



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

in co-operation with



**ICRC**

*43<sup>rd</sup> ROUND TABLE ON CURRENT ISSUES  
OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW*

*“New Dimensions and Challenges of  
Urban Warfare”*

***WEBINAR SERIES***

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9<sup>th</sup> September – 7<sup>th</sup> October 2020

**Wednesday, 9 September**  
**Humanitarianism, ICRC, Geneva and on-line**

**OPENING SESSION 15.00 – 15.50**

CROSS-INTERVIEW (15 min)

Chair: Helen Durham, Director of International Law and Policy, ICRC

Edoardo Greppi, President, IIHL  
Gilles Carbonnier, Vice-President, ICRC

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS (5 min)

Félix Baumann, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva

IIHL 50<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY (30 min)

*The Institute's Main Achievements over the Last 50 Years and its challenges ahead*  
Fausto Pocar, Honorary President, IIHL

Gian Lorenzo Cornado, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Italy to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva

**15.50 – 17.00**

***THE EVOLUTION OF URBAN WARFARE OVER THE PAST 50 YEARS  
AND ITS IMPACT ON CIVILIANS***

*Although not a new phenomenon, hostilities are increasingly being conducted in populated areas. The recent cases of war-ravaged cities, such as Aleppo, Mosul, Sana'a, Mogadishu and Gaza are illustrations of this growing trend and its enormous cost to the civilian living in these areas. This trend is likely to continue with growing urbanization. It is compounded when parties to the conflict avoid facing their enemy in open areas and instead intermingle with the civilian population. At the same time, these armed conflicts often continue to be waged with weapon systems ill-adapted for use in urban areas. Indeed, cities are inherently vulnerable, dependent on a complex web of interconnected services. When critical infrastructure is damaged, these services are disrupted, or even collapse when the conflict is protracted. This triggers a domino effect that causes even more suffering. Against this background, this first webinar will discuss how urban warfare evolved over the past 50 years, and how it affected the protection of civilians against the effects of hostilities.*

Chair: Prof. Edoardo Greppi, President, IIHL

- *Cities in the Crossfire – the evolution of armed conflict in urban areas over the past 50 years*  
Antony Beevor, Military Historian
- *Protecting civilians during urban warfare; challenges from recent conflict and future prospects*

Darren Stewart, Brigadier, Head, Operational Law, British Army Headquarters; Council member, IIHL

- *Reducing the humanitarian consequences of protracted urban warfare*  
Cordula Droege, Chief Legal Office and Head of the Legal Division, ICRC

**Wednesday, 16 September**  
**15.00 - 16.15 on-line**

***PROTECTING CIVILIANS DURING URBAN WARFARE***  
***LESSONS LEARNED FROM RECENT OPERATIONS***

*Recent military operations in war-torn cities have taken different forms. Some cities have been affected by protracted conflicts for decades, while others experience shorter but intense flare-up of hostilities. This panel will analyse some recent examples. Experts will discuss the vulnerability of modern cities infrastructure to urban warfare, the challenges that urban warfare raises in terms of compliance with IHL, how commanders address these challenges, and the lessons that can be drawn from these operations about protecting civilians and civilian infrastructure during urban warfare.*

Chair: Nils Melzer, Vice-President, IIHL

- *The vulnerability of modern cities infrastructure to urban warfare*  
Wendy Pullan, Professor of Architecture and Urban Studies and Director of the Centre for Urban Conflicts Research, University of Cambridge
- *Gaza: lesson learned from Cast Lead (2008-2009) and Protective Edge (2014) Operations*  
Eran Shamir-Borer, Colonel, Head of the International Law Department, Israel Defense Forces
- *The challenges of protecting civilians during urban warfare from the commanders' perspective – lessons learned from Basra*  
James Bashall, Lt General (ret'd), former Commander, Home Command, British Army

**Wednesday, 23 September**  
**15.00 - 16.15 on-line**

***ADDRESSING THE HUMANITARIAN CONSEQUENCES OF URBAN WARFARE  
IN THE MIDST OF THE HOSTILITIES***

*The humanitarian consequences of urban warfare are multifaceted and cumulative. This webinar will give a broad overview of the humanitarian consequences for the population affected by urban warfare with focus on the collection and evacuation of wounded and sick and on internal displacement. Displaced people in a city at war are particularly vulnerable. Yet, little is known about people's experience of displacement in urban settings and outside camps. And, despite humanitarian organisations' efforts to develop better responses in urban settings in recent years, important improvements are still required to sustainably address the needs of internally displaced people and host communities. Displacement also exacerbates pre-existing problems of employment and markets, and of housing, infrastructure, access to land, waste management and other public services, in the neighbourhoods affected.*

