



ICRC



ICRC/IPU Joint News Release

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ICRC and IPU urge lawmakers to ensure greater respect for rules of war

Geneva – The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) are calling on parliamentarians and legislators around the world to become more engaged in making sure that international humanitarian law (IHL) is both implemented and respected.

The joint call comes on the first day of the 121st IPU Assembly, which begins in Geneva on Monday. During the Assembly, the ICRC will participate in a panel discussion to mark the 60th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions this year. The 1949 Conventions form the cornerstone of IHL, which places limits on how war is waged.

"As lawmakers, we have a responsibility to the victims of armed conflict to draft and implement legislation that ensures the rules of war are applied at a national level," said IPU President, Theo-Ben Gurirab of Namibia. "While legal measures are key, parliamentarians must also breathe life into these rules by using their political influence to spread knowledge of IHL and convince government leaders of the absolute need to ensure that civilians are protected during armed conflicts and that the perpetrators of war crimes are held to account for their actions."

During the Assembly, the Vice-President of the ICRC, Christine Beerli, will unveil a new handbook for parliamentarians on "The Missing", highlighting what lawmakers can do to prevent people from disappearing in armed conflicts, help clarify the fate of missing persons and better support their families. The handbook was jointly produced by the IPU and the ICRC. "These issues go hand-in-hand. International humanitarian law requires that authorities do all they can to inform families about relatives who have disappeared, yet across the globe, countless people remain without news of their missing relatives, sometimes for decades. This is just one of many IHL rules that States and non-State actors must take more seriously," said Beerli.

Earlier this year, the ICRC carried out a survey, which showed that the vast majority of people in war-affected countries believed that wars should have limits, yet far fewer respondents perceived that the Geneva Conventions were effective in limiting the suffering of civilians.

"For us, this sends a very strong signal that IHL must be better implemented and it's up to lawmakers and politicians to lobby for the ratification of relevant treaties and legislation. Parliamentarians should also do all they can when a conflict erupts to facilitate humanitarian operations, protect civilians and relief workers, and expedite the arrival of assistance," added Beerli.

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To learn more about IHL visit: <http://www.icrc.org/web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/html/geneva-conventions-60-years-310809>

To learn more about the IPU visit: www.ipu.org