



3rd Online course on integrating gender perspectives into international operations, armed conflicts and other crisis scenarios

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Concept note

ORGANISING INSTITUTIONS

The Sanremo Institute (IIHL)

The [International Institute of Humanitarian Law](#) (IIHL) is an independent, non-profit humanitarian organization founded in 1970 in Sanremo, where it has its headquarters in the historic Villa Ormond. The primary objective of the Institute is the promotion of international humanitarian law (IHL), international human rights law, refugee law and related issues. Thanks to its specific and proven experience, the Institute has acquired an international reputation as a centre of excellence in the field of promotion, research and dissemination of IHL in all its aspects.

In the framework of its statutory activities, for more than fifty years now the Institute has organised training programmes on IHL and other related disciplines, including courses, workshops, conferences and other capacity-building initiatives addressed to an audience of military and civilian practitioners, legal advisors, academics, law enforcement officers, officials from international organisations and NGOs.

Following the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Institute was forced to convert most of its activities online, through the swift design and development of a reliable virtual learning platform to ensure a continuous institutional commitment in its specific field of action. The platform offers several online courses, workshops and other online initiatives, providing participants with the opportunity to attend live sessions, pre-recorded lectures and webinars, supported by exercises and case studies delivered by high-level international experts. In order to maintain the high-level of interaction between facilitators and participants – which is one of the distinctive marks of the Sanremo Institute – the platform also offers participants several opportunities to interact with trainers, particularly through dynamic Q&A slots, dedicated chats and thematic forums.

Along with the learning platform the Institute developed an online thematic library with the final aim of providing all its participants with a flexible digital environment capable of gathering training materials, texts and publications related to the different topics addressed by the training activities.



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

With 57 participating States in North America, Europe and Asia, the OSCE – the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe – is the world’s largest regional security organization. The OSCE works for stability, peace and democracy for more than a billion people, through political dialogue about shared values and through practical work that aims to make a lasting difference.

The OSCE is a forum for political dialogue on a wide range of security issues and a platform for joint action to improve the lives of individuals and communities. The organization uses a comprehensive approach to security that encompasses the politico-military, economic and environmental, and human dimensions. Through this approach, and with its inclusive membership, the OSCE helps bridge differences and build trust between states by co-operating on conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation.

With its [Institutions](#), expert units and network of [field operations](#), the OSCE addresses issues that have an impact on the OSCE common security, from arms control to terrorism, good governance, energy security, human trafficking, democratization, media freedom and national minorities. Achieving gender equality represents a core value of the OSCE and a fundamental aspect of its comprehensive approach to security. In this regard, and in full implementation of the 2004 Action Plan on Gender Equality, the OSCE has developed extensive policies and tools to mainstream gender in all programs and actions, support its Participating States in implementing their gender equality commitments as well as build staff capacity to effectively mainstream gender into OSCE’s activities, including tailored action plans, gender working groups and guidance– and training material.

BACKGROUND

The increasing number of gender-related crimes committed against vulnerable categories of people particularly women, men, boys and girls, during armed conflicts and other humanitarian crises including conflict related sexual violence¹, underlines the need for a deeper dissemination, understanding and adherence to the existing International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and International Human Rights Law (IHRL) provisions which regulate such scenarios.

It is of paramount importance to highlight that the documented violations are not limited to activities conducted by members of non-state armed groups or similar actors. This has been evidenced in recent years by multiple reports from international organisations and human rights entities², and has been subject to internal scrutiny by prominent intergovernmental bodies such as the United Nations (UN) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

¹ See for example <https://www.undp.org/blog/rising-rates-rape-and-sexual-violence-conflict-should-be-alarm-bell>.

² See for example <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/01/11/un-peacekeeping-has-sexual-abuse-problem>, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2017/10/car-fresh-evidence-un-peacekeepers-drugged-and-raped-young-woman/>, and <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/may/07/balkans>.



The rise in reports of gender-related crimes attributed to both national and international members of regular armed forces and peace operators against civilian populations has indeed brought to light a significant and widespread issue. Consequently, several organisations have stepped up their efforts to address and investigate these cases within their military and civilian personnel, not only to prosecute the crimes and their perpetrators but also, and more importantly, to prevent them within their peacebuilding and peacekeeping efforts.³

In order to provide victims with an adequate level of protection, both in terms of prevention of gender-based violence (GBV) and accountability/prosecution of the perpetrators, it is therefore key to raise awareness on the relevant international rules among different practitioners and stakeholders.

As highlighted by Judge Fausto Pocar, gender violence, whilst still prevalent in many armed conflicts, does not appear to be properly addressed in traditional IHL training packages for armed forces and humanitarian practitioners⁴. Such absence could lead to the wrong perception that the issue of gender has not yet been absorbed as a mainstream IHL subject. Furthermore, in many cases, the existing structural inequalities and gender stereotypes in society may risk entailing the application of IHL rules in a way that is inherently discriminatory.

Against this background, the Sanremo Institute published in 2020 the “Handbook on Integrating Gender Perspectives into International Operations”, a training manual that integrates its institutional capacity-building mission on IHL, IHRL and other related issues. The handbook was one of the main outcomes of the project on “Enhancing Training on Women, Peace and Security” funded by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, within the framework of Italy’s Third National Action Plan 2016-2019 in accordance with UNSCR 1325/2000. The Handbook was piloted in the same year by means of two high-level online courses, delivered in English and Spanish.

