

# MANAGEMENT OF THE DEAD IN CONFLICT:

A GUIDE FOR MILITARY AND  
SECURITY PERSONNEL



ICRC

# **MANAGEMENT OF THE DEAD IN CONFLICT:**

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SECURITY PERSONNEL**

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# 1. Important considerations before responding:

1. **Assess the scene** and surrounding area for risks.
2. Ensure that the **injured** are given priority.
3. **Medical authorities** should confirm death.
4. **Protect the scene** from human, animal and environmental interference.
5. Ensure that **permission** to enter the scene and recover the bodies is provided by the proper **chain of command** or competent authority.
6. Work in **collaboration** and **coordination** with other agencies that can provide expert resources, can assist with personnel or equipment, or have an investigative mandate.

## 2. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

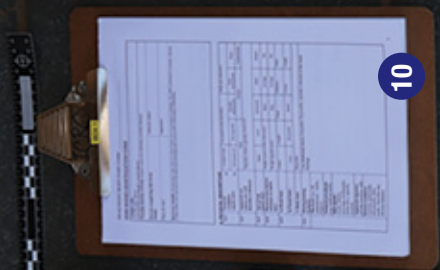


**Mandatory at the scene for recovery efforts:** Latex/Nitrile disposable gloves

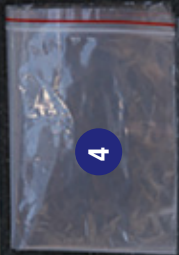
**Optional/Scene Dependent:** All other items shown in the image are preferable but, in most cases, not having them or only having certain items shown does not exclude one from recovering bodies



1



10



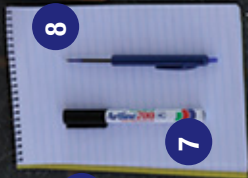
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11



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### **3. Documentation and Tools**

#### **BODY RECOVERY EQUIPMENT REQUIRED AT THE SCENE:**

1. Body bags
2. Two body tags per body or body part
3. Two cable ties per body or body part
4. Plastic evidence/personal effects bag
5. Ruler for scale
6. Tape measure
7. Permanent marker
8. Pen
9. Notebook
10. One Dead Body Form per body or body part
11. Camera and >64GB memory card  
(extra batteries)

Check of University Forms  
 جدول فحص النماذج

Institution Name اسم المؤسسة		Unique identifying number رقم التعريف الخاص		Name اسم		Description الوصف		Unique form number of the body or body part or appendix (from 200 used every number of members/branches of the university, names of the faculty/center or department/office of faculty) رقم النماذج الخاص بالجسم أو جزء الجسم أو الملحق (من 200 استخدم كل رقم أعضاء/فروع الجامعة، أسماء الكلية/مركز أو القسم/مكتب من الجامعة)	

Item العنصر	Faculty الكلية	Location المكان	Name of Person اسم الشخص	Title/Occupation المهنة	Organization المؤسسة	Date التاريخ	Time الوقت	Signature التوقيع	Name الاسم
1									

Item العنصر	Faculty الكلية	Location المكان	Name of Person اسم الشخص	Title/Occupation المهنة	Organization المؤسسة	Date التاريخ	Time الوقت	Signature التوقيع	Name الاسم
2									

Item العنصر	Faculty الكلية	Location المكان	Name of Person اسم الشخص	Title/Occupation المهنة	Organization المؤسسة	Date التاريخ	Time الوقت	Signature التوقيع	Name الاسم
3									

Item العنصر	Faculty الكلية	Location المكان	Name of Person اسم الشخص	Title/Occupation المهنة	Organization المؤسسة	Date التاريخ	Time الوقت	Signature التوقيع	Name الاسم
4									

Item العنصر	Faculty الكلية	Location المكان	Name of Person اسم الشخص	Title/Occupation المهنة	Organization المؤسسة	Date التاريخ	Time الوقت	Signature التوقيع	Name الاسم
5									



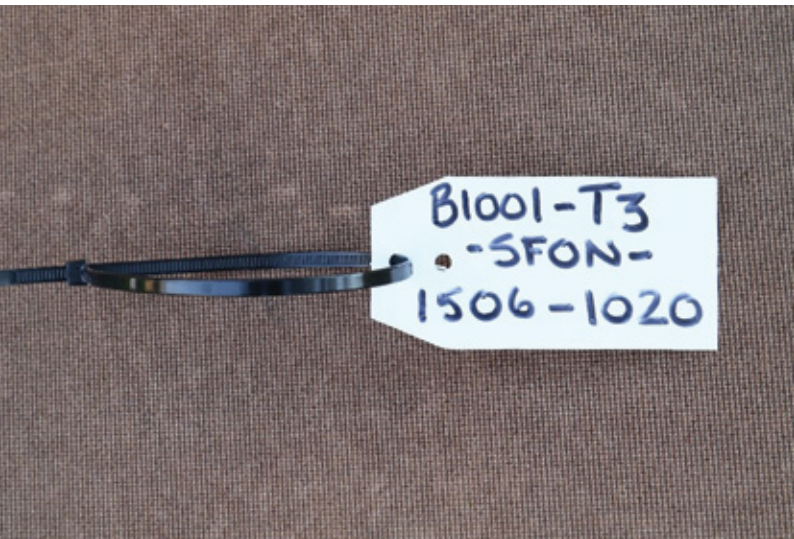
## **4. Importance of the Chain of Custody (COC)**

