

“IHL in action: *Respect for the law on the battlefield*” is a collection of real case-studies documenting compliance with international humanitarian law (IHL) in modern warfare. Based on publicly available information, these cases have been assessed by academics as demonstrating respect for IHL.

The project has been conducted by four IHL clinics: Emory University School of Law, Leiden University, Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya and Roma Tre University. All cases have undergone independent peer review. The database is hosted by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) with a view to encourage the reporting, collection and promotion of instances of respect for IHL. The cases shall not be construed as reflecting the views of the ICRC.

By gathering examples of “IHL success stories” into this database, the authors aim to recall that the reality of armed conflict is more nuanced than what is generally reported in the media and by NGOs. Despite numerous violations of the law, compliant behaviour shows that existing rules are adequate and can significantly reduce human suffering. The project hopes to foster a change in the way we talk about, teach and research IHL. The cases reproduced should not be seen as ignoring the suffering of victims of armed conflicts, both by attacks which do not violate IHL and by violations of IHL, committed by the same party whose respect is mentioned in the cases reproduced.

The case-studies can be searched by country – on a clickable map – or by topics (conduct of hostilities; protection of persons and objects; combatants and POWs; implementation mechanisms). Each case study begins with a summary of the situation and a selection of public and official documents on IHL. This is followed by a discussion section, which raises thought-provoking questions on the case at hand. The cases are intended to encourage practice-oriented thinking on the ongoing relevance of IHL in contemporary conflicts and identify elements, both legal and non-legal, that foster respect for the rules of war in armed conflicts.

As the project is ongoing and aims for a growing number of “success stories”, the ICRC calls for more cases to be submitted to enrich the database.