After three successful editions of the training, the Special Projects Department of the Institute is now launching the 3rd *Online course on integrating gender perspectives into international operations, armed conflict and other crisis scenarios*.

The course is organised in collaboration with the OSCE, Gender Issues Program, in the office of the OSCE Secretary General. As part of its mandate the Gender Issues Programme supports the organization in applying a gender perspective on a range of topics including topics specifically covered in the “Sanremo Handbook on Gender”.

IHL and gender equality are regular topics of discussion at OSCE’s Forum for Security Co-operation. This year marks the 20th anniversary of the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality, which recognizes gender-mainstreaming contributing to comprehensive security and OSCE activities in all three dimensions. This includes a need of integrating gender perspectives when

³ See for example <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-centralafrica-un-crime-idUSKBN13U28H/> and <https://conduct.unmissions.org/addressing> for the UN. See also https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_184487.htm for the NATO case.

⁴ See *Integrating Gender Perspectives into International Operations. A training handbook with commentaries*, Sanremo, 2019, Foreword, p. v.



implementing politico-military commitments and gender-monitoring the activities conducted in the political-military field of the OSCE.

Command responsibility is codified in the Additional Protocol (I) to the Geneva Conventions and is addressed in the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security (DOC.FSC/1/95), most predominantly in paras 30, 31 and 34.

Under IHL, the principle of command responsibility means that superiors can be held individually and criminally responsible for ordering their subordinates to carry out unlawful acts. War-time sexual and gender-based violence is prohibited by IHL and, as such, may give rise to command responsibility when such crimes are condoned, or otherwise left unaddressed. Accountability through command responsibility is also particularly relevant where sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is used, or condoned, as a tactic of warfare or intimidation.

It is the duty of States to incorporate command responsibility into their domestic legislation, including in their military justice system, and ensure that members of their armed forces receive appropriate instruction and training on IHL.

In addition, the Geneva Conventions (Art. 87 API) stipulate that military commander have a duty to train staff under their command on IHL.

TRAINING NEEDS

Considering the large number of reported gender-based violent acts perpetrated by some actors involved in armed conflict and/or operating within national and transnational crises⁵, there is a clear global need of fostering a deeper understanding of the gender-related impact of armed conflicts and transnational crisis. Including raising awareness of the applicable international legal framework related to gender-based crimes in order to ensure effective prevention.

The course therefore aims at responding to the above-mentioned needs, ranging from introducing the key technical terminology to present the existing international IHL and IHRL provisions and sharing the procedures and best practices in the fields of prevention, monitoring and reporting.

OVERALL OBJECTIVES

The main objective of the course is to provide participants with the legal knowledge and key analytical tools necessary to comply with and apply the existing international rules governing international operations and other complex scenarios. The course also aims at promoting the use of the “Sanremo

⁵ See for example the Report of the UN Secretary-General to the UN Security Council S/72022/272, dated March 2022, as well as many other national and international reports related to the monitoring activities implemented by UN bodies and national governments.



Handbook on Gender” as a reference manual for military, civilian and humanitarian practitioners deployed in the field.

The course will specifically address the 7 areas of concern comprehensively analysed by the Handbook: Gender Mainstreaming, Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, Conflict-related Sexual Violence, Trafficking in Human Beings, Terrorism, Detention and Women’s Engagement in Peace Processes.

SPECIFIC LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Promote the participants’ overall awareness of the importance of integrating gender perspectives into the daily work of humanitarian practitioners and military personnel.
- Improve the overall awareness of the different bodies of law governing gender-related issues at different levels (international, regional, national) and in different frameworks.
- Promote a deep understanding of the specific existing international provisions applicable to gender-based violent acts and other violations in various crisis contexts, including armed conflict, natural and man-made disasters and displacement.
- Develop a better understanding of the relevant prevention, monitoring and reporting procedures, instruments and practices.
- Enhance the participants’ capacity of complying with the rules, assess gender-related risks and develop policies accordingly.
- Provide participants with real life examples and analytical skills on the gender dimension of specific national and/or transnational phenomena, such as armed conflict (international and non-international), terrorism and counterterrorism, post-conflict and peacebuilding processes, internal displacement and migrations, natural and man-made disasters.
- Foster the cooperation and the exchange of experiences among the staff of institutions operating at different institutional levels, in different sectors (e.g. public and private, national and international) and countries.

TARGET AUDIENCE

The course is primarily addressed to armed forces personnel and legal advisors from Ministries of Defence in OSCE participating states. A limited number of professionals from other international and non-international organisations active in the security field and within international operations will be invited to attend.

METHODOLOGY

The programme will integrate both live and recorded sessions, with self-evaluation contents and practical case studies to be addressed by the participants. Attendees will have the opportunity to deepen their knowledge of the subject through self-paced sub-curricula and live interactions with the



high-level teaching staff, accurately selected by the Institute. The delivery of assignments will be required to successfully complete the course (see below the “Certificate” section).

Exercises and case studies will be mainly focused on the real-life application of the guidelines reported by the Handbook, also offering an opportunity to study the best practices implemented on the ground by the most relevant international organisations, NGOs and other actors.

Considering the specialised nature of this training programme, participants are invited to download and review the Handbook on integrating gender perspectives into international operations before the beginning of the course, by visiting the “Publications” section on the IIHL website.