Title:
Marking the 40th anniversary of the Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions: The impact and practical relevance of the Additional Protocols – a focus on urban warfare and humanitarian relief and access

Organizers: ICRC
Co-sponsors: Argentina, France, Senegal

Time and Date: Thursday 22 June 2017 13:15 to 14:45
Room XXII, Palais des Nations, Geneva

This is one of the side-events to be convened during the ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment, in keeping with this year’s theme: Restoring Humanity and Leaving No One Behind: Working together to reduce people’s humanitarian need, risk and vulnerability.

Background and objectives

On 8 June 1977, States parties to the Geneva Conventions adopted Additional Protocols I and II - a landmark in the development of international humanitarian law (IHL). The Protocols codified basic principles and rules of IHL. They also developed new rules to reflect the changing face of modern conflicts.

After the Second World War, non-international armed conflicts far outnumbered international armed conflicts, and civilians were left largely beyond the protection of the 1949 Geneva Conventions. There was also a proliferation of asymmetric conflicts, with guerrilla fighters adopting unconventional tactics as they faced well-organized and well-equipped armies. The Cold War arms race and the development of new weapons technologies brought new realities to the battlefield, such as aerial weapons and rockets. They allowed strikes to take place virtually anywhere and were subject to few specific regulations.

Given these experiences and the changing face of modern armed conflicts, the existing principles of IHL needed to be reaffirmed and clarified, and essential rules on the conduct of hostilities needed to be codified and developed further. The Additional Protocols strengthened the protection for victims of armed conflict, including civilians, in both international (Protocol I) and non-international (Protocol II) armed conflicts. In fact, Additional Protocol II became the first universal treaty devoted exclusively to non-international armed conflicts. The Additional Protocols also placed limits on the way wars must be fought, giving parties to conflicts the means to strike a balance between humanity and military necessity.

1 With the exception of Article 3 common to the Geneva Conventions, the Geneva Conventions of 1949 are applicable only in international armed conflicts.
Marking the 40th anniversary of the adoption of the Additional Protocols, this side event will look back at the normative impact of the Protocols and foster a discussion on their practical relevance today, focusing on two issues of particular interest in the current humanitarian environment: the conduct of hostilities in urban settings and humanitarian access.

**Discussion points**

- **Historical and legal perspective:** why were the Additional Protocols developed and what have they brought to IHL?

- **Military perspective:** how are conduct of hostilities rules codified in the Additional Protocols used by actors involved in the planning and execution of military operations? How do they help address current challenges in the battlefield, especially in urban warfare?

- **Humanitarian perspective:** how do rules related to access and delivery of humanitarian aid play out on a daily basis on the ground?

**Intended outcomes/conclusions/recommendations**

The intended outcome of the event is to shed light on how certain rules that were clarified, codified and developed in the Additional Protocols can guide humanitarian actors and military actors, as they navigate dilemmas and challenges on the ground on a daily basis.

**Format**

**(Co-)Chair(s):**

- Permanent Missions of Argentina, France, Senegal.

**Moderator:**

- Dr. Hugo Slim, Head of the Policy and Humanitarian Diplomacy Division, ICRC

**Panel composition:**

- Dr. Marco Sassoli, Professor of International Law and Director of the Department of International Law and International Organization at the University of Geneva

- Colonel Nathalie Durhin, French Ministry of Defence

- Robert Mardini, Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa, ICRC

**Background Material**


**Contact**

For more information, please contact: