



CODE OF CONDUCT FOR COMBATANTS


IN BRIEF



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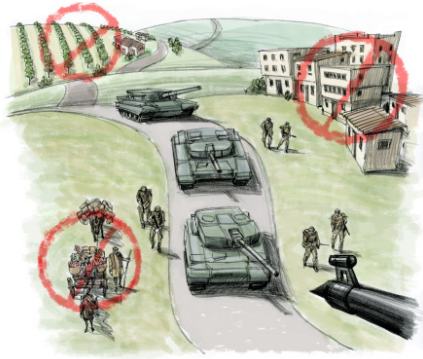
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Illustrations by Victor Juhasz

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR COMBATANTS

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1. Only attack belligerents and military objectives.



2. Do not attack civilians or civilian objects.



3. Do not attack combatants who are no longer fighting – including those who are wounded, sick or shipwrecked and those who are surrendering or have been captured.



4. Do not damage or steal civilian property.
5. Limit destruction to what your mission requires.



6. Do not use weapons or tactics that cause unnecessary suffering or injury or that could have an indiscriminate or disproportionate impact. Do not use prohibited weapons.



7. Take care to avoid harming civilians.
8. Take all feasible precautions to avoid or minimize incidental harm to civilians and civilian objects and to protect civilians from the dangers of military operations.



9. Do not starve civilians or deprive them of items essential to their survival.



10. Search for, collect and provide medical care to the sick and wounded, whether friend or enemy.



11. Search for, collect and respect the dead. Keep any information that will help to identify them.



12. Protect those who have surrendered or been captured.
Treat them humanely and hand them over to your superior.
13. Treat civilians in your power humanely.
14. Protect civilians against all forms of ill-treatment.



15. Do not take hostages or use people as human shields.



16. Do not commit rape or other sexual violence.



17. Do not forcibly displace civilians.



18. Do not recruit children into your armed forces and do not use them in fighting.



19. Respect and protect all medical and humanitarian personnel, facilities and transport. Do not use medical facilities or transport for military purposes.



20. Do not attack personnel or objects – including vehicles, ships and aircraft – bearing the red cross, red crescent or red crystal emblem. Do not misuse the emblems.



21. Allow humanitarian aid to reach civilians in need as quickly as possible and take steps to help it get through to them. Do not create obstacles or delays.



22. Respect all cultural objects, educational facilities and places of worship and the natural environment.



23. Apply these rules even if the enemy does not.
Do not commit acts of revenge.
24. Do everything possible to prevent any breach
of the above rules. Report any possible violation
to your superior.



INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

In times of war, certain rules must be followed. These rules, known as international humanitarian law, or IHL, are set out primarily in the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their three Additional Protocols of 1977 and 2005.

These conventions are founded on the idea that human suffering must be prevented, or at least limited, in times of armed conflict, even when it comes to the enemy. They protect those who are no longer engaged in hostilities and limit the weapons and tactics that can be used. The rules in these conventions often reflect values that are universally shared across cultures, societies and religions.

Everyone – military personnel and civilians alike – must comply with these rules. Failure to do so can have serious consequences and may constitute a war crime.

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is an impartial, neutral and independent organization whose exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence and to provide them with assistance. The ICRC also endeavours to prevent suffering by promoting and strengthening humanitarian law and universal humanitarian principles. Established in 1863, the ICRC is at the origin of the Geneva Conventions and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. It directs and coordinates the international activities conducted by the Movement in armed conflicts and other situations of violence.

VISITS TO DETAINEES

The purpose of the ICRC's activities in places of detention is to ensure that detainees are treated humanely and their dignity is respected.

As part of a confidential dialogue with the authorities, the ICRC makes recommendations on detainees' treatment and conditions of detention.

In addition, the ICRC provides the detaining authorities with material or technical support or, where needed, delivers services directly to the detainees.

The ICRC works with the authorities at all levels, from prison guards to national leaders.

CRITERIA FOR VISITS

Whether or not it is dealing with a situation covered by the Geneva Conventions, the ICRC applies the same criteria to its activities for detainees. ICRC delegates must:

- have access to all detainees and be able to speak to them freely and without witness
- have access to all places of detention and be allowed to repeat the visits
- be given lists of all persons to be visited (or be able to draw up such lists on the spot).



THE ICRC'S CENTRAL TRACING AGENCY

The ICRC's Central Tracing Agency – in cooperation with National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies – works around the globe to help people who have become separated from their loved ones. In armed conflicts and other situations of violence, its tasks are to:

- put family members in contact through phone calls, the Family Links website, radio broadcasts and handwritten messages, when normal means of communication are disrupted
- trace missing people in order to assist them and let their families know where they are
- register and keep track of vulnerable individuals such as children and detainees in order to prevent them from disappearing and let their families know where they are
- reunite separated family members and organize transfers and repatriations
- help clarify the fate and whereabouts of missing people and ensure that the needs of their families are met.

ANXIOUS FOR NEWS?



To learn more about the Restoring Family Links services of the ICRC's Central Tracing Agency and the National Red Cross or Red Crescent Society in your country, please visit: familylinks.icrc.org

