



**Resolution 1623 (2008)<sup>1</sup>**

Final version

## Activities of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was established in 1863; it is at the origin of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (the Movement).
2. It is an impartial, neutral and independent organisation with an exclusively humanitarian mandate to protect the lives and dignity of victims of war, armed conflict and internal violence and to provide them with assistance. It directs and co-ordinates international relief activities conducted by the Movement in situations of conflict. It also seeks to prevent suffering by promoting and strengthening humanitarian law and universal humanitarian principles.
3. The ICRC has an international legal mandate under the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the 1977 additional protocols to visit prisoners, organise relief operations, reunite separated families and to undertake other humanitarian activities during armed conflicts. It also has a mandate under its statutes to undertake similar work in situations of internal violence where the Geneva Conventions do not apply.
4. The ICRC has a dedicated staff of over 12 000 worldwide, maintaining a presence in 80 countries and helping millions of persons affected by armed conflict or other situations of violence. It is generously supported by European states, in particular by Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.
5. International humanitarian law (IHL) remains just as relevant today in international and other armed conflicts, and it remains imperative to protect all victims of armed conflict, whatever side they are on.
6. The Parliamentary Assembly welcomes the universal ratification of the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the entry into force of Protocol III additional to these conventions on 14 January 2007. It also expresses the hope that all IHL treaties will achieve universal acceptance.
7. Furthermore, the Assembly welcomes the progress made in the implementation of IHL and acknowledges the importance of taking measures at all levels to achieve its effective implementation, dissemination and enforcement. Therefore, the Assembly recommends to the Council of Europe member states to:
  - 7.1. actively support the work of the ICRC and its Advisory Service on IHL aimed at assisting states to accede to and implement IHL treaties;
  - 7.2. encourage partnerships and synergies in the implementation, dissemination and development of IHL with other countries, international and regional organisations, the ICRC, Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies and their international federation, academic institutions and non-governmental organisations;

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1. *Assembly debate* on 26 June 2008 (26th Sitting) (see [Doc. 11608](#), report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population, rapporteur: Mr Hancock). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 26 June 2008 (26th Sitting).



- 7.3. strengthen the efforts to enforce IHL at the domestic and international levels, bearing in mind that impunity for crimes under international law is not acceptable and that victims' rights must be addressed in accordance with international law;
- 7.4. translate IHL in relation to the conduct of military operations and integrate them into military regulations and mechanisms;
- 7.5. provide ongoing in-depth training for armed and security forces personnel at all levels on the rules of IHL and their concrete application, including in the context of multinational peacekeeping operations.

8. The Assembly fully supports the ICRC's institutional objective for the period 2007-10 aimed at adapting the ICRC's operational framework and activities in order to respond to the needs of the victims of armed conflicts and other forms of armed violence in the most timely and effective way possible. The Assembly encourages the ICRC to:

- 8.1. further increase its focus on protection activities, which can best be done by improving its financing;
- 8.2. continue its efforts to prevent enforced disappearances;
- 8.3. provide more support to governments to resolve the issue of persons unaccounted for as a result of armed conflict or internal violence, especially in the countries of the former Yugoslavia and of the Caucasus;
- 8.4. further contribute to building and maintaining the capacity of National Red Cross Societies to promote IHL, the principles and humanitarian values of the Movement and to consolidate the National Red Cross Societies' capacity to restore family links;
- 8.5. continue to participate in institutional and operational humanitarian co-ordination with other humanitarian organisations and adapt to new forms of co-ordination developed within the current United Nations' humanitarian reform, while upholding the neutral and independent approach of the ICRC;
- 8.6. further promote IHL through education and, in particular, through the implementation of the Exploring Humanitarian Law (EHL) programme aimed at integrating IHL into the formal curricula of secondary schools around the world, as part of the basic education given to students;
- 8.7. pursue work aimed at minimising the suffering of civilians due to landmines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war;
- 8.8. continue its work on protection of migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons.

9. The Assembly recommends to member states of the Council of Europe and to the states whose parliaments enjoy observer status with the Parliamentary Assembly to:

- 9.1. ratify, if they have not done so, and fully implement, *inter alia*, the 1977 and 2005 Additional Protocols to the 1949 Geneva Conventions, the 2003 Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War, the 2000 Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, and the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction;
- 9.2. create a domestic legal framework for the investigation and prosecution of crimes under international law, in particular war crimes, and for those states that have not yet done so, ratify the Statute of the International Criminal Court;
- 9.3. sign the Convention on Cluster Munitions when it is opened for signature on 2 December 2008 in Oslo, Norway, and take the necessary steps to ratify it as soon as possible;
- 9.4. enact the necessary legislation implementing international humanitarian norms and allocate the necessary financial resources for their implementation;
- 9.5. accord ICRC personnel unconditional access to persons deprived of their freedom in order to monitor the well-being of detainees;
- 9.6. solve the problem of missing persons by using the good offices and experience of the ICRC;
- 9.7. protect cultural property from the effects of armed conflicts;
- 9.8. provide the ICRC with financial support for its ongoing activities and its future monetary appeals;

- 9.9. integrate education on IHL in the formal curricula of secondary schools as part of the basic education of students;
- 9.10. promote knowledge of the ICRC and its activities;
- 9.11. promote the independence and auxiliary role of the National Red Cross and the Red Crescent Societies;
- 9.12. adopt measures on the use and protection of the distinctive emblems and signs of the Movement recognised under the Geneva Conventions and their protocols.