



International Institute of Humanitarian Law
Institut International de Droit Humanitaire
Istituto Internazionale di Diritto Umanitario

in co-operation with the



ICRC

*44th ROUND TABLE ON CURRENT ISSUES
OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW*

*“Pandemics, armed conflict, and international
humanitarian law”*

VIRTUAL ROUND TABLE, 6th, 8th, 13th AND 15th SEPTEMBER 2021

DRAFT PROGRAMME (July 2021)

OPENING SESSION

6 September, 15:00-16:30 CEST

Introduction

Professor Greppi, President, IIHL; Dr Helen Durham, Director of International Law and Policy, ICRC

Key-note messages

Introductory Remarks

“The pandemic and IHL, before the Institut de Droit International”

Legal and Operational challenges arising in Armed Conflict in the times of Pandemic

Moderation: Prof Greppi, President of the IIHL

Speakers:

- Senior military commander
- Senior humanitarian professional

SESSION 2

8 September, 15:00-16:00 CEST

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| <i>THE PROVISION OF MEDICAL CARE IN TIMES OF ARMED CONFLICT</i> |
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International humanitarian law (IHL) – also called the “law of war” or the “law of armed conflict” – sets out detailed rules on the provision of health care during armed conflict. IHL also provides a robust framework to respect and to protect medical personnel and units – be they military or civilian.

This panel shall discuss the legal framework for the provision of health care in times of armed conflict and the legal and operational challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic has posed in practice. It will further explore concrete ways to operationalize the protection of health care by parties to armed conflicts and address new risk to health-care providers stemming from mis- and disinformation.

Chair: TBD

- **Legal and operational challenges for the provision of health care during armed conflict and pandemics**

- **Operationalizing the protection of health care: ICRC Guidelines for Military on Protection of Healthcare**
- **Tackling online misinformation, disinformation against health-care providers in a pandemic**

SESSION 3

13 September, 15:00-16:00 CEST

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| <p><i>THE ROLE AND CHALLENGES OF HUMANITARIAN ACTORS IN PROVIDING AID AND ASSISTANCE TO POPULATIONS AFFECTED BY ARMED CONFLICT AND PANDEMICS</i></p> |
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Populations in armed conflicts – weakened by years of fighting, destruction, erosion of basic services, and displacement – are particularly vulnerable to the spread of infectious diseases, such as COVID-19. Many of them depend on humanitarian relief for their survival, including displaced persons, detainees, and populations under siege or cut off from basic services. Yet, as States took measures to contain the spread of Covid-19, such as restrictions on international travel, on freedom of movement of humanitarian workers, or on transport of medicines and other goods, humanitarian operations were often hampered, leaving some populations without support. Finding a balance between the legitimate right (and duty) of States to protect public health, and the need for humanitarian relief and access by impartial humanitarian organizations has been a challenge that requires further dialogue.

This panel shall present first-hand testimony of the challenges humanitarian organizations have faced during the pandemic, revisit the existing legal framework for humanitarian assistance in times of armed conflict, and examine the challenges pose by counter-terrorism measures.

Chair: TBD

- **The delivery of humanitarian relief for displaced populations in times of armed conflict and pandemics**
- **Humanitarian relief operations for populations affected by armed conflict and pandemics: The commonalities and differences between international humanitarian law and international disaster law**
- **Balancing public health and public security: operational, legal, and policy challenges posed by counter-terrorism measures**

SESSION 4

15 September, 15:00-16:00 CEST

THE PROTECTION OF PERSONS LIVING IN AREAS BEYOND STATE CONTROL AND THE ROLE OF NON-STATE ARMED GROUPS IN ADDRESSING THE PANDEMIC

Millions of persons live under the exclusive control of non-State armed groups, and many more in areas affected by non-international armed conflict. Since the outbreak of the pandemic, non-State armed groups have taken different approaches to addressing the pandemic: while some have interpreted the pandemic as divine punishment that would primarily affect non-believers or used it as a tactical opportunity to attack adversaries weakened by disease, others have taken a variety of ‘public-health’ measures to curb the spread of the virus. Going forward, a key challenge for non-State armed groups, States, and the international community will be to ensure that everyone, including people living under the control of non-State armed groups, will have access to vaccinations.

This panel shall analyse the variety of measures that non-State armed groups have taken to curb the pandemic, recall how international law – in particular international humanitarian law – applies to their conduct, and examine what the main legal and operational challenges will be for an effective vaccination roll-out in areas beyond State control.

Chair: TBD

- **The humanitarian impact of COVID-19 measures adopted and enforced by non-State armed groups**
- **The adoption and enforcement of COVID-19 measures by NSAGs: what legal framework applies?**
- **Ensuring vaccinations in territories under the control of non-State armed groups**

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