



Published on *How does law protect in war? - Online casebook* (<https://casebook.icrc.org>)

Home > Geneva Conventions

---

The first Geneva Convention was adopted in 1864, following **Henry Dunant's** <sup>[1]</sup> experience at **Solferino** <sup>[2]</sup>, and dealt with wounded **combatants** <sup>[3]</sup>.

Since then, the rules of the original Geneva Convention have been continuously revised, other categories of persons have come under the umbrella of their protection, and the protection of existing categories has been expanded. The Four Geneva Conventions in force today were adopted in 1949, and each Convention is designed to provide protection for a category of protected persons <sup>[4]</sup> who do not (civilians <sup>[5]</sup>, medical personnel <sup>[6]</sup>) or no longer take part in the hostilities (wounded, sick <sup>[7]</sup> and shipwrecked <sup>[8]</sup> troops, prisoners of war <sup>[9]</sup>).

Although the great bulk of the Conventions are applicable only to international armed conflicts <sup>[10]</sup>, Article 3 common to the four Conventions – which is often called a mini-convention - represented the first set of rules of international law applicable to conflicts of a non-international <sup>[11]</sup> character.

The Geneva Conventions are supplemented by the 2 Additional Protocols <sup>[12]</sup> of 1977, and the Third Protocol of 2005

The Geneva Conventions that have been adopted over time include:

- The 1864 Convention for the Amelioration of the Wounded in Armies in the Field;
- the 1906 Convention for the Amelioration of the Wounded and Sick in Armies in the

Field;

- the 1929 Convention for the Amelioration of the Conditions of the Wounded and Sick in Armies in the Field;
- the 1949 Convention (I) for the Amelioration of the Conditions of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces;
- the 1949 Convention (II) on Wounded, Sick and Shipwrecked of Armed Forces at Sea
- the 1949 Convention (III) on Prisoners of War; and
- the 1949 Convention (IV) on Civilians.

See [Treaties](#) [13], [Civilians](#) [5], [Medical personnel](#) [6], [Wounded and sick](#) [7]; [Shipwrecked](#) [8]; [Prisoners of war](#) [9]; [Protected persons](#) [4]; [Law of the Hague](#) [14]; [Law of Geneva](#) [15]; [Additional Protocols](#) [12]; [International armed conflict](#) [10]; [Non-international armed conflict](#) [11];

## DOCUMENTS

of 1864: [Convention for the amelioration of the wounded in armies in the field](#) [16]

of 1906: [Convention for the amelioration of the wounded and sick in armies in the field](#) [17]

of 1929: [Convention for the amelioration of the conditions of the wounded and sick in armies in the field](#) [18]

of 1929: [Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War](#) [19]

of 1949: [GCI](#) [20]

of 1949: [GCII](#) [21]

of 1949: GCIII <sup>[22]</sup>

of 1949: GCIV <sup>[23]</sup>

## CASES

Sudan, Report of the UN Commission of Enquiry in Darfur <sup>[24]</sup> (A. Paras. 640-642 <sup>[24]</sup>)

Case Study, Armed Conflicts in the Great Lakes Region <sup>[25]</sup> (1. A <sup>[25]</sup>)

ICTR, The Prosecutor v. Akayesu <sup>[26]</sup> (A. <sup>[27]</sup> Paras. 492 <sup>[28]</sup>-523 <sup>[29]</sup>)

Switzerland, The Niyontese Case <sup>[30]</sup> (B. III. B <sup>[30]</sup>)

USA, Al-Shimari v. CACI Premier Technology, Inc. <sup>[31]</sup>

USA, Guantánamo, End of "Active Hostilities" in Afghanistan <sup>[32]</sup>

Spain, Universal Jurisdiction over Grave Breaches of the Geneva Conventions <sup>[33]</sup>

Belgium, Prosecution of Terrorist Crimes in the context of Armed Conflict <sup>[34]</sup>

## BIBLIOGRAPHIC RESOURCES

Département Fédéral des Affaires Etrangères (DFAE), CICR, *60 ans des Conventions de Genève et les décennies à venir = 60 Years of the Geneva Conventions and the Decades Ahead*, Geneva, CICR; Berne, DFAE, 2010, 104

pp.

DRAPER Gerald I.A.D., "The Implementation and Enforcement of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and of the Two Additional Protocols of 1977", in *Collected Courses*, Vol. 164, 1979, pp. 5-54.

ESGAIN Albert J. & SOLF Waldemar A., "The 1949 Geneva Conventions Relating to the Treatment of Prisoners of War: Its Principles, Innovations and Deficiencies", in *North Carolina Law Review*, Vol. 41/3, 1963, pp. 537-596.

HOSNI Lori, "The ABCs of the Geneva Conventions and their Applicability to Modern Warfare", in *New England Journal of International and Comparative Law*, Vol. 14, No. 1, 2007, pp. 135-167.

PERRIGO Sarah & WITHMAN Jim, *The Geneva Conventions under Assault*, London, New York, Pