwindle and becomes harder to access. I saw families living in slum-like areas for many years waiting for a way out as their hope of something better fades.

For many of us who witnessed and were impacted by armed conflict, we view education as our chance to make way out of poverty, our way out of victimhood. We want to break through and be active participants in the world rather than the feeble and helpless we are forced to be due to circumstances. In my eyes, I see many lost generations around the globe, children who were not given protection and a chance to get education, and now they will grow into dependent adults living in poverty and fear. We tend celebrate the success of those who made it through forgetting that million others couldn't because they were not as fortunate and that should be the wake-up call. If we as communities and in turn governments work for the common good of protecting children in armed conflict and allow them the proper access to education without fear of exploitation or harm, we can guarantee some equality for them as they carve their way through life.

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## IHL CONVERSATIONS

Like most areas of study, those who study IHL are continuously publishing articles that spark conversation. In this section we would like to highlight a few recent publications that are furthering the dialogue within IHL.

Please note: Although shared by the American Red Cross NHQ IHL team, these articles should not be interpreted as positioning the American Red Cross, ICRC, or IFRC in any way, and their content does not amount to formal policy or doctrine, unless specifically indicated as such.

- [Strengthening resilience: The ICRC's community-based approach to ensuring the protection of education](#)  
By Geoff Leone
- [Special Tribunal for Lebanon hands down historic verdict on Hariri assassination charges](#)  
By Arthur Traldi
- [COVID-19 and International Law Series: International Humanitarian Law – Conduct of Hostilities](#)  
By Oona Hathaway, Mark Stevens and Preston Lim
- [COVID-19 and International Law Series: International Humanitarian Law – Treatment of Detainees](#)  
By Oona Hathaway, Mark Stevens and Preston Lim
- [IHL in action: seven patterns of respect](#)  
By Juliane Garcia Ravel and Madalena Vasconcelos Rosa
- [JIB/JAB: A Podcast Series over Jus in Bello and Jus ad Bellum](#)  
Hosted by Prof. Craig Martin of Washburn University School of Law



## IHL APP: CARRY IHL WITH YOU IN YOUR POCKET

Discover the IHL Digital App for international humanitarian law. Designed for the mobile user on the go, the IHL app allows you to quickly check IHL references for legal practice and discussion. From the palm of your hand, you can search, save and share – anytime, anywhere.

Developed by the ICRC, the IHL Digital App provides access, via tablet, desktop and smartphone, to more than 75 treaties and other documents relating to international humanitarian law – most notably, the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, the ICRC's original and updated Commentaries on the Conventions and Additional Protocols, and

the rules of customary IHL identified by the ICRC's 2005 Study on customary IHL.

The app is available for download at [Apple App Store](#), [Microsoft Store - Windows](#) and [Google Play](#).

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## OPERATION DISSEMINATION: Notable developments and actions by those in the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement

The organization Geneva Call works to disseminate IHL to non-state actors and recently has released a statement on new tools being used to instruct non-state actors in IHL. Following was a press release on these new tools, released on November 19, 2020:



In recent years, attacks against medical personnel and healthcare facilities as well as cultural property have been on the rise. Similarly, today an unprecedented 79.5 million people around the world were forced to flee from their homes by armed conflict, persecution or violence. In response to these developments, Geneva Call has started to engage armed non-State actors on the protection of health care, displaced persons and cultural property. Based on its experience, Geneva Call has developed a series of educational tools on international humanitarian norms related to the protection of health care, displaced persons and cultural property in armed conflict. For each thematic, a new booklet with illustrations and key messages has been produced, in consultation with relevant stakeholders.

Other humanitarian organizations have also shown interest in using the booklets. They have underlined that these educational tools provide a 'clear, simple and visually supported guidance' with 'limited text and engaging visuals'. Such an approach makes the technical information readily available and understandable to all those participating in armed conflict, even without receiving formal training.

The booklets on the protection of [health care](#), [displaced persons](#) and [cultural property](#) are available on Geneva Call's website. In addition, video clips have been produced, blending different cultural contexts to make them usable across all regions.

The new videos on the protection of [health care](#), [displaced persons](#) and [cultural property](#) are publicly available and are being disseminated as part of Geneva Call's **Fighter not Killer** campaign, promoting international humanitarian norms through social media, TV, radio and other means in many countries affected by armed conflict. Over the years, the campaign has reached more than 63 million people worldwide.



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## American Red Cross IHL Essay Competition

The International Humanitarian Law team at the American Red Cross (ARC) is excited to announce its first Essay Competition. The competition has three categories: youth (high school students), young adults (college students), law school students, and working professionals. This year, to mirror our IHL Youth Action Campaign theme, the topic for this year's competition is Education in Armed Conflict. Best essay-winners in each category will receive a \$200 USD cash prize.



We encourage all interested ARC volunteers to participate and share this opportunity with others that may be interested. Please note that ARC-staff and their family members are not eligible.

For more information on the competition, such as the deadline and requirements, please visit our [website](#).



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