



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

in collaboration with



ICRC

47th ROUND TABLE ON CURRENT ISSUES OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

**“From the Battle of Solferino of 1859 to the Geneva Conventions of 1949:
Challenges and Future Prospects of International Humanitarian Law”**

Villa Ormond, Sanremo (Italy), with live broadcasting online

12-13 September 2024

PROGRAMME

With the financial support of





Concept

Background

The Battle of Solferino, fought on June 24, 1859, during the Second Italian War of Independence, marked a turning point in the history of warfare. Witness to the devastating humanitarian consequences of armed conflicts, particularly the suffering of wounded soldiers on the battlefield, Henry Dunant, a Swiss businessman, was inspired to initiate the humanitarian movement that led to the establishment of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and, eventually, the Geneva Conventions (GCs).

The Geneva Conventions of 1949 form the cornerstone of international humanitarian law (IHL), providing protection for the sick, wounded, and shipwrecked members of the armed forces, prisoners of war, and civilians during armed conflicts.

The Round Table aims to delve into the historical continuum from the Battle of Solferino to the codification of GCs in 1949, exploring the transformative journey of IHL from the Battle of Solferino to the Geneva Conventions, fostering a deeper understanding of the development of IHL and acknowledging the importance of humanitarian principles in shaping the landscape of modern conflict resolution and protection of vulnerable populations.

Format

The round table will be structured as a series of thematic sessions, combining expert presentations, panel discussions, and interactive Q&A session. Emphasis will be placed on fostering dialogue and collaboration among participants. Approximately 30 minutes of each session will be devoted to Q&A. Questions will be collected both on-site and online.



Tentative agenda

(As of 11/04/2024)

OPENING

Opening remarks - Institutional opening and keynote speech

12 September 2024, 9 am (Italian time). The session will last 45 minutes.

- Representative of the Municipality of Sanremo
- Giorgio Battisti, Lt. General (rtd.), former Commanding General of the Italian Army Training and Doctrine Command; President, International Institute of Humanitarian Law
- Mirjana Spoljaric Egger, President, International Committee of the Red Cross (TBC)
- Representative of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

Keynote speech

- Representative of the Italian Ministry of Defence

PANEL 1

Historical scene setter

12 September 2024, 9.45 am (Italian time). The session will last 90 minutes.

The Battle of Solferino, fought on 24 June 1859, during the Second Italian War of Independence, marked a turning point in the history of warfare. Witness to the devastating humanitarian consequences of armed conflicts, particularly the suffering of wounded soldiers on the battlefield, Henry Dunant, a Swiss businessman, was inspired to initiate the humanitarian movement that led to the establishment of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Geneva Conventions. 2024 marks the 160th anniversary of the very first Geneva Convention of 1864 and the 75th anniversary of the universally ratified 1949 Geneva Conventions. In light of the double anniversary, this panel will address the evolution and development of IHL over decades, the continued relevance and adaptability of IHL to the realities on the ground, and the need to work toward better implementation and compliance.

PANEL 2

GC I: The First Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field: Advancements, Challenges, and Future Prospects of Humanitarian Law in Armed Conflict

12 September 2024, 11.45 am (Italian time). The session will last 90 minutes.



The First Geneva Convention of 1949 is inextricably linked with the very origins of international humanitarian law, the care for military wounded and sick, whether friend or foe, as well as the protection of military medical services from violence. Like the other three 1949 Conventions, in common Article 3, it also contains rules for non-international armed conflicts, including for the collection and care of wounded and sick, whether civilian or military. This panel will address legal and military-operational aspects on how to address contemporary challenges for the wounded and sick and medical services.

PANEL 3

GC II: The Second Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of Wounded, Sick and Shipwrecked Members of Armed Forces at Sea: Evolving Technological Developments in the Maritime Domain and the application of Humanitarian Law at Sea

12 September 2024, 2.30 pm (Italian time). The session will last 90 minutes.

The Second Geneva Convention, with its comprehensive provisions, represents a significant milestone in the development of international humanitarian law, shaping the rules that govern the treatment of those at sea during times of armed conflict. The panel will provide an overview concerning the contemporary relevance of the Second Geneva Convention's provisions and will share insights on the challenges faced in upholding humanitarian law and the ongoing efforts to ensure the *continued* application of the Convention at sea.

PANEL 4

GC III: Contemporary issues related to the Third Geneva Convention and the protection of POWs in international armed conflicts

12 September 2024, 4.30 pm (Italian time). The session will last 90 minutes.

The detailed rules of the Third Geneva Convention have stood the test of time. This panel will highlight the key provisions by exploring the fundamental principles of the GCIII, emphasizing those related to the humane treatment and protection of prisoners of war. The rest of the panel will be devoted to the contemporary legal and practical challenges which impact the implementation of the Convention. It will address certain trends in conflict and their implications by exploring new scenarios of modern warfare and analyze the potential impact of these trends on the protection of prisoners of war under GCIII.

Welcome cocktail offered by the President of the Sanremo Institute

12 September 2024 (time and place TBD)



PANEL 5

GC IV: The Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War: The Cornerstone of Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflicts

13 September 2024, 9 am (Italian time). The session will last 90 minutes.

The detailed rules of GCIV remain pertinent 75 years after their adoption. The problems for which GCIV tries to provide solutions remain salient in today's armed conflicts, in particular for the protection of the civilian population, including in occupied territory. This panel will outline the key provisions by exploring the fundamental principles of the GCIV, emphasizing those related to humane treatment, non-discrimination, protection of women, children, and elderly, as well as the protection of civilian infrastructures. It will go on to address the protection of civilian persons in times of war, including in non-international armed conflicts, and highlighting the ongoing challenges and complexities faced in upholding the Convention's principles in current armed conflicts.

PANEL 6

Outlook towards the Future

13 September 2024, 11 am (Italian time). The session will last 90 minutes.

The Geneva Conventions have endured for 75 years, and their ongoing relevance is regrettably on display in armed conflicts around the world. Yet, the Conventions – and IHL more broadly – are under visible strain. Noncompliance with clear rules, narrow interpretations of the law's protective scope, and an unwillingness by states to fully pressure one another to comply are all contributing to the potential erosion of a universally endorsed body of law. This panel will identify some of the keys to safeguarding the future of the Geneva Conventions. It will examine what needs to be done to secure better compliance with the law and maintain its credibility. It will look at where the law may need to be adapted in light of new technologies, new actors, and the changing nature of warfare. And it will generate ideas for how military and civilian practitioners can contribute to maintaining the solidity of the Conventions over the coming decades.

CLOSING

Closing session - Closing remarks

13 September 2024, 12.30 pm (Italian time). The session will last 30 minutes.

- Giorgio Battisti, *Lt. General (rtd.)*, former Commanding General of the Italian Army Training and Doctrine Command; President, International Institute of Humanitarian Law
- Nils Melzer, *Director of International Law, Policy and Humanitarian Diplomacy*, ICRC; Council Member, IIHL

Closing lunch

13 September 2024, 1 pm (Italian time)