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**31<sup>st</sup> International Conference of the Red Cross Red Crescent**  
Geneva, 28 November–1 December – **For humanity**



**EN**  
**31IC/11/R1**  
**Original: English**  
**Adopted**

**31st INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE  
OF THE RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT**

Geneva, Switzerland  
28 November – 1 December 2011

**Strengthening legal protection  
for victims of armed conflicts**

**Resolution**

**Document prepared by**

**The International Committee of the Red Cross**

## RESOLUTION

### **Strengthening legal protection for victims of armed conflicts**

The 31st International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent,

*deeply concerned* that armed conflicts continue to cause enormous suffering, including violations of international humanitarian law, such as murder, forced disappearance, the taking of hostages, torture, cruel or inhumane treatment, rape and other forms of sexual violence, and that such suffering affects entire populations, including among the most vulnerable, in various parts of the world,

*stressing* that greater compliance with international humanitarian law is an indispensable prerequisite for improving the situation of victims of armed conflict and *reaffirming* the obligation of all States and all parties to armed conflict to respect and ensure respect for international humanitarian law in all circumstances,

*recalling* the universal ratification of the 1949 Geneva Conventions,

*expressing* the hope that other international humanitarian law treaties will also achieve universal acceptance, and *inviting* all States to consider ratifying or acceding to international humanitarian law treaties to which they are not yet party,

*recalling* Resolution 3 on the Reaffirmation and implementation of international humanitarian law adopted by the 30<sup>th</sup> International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent,

*reiterating* that international humanitarian law remains as relevant today as ever before in international and non-international armed conflicts and continues to provide protection for all victims of armed conflict,

*recognizing* the importance of having due regard to humanitarian considerations and military necessity arising from armed conflict, with the objective of ensuring that international humanitarian law remains essential in providing legal protection to all victims of armed conflict and that States and other parties to armed conflicts fully implement their obligations in this regard,

*mindful of* the need to strengthen international humanitarian law, in particular through its reaffirmation in situations when it is not properly implemented and its clarification or development when it does not sufficiently meet the needs of the victims of armed conflict,

*emphasizing* the primary role of States in the development of international humanitarian law,

*recalling* that one of the important roles of the ICRC, in accordance with the Statutes of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, is in particular "to work

for the understanding and dissemination of knowledge of international humanitarian law applicable in armed conflicts and to prepare any development thereof", and *further recalling* the respective roles of the ICRC and National Societies in the promotion, dissemination, implementation and development of international humanitarian law,

*recalling* that the functions of the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, in accordance with the Statutes of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, include "to contribute to the respect for and development of international humanitarian law and other international conventions of particular interest to the Movement",

*taking note* of the 2003 ICRC summary Report on regional expert seminars related to "Improving Compliance with International Humanitarian Law" presented to the 28<sup>th</sup> International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, as well as the 2009 Report on a Conference of experts entitled "60 Years of the Geneva Conventions and the Decades Ahead" prepared by the Swiss Government and the ICRC,

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1 *thanks* the ICRC for the report outlining the main conclusions of its Study on Strengthening Legal Protection for Victims of Armed Conflicts and for the consultations carried out with States in this regard;

2 *acknowledges* that the report identifies serious humanitarian concerns and challenges that need to be addressed, in particular those related to the protection of persons deprived of their liberty in relation to armed conflict and the need to ensure greater compliance with international humanitarian law, and that, on the basis of the consultations, the report calls for concrete and coordinated action to address these concerns;

3 *recognizes* the importance of analyzing the humanitarian concerns and military considerations related to the deprivation of liberty in relation to armed conflict with the aim, *inter alia*, of ensuring humane treatment, adequate conditions of detention, taking into account age, gender, disabilities and other factors that can increase vulnerability, and the requisite procedural and legal safeguards for persons detained, interned or transferred in relation to armed conflict;

4 *recognizes*, taking into account questions raised by States during the preparation of and in the debates at the 31st International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, that further research, consultation and discussion are needed to assess the most appropriate way to ensure that international humanitarian law remains practical and relevant in providing legal protection to all persons deprived of their liberty in relation to armed conflict;

5 *recognizes*, taking into account questions raised by States during the preparation of and in the debates at the 31st International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, the importance of exploring ways of enhancing and ensuring the effectiveness of mechanisms of compliance with international humanitarian law, with a view to strengthening legal protection for all victims of armed conflict;

6 *invites* the ICRC to pursue further research, consultation and discussion in cooperation with States and, if appropriate, other relevant actors, including international and regional organisations, to identify and propose a range of options and its recommendations to: i) ensure that international humanitarian law remains practical and relevant in providing legal protection to all persons deprived of their liberty in relation to armed conflict; and ii) enhance and ensure the effectiveness of mechanisms of compliance with international humanitarian law, and *encourages* all members of the International Conference, including National Societies, to participate in this work while recognizing the primary role of States in the development of international humanitarian law;

7 *notes* that such work should be carried out taking into account existing relevant international legal regimes and other international processes on similar issues; in this sense *expresses its appreciation* to the government of Switzerland for its commitment to explore and identify concrete ways and means to strengthen the application of international humanitarian law and reinforce dialogue on international humanitarian law issues among States and other interested actors, in cooperation with the ICRC;

8 *invites* the ICRC to provide information on the progress of its work at regular intervals to all members of the International Conference and to submit a report on this work, with a range of options, to the 32<sup>nd</sup> International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, for its consideration and appropriate action.