



THE 23RD INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS ESSAY COMPETITION FOR EAST AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

Building a Culture of Respect for International Humanitarian Law (IHL): Challenges and Prospects

The 21st Century has seen an increase in good practices in promotion of IHL. The reality, though, is that implementation of IHL and compliance with it are still insufficient; and even when IHL is implemented, its protective purpose is often ignored.

In an era where political commitment for compliance with IHL remains elusive, patterns of violations continue to cause immense human suffering, destruction, and unmet humanitarian needs. While adherence to IHL ultimately lies in the hands of parties to armed conflicts, broader efforts are necessary to foster a culture of respect for its principles.

ESSAY

Discuss the key obstacles to effective implementation of IHL and explore strategies that can be employed to cultivate a culture of greater respect among parties to armed conflicts. In your response, consider the role of States' acceptance of IHL, the role of domestic legal frameworks, education in and understanding of IHL, and of diplomacy and advocacy in promoting adherence to IHL.

INSTRUCTIONS

- The competition is open to all undergraduate students from East African universities.
- Essays must be typed, properly referenced, structured, and a bibliography provided.
- Essays must **not exceed 4,000 words** (including the footnotes but excluding the bibliography).
- Any essay found to have been plagiarized will be disqualified from the competition.
- The essay and a copy of the student's identification card must be received at the ICRC Regional Delegation in Nairobi by **15th June 2025** by email to nai_IHLmailbox@icrc.org
- Late entries will not be accepted.

The winner of the competition will receive a cash prize. There will also be awards for the first and second runners-up as well as for the best essay from each participating country not represented in the top 3 winners. Additionally, the winning essay will be nominated for publication on the ICRC's Humanitarian Law and Policy blog in adherence to the process of publication.

ASSESSMENT GUIDE

Participants will be assessed on their logical arguments, the depth to which they develop their answers, structure, and, demonstrated knowledge of the subject matter. Each of the criteria will be awarded points as below:

Knowledge of the subject matter	Critical thinking and analysis	Structure, referencing and evidence of research	Total Points
40	30	30	100

CASH PRIZES

- Best Essay – USD 500
- 2nd Best Essay – USD 400
- 3rd Best Essay – USD 200
- Best Country Paper – USD 100

For any further information or inquiries, please contact:

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Applications close on **15th June, 2025**.



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