

## CODE OF CONDUCT FOR COMBATANTS

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE  
OF THE RED CROSS / GENEVA  
INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS (ICRC)  
19, avenue de la Paix  
CH-1202 GENEVA, Switzerland

### COMBAT RULES

1. Fight only combatants.
2. Attack only military targets.
3. Spare civilian persons and objects.
4. Limit destruction to what your mission requires.

### COMBATANTS: RESPECT THESE SIGNS!

which protect:

- wounded and sick
- medical staff and Red Cross/Red Crescent personnel
- ambulances and Red Cross/Red Crescent relief transports
- hospitals, first-aid posts and Red Cross/Red Crescent premises.

### WOUNDED ENEMIES IN THE FIELD

1. Collect them.
2. Care for them.
3. Hand them over to your superior or to the nearest medical personnel.
4. Respect medical personnel and facilities.

### **WOUNDED AND SHIPWRECKED ENEMIES AT SEA**

1. Protect the wounded, sick, and shipwrecked (also aircrew).
2. Search for them and collect them after every engagement.
3. Protect civilian boats rescuing the wounded and shipwrecked.
4. Respect hospital ships and medical aircraft marked with the Red Cross/Red Crescent signs.

### **ENEMY PRISONERS**

1. Spare them.
2. Disarm them.
3. Hand them over to your superior.
4. Treat them humanely. Their families must be informed of their capture.

### **CIVILIANS**

1. Respect them.
2. Treat those in your power humanely.
3. Protect them against ill-treatment. Vengeance and the taking of hostages are forbidden.
4. Respect their property. Do not damage or steal it.

### **INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW**

In time of war, certain rules must be observed, even with regard to the enemy. These rules are set out mainly in the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols of 1977.

At present (August 1992), 171 States are party to the four Geneva Conventions, 113 party to Protocol I and 103 party to Protocol II. As a State party to the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, your country is bound by these treaties.

These treaties are founded on the idea of respect for the individual and his dignity. Persons not directly taking part in hostilities and those put out of action through sickness, injury, captivity or any other cause must be respected and protected against the effects of war; those who suffer must be aided and cared for without discrimination. Special protection is to be given to medical personnel, hospital and medical transports as well as Red Cross personnel, buildings and equipment.

The four Geneva Conventions protect the following categories of persons:

- Wounded and sick members of the armed forces in the field and medical personnel (Convention I);

- Wounded, sick and shipwrecked members of the armed forces at sea (Convention II);
- Prisoners of war (Convention 111);
- Civilians in the power of the enemy or in an occupied territory (Convention IV).

Article 3 common to all four Geneva Conventions, which regulates internal conflicts, provides for the humane treatment of all persons who are not taking part in the conflict or who are no longer doing so. In particular, Article 3 prohibits inhuman treatment, taking of hostages, torture and arbitrary executions and stipulates that trials have to afford all judicial guarantees.

Protocol I and Protocol 11 regulate in greater details international and internal conflicts respectively. During hostilities a distinction be made between civilians and military objectives.

The States party to the Geneva Conventions pledge to:

- Care for the wounded on an equal basis, regardless of whether they are friends or enemies.
- Respect the physical integrity, the honour, the dignity, the family rights and the moral and religious convictions of the individual.
- Prohibit torture and inhuman treatment, summary execution or extermination, deportation, the taking of hostages, looting and destruction of civilian objects.
- Authorize ICRC delegates to visit detainees and to talk to them in private.

## ICRC

**The International Committee of the Red Cross**, based in Geneva, Switzerland, is the founding body of the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement.

As a neutral intermediary in the event of armed conflict, it endeavours on its own initiative or on the basis of the Geneva Conventions to protect and assist the victims of international and civil war and of internal disturbances and tensions, thereby contributing to peace in the world.

The ICRC is the promoter of the **Geneva Conventions** and the custodian of **international humanitarian law**.

## VISITS TO PRISONERS

The purpose of ICRC visits is to assess the material and psychological conditions of detention and the treatment of the prisoners.

Where improvements are necessary, the ICRC makes recommendations to the detaining authorities.

The reports drawn up by the ICRC following visits to places of detention are strictly confidential, and may not be published.

In internal conflicts, the reports are handed over to the detaining authorities only

In international conflicts, the reports are handed over to the detaining authorities and also to the prisoners' powers of origin.

## PRECISE CRITERIA

Whether it is dealing with a situation covered by the Geneva Conventions or not, the ICRC applies the same criteria to its activities for detainees, i.e.:

- its delegates must be able to have access to all prisoners (or detainees) and to speak to them freely and without witness;
- they must have access to all places of detention and be allowed to repeat the visits;
- they must be given lists of all persons to be visited (or be able to draw up such lists on the spot).

## ANXIOUS FOR NEWS?

*Useful Addresses:*  
Central Tracing Agency  
ICRC  
19, Av. de la Paix  
CH-1202 GENEVA  
Switzerland

## **THE ICRC'S CENTRAL TRACING AGENCY**

In international conflicts, civil wars and situations of internal disturbances and tensions, its tasks are as follows:

1. To obtain, record, process and transmit all information required for the identification of persons being traced by the ICRC;
2. To forward correspondence between dispersed family members when normal means of communication are disrupted;
3. To seek persons reported missing or whose relatives are without news of them;
4. To reunite families and organize transfers and repatriations.