### **THE COC KEEPS TRACK OF THE MOVEMENT AND CUSTODY OF:**

1. The body or body part
2. Associated clothing and personal effects

Fill in the COC for each case.

## 5. Body tag and unique coding per body or body part



### **EASY EXAMPLE OF CREATING A UNIQUE BODY IDENTIFICATION CODE FOR EACH BODY AND BODY PART COLLECTED:**

Body (B1001) or Body Part (BP1001) number –  
Team number (T and number) – Initials of the Scribe  
(4 letters) – Date (DDMM) – Exact time of day  
(24 hour - HHMM)

- 6. Separate the scene for teams, calculate how many bodies and body parts require recovery, and distribute personnel and equipment to carry out the task.**



Bodies may be complete or incomplete. Body parts may too require recovery and professional recovery and processing.



**7. Before a body or partial body is handled, moved or placed in a body bag or container, all weapons and ammunition must be removed.**

Remember that weapon serial numbers may assist with identification of the body so document what is removed.

8. Each body and/or body part must be tagged at the point of recovery with a unique identifying code that will be reflected in the corresponding paperwork to ensure continuity of the body part, personal effects and documentation. This will help in future identification.



## 9. Body recovery into a body bag



### **Step 1 :**

Align the body bag or alternate wrapping parallel with the body laid out on its back. Check that the unique body number assigned for the body matches on the body tag and the body bag.





**Step 2 :**

Tilt the body onto one side. Roll the body bag sheet to halfway. Pull the body bag until it rests flush with the body.



**Step 3 :**

Respectfully lower the body onto the body bag.





**Step 4 :**

Tilt the body onto the opposite side over the body bag.



**Step 5 :**

Unroll the body bag out and lower the body into the body bag.



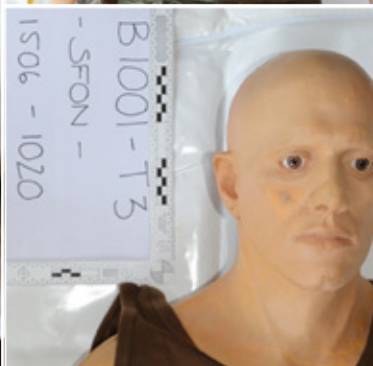
**Step 6 :**  
Close the body bag



This body recovery technique into a body bag reduces the need to pick the body up to place it into the body bag thereby avoiding unnecessary work and injury to the body handlers.

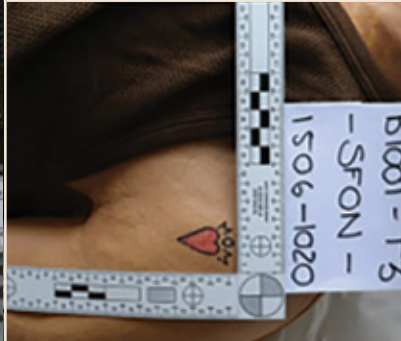
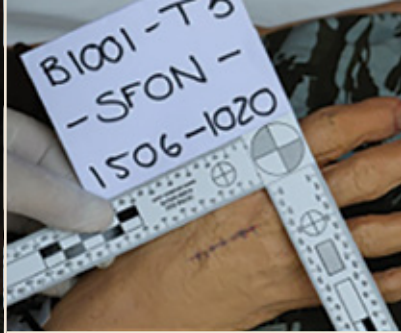
## 10. Documenting

Documenting the features of the body prior to burial is important for future identification but also to return to families when feasible.









Document as well as photograph with a ruler for scale any obvious identifying features that may assist with later identification of the deceased person. This includes scars, tattoos, abnormalities, healed amputations, skin marks, etc.



Search the pockets and body for personal effects that may assist with identification.

Document and photograph all personal effects and ensure that the items are stored and protected to be used towards identification of the deceased person and to be returned to their relatives.