*Experts will assess the issues from a multidisciplinary angle, looking at the humanitarian consequences and protection needs of persons affected by the hostilities and the specific measures that parties to the conflicts, including national and local authorities, and humanitarian organisations, can take to prevent or respond to such humanitarian consequences.*

Chair: Robert Mood, President, Norwegian Red Cross

- *How women with disabilities address the challenges of living in a city at war*  
Amina Azimi, Afghan Landmine Survivors' Organization and Empowering Women with Disabilities, Kabul (3-5 minutes pre-registered testimony considering time-difference and connection challenges)
- *Humanitarian consequences and protection risks faced by civilians during urban warfare*  
Caroline Baudot, Deputy Head of Unit, Protection of Civilian Population Unit, ICRC
- *Persons displaced by urban fighting: understanding their needs and how to respond*  
Nancy Polutan-Teulieres, Senior Protection Officer, Global Protection Cluster, UNHCR
- *Challenges of ensuring the prompt evacuation and care of wounded and sick during urban operations*  
Michael von Bertele, Major General (retired), Non-Executive Director, Salisbury NHS Foundation Trust

**Wednesday, 30 September**  
**15.00 - 16.15 on-line**

***THE CHOICE OF MEANS AND METHODS IN URBAN WARFARE***

*Fighting in urban areas is characterised by the intermingling of lawful targets and protected persons and objects. This creates challenges for the application of the main IHL principles governing the conduct of hostilities, namely distinction, proportionality and precautions in attack. The choice of means, in view of their foreseeable effects in urban environment, is one of the critical responsibilities of military commanders when conducting hostilities in urban areas. Experts will address the question of whether the use of certain weapons, although not per se prohibited under IHL, should be avoided in urban warfare based on the severe humanitarian consequences this causes. Experts will also share positive examples regarding the belligerents' choice and use of means and methods of warfare during urban operations.*

**Chair:** Thomas Hajnoczi, Director for Disarmament, Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, Foreign Affairs Federal Ministry, Austria

- *The challenges of applying the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution in urban environment characterised by dual-use objects and intermingled civilians and military*  
Warren Wells, Colonel, Staff Judge Advocate, XVIII Airborne Corps and Fort Bragg, US Army
- *Explosive weapons in populated areas – the law and the policy*  
Eirini Giorgou, Legal Adviser, ICRC
- *Best practices in the choice and the use of means and methods of warfare in urban operations*  
Rudolph Stamminger, Colonel, Head, International Humanitarian Law office, French Ministry of the Armed Forces

**Wednesday, 7 October**

**15.00 - 16.15 on-line**

***IS A CHANGE OF APPROACH REQUIRED TO BETTER PROTECT CIVILIANS  
IN THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT?***

*The conduct of hostilities in populated areas poses a number of particular challenges to armed forces trying to comply with IHL. Even where the parties invest great efforts in respecting IHL rules, the cumulative impact of urban warfare renders human suffering almost inevitable. The destruction of and suffering in cities witnessed in recent conflicts illustrate how difficult the application of the proportionality principle is in such environments.*

*This webinar will offer a critical assessment of the importance placed on the protection of civilian at all levels of a military operation, from doctrine, planning and training to national strategies. Experts will provide insights on how armed forces can improve their assessment and adjustment of tactics to avoid or minimize civilian harm in populated areas.*

Chair: Cordula Droege, Chief Legal Office and Head of the Legal Division, ICRC

- *Putting the protection of civilians at the heart of military thinking*  
Sahr Muhammedally, MENA & South Asia Director at Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC)
- *Doctrine, planning and training for urban warfare: what remains to be done*  
John W. Spencer, Major, Chair, Urban warfare studies, Modern War Institute, U.S. Military Academy, West Point
- *Collecting the views of armed non-state actors on the conduct of hostilities in urban settings*  
Annyssa Bellal, Senior Research Fellow and Strategic Adviser in International Humanitarian Law, Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights

**CLOSING WORDS 16.15-16.30**

- Helen Durham, Director of International Law and Policy, International Committee of the Red Cross
- Edoardo Greppi, President, International Institute of Humanitarian Law