# 11. Transportation and Storage

1. The immediate goal is to **preserve the bodies**. Avoid unnecessary exposure to direct heat and sunlight at the scene. Move bodies to shaded areas for health of responders and reduce decomposition rate of the bodies.
2. Transport the bodies in a **closed-back vehicle** out of respect for the dignity of the dead, protection and preservation of the bodies and effects, and to reduce impact to the affected communities (including fellow personnel).
3. **Refrigeration storage** is necessary if the bodies are going to be stored above ground. Bodies should be refrigerated at between 2 and 4 degrees Celsius.
4. **If there are no facilities to store remains**, examine, collect samples, photograph and document the body and body parts before respectful burial as soon as is authorized and permitted.

## 12. Burial and Cemetery Practices

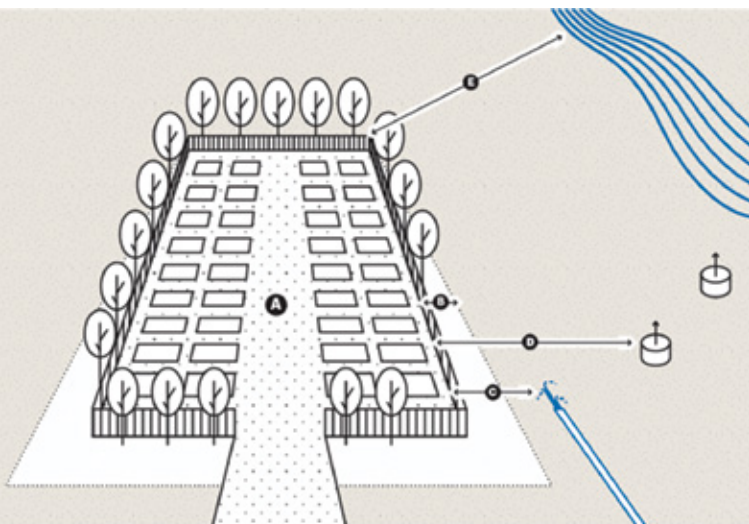


Illustration by igor Malgrati and Mirna Noaman/ICRC

**Figure 1: Cemetery and minimal distance**

- A** = Burial site
- B** = Buffer zone for planting deep-rooted vegetation and to separate the burial site from inhabited areas = 10m minimum
- C** = Distance between burial site and field drains = 10m minimum
- D** = Distance between burial site and drinking wells, boreholes and wells = 250m minimum
- E** = Distance between burial site and springs and water courses = 30 m minimum

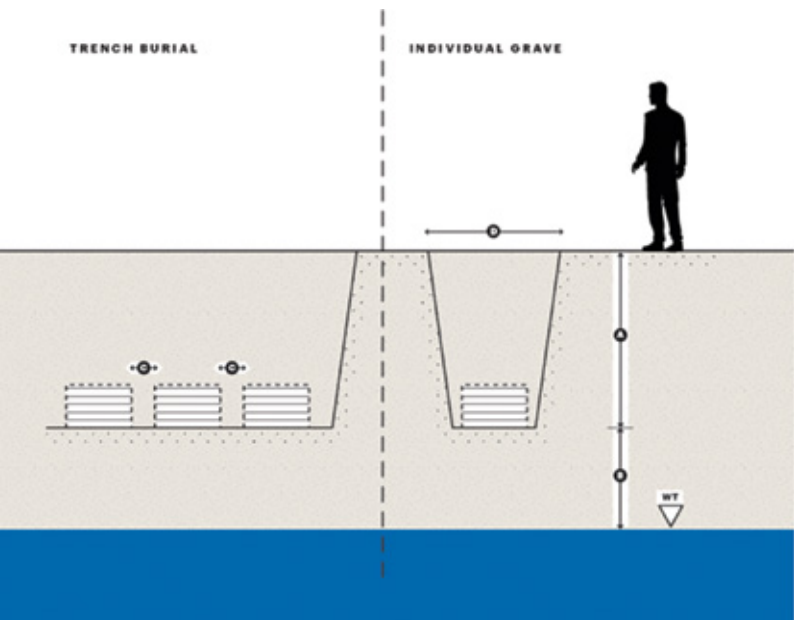






Illustration by igor Malgrati and Mirna Noaman/ICRC

**Figure 2: Grave section, with sizes and distances (for individual graves and trench burial)**

- A'** = Depth = 1.5m to 3m
- B** = Distance from bottom of the grave to water table = 1.2m minimum (1.5 m if burials are in sand)
- C** = Distance between bodies and trench burial = 0.4m
- D** = Width of individual grave = 0.75m to 1.2m (1m for urns)
- WT** = Water-table level (at its highest level)



We help people around the world affected by armed conflict and other violence, doing everything we can to protect their dignity and relieve their suffering, often with our Red Cross and Red Crescent partners.

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**ICRC Somali Delegation**

Ngecha Road off Lower Kabete Road

P.O.Box 73226-00200

Nairobi-Kenya

T + 254 0709 132 000

[SOK-Nairobi@icrc.org](mailto:SOK-Nairobi@icrc.org)

[www.icrc.org](https://www.icrc.org)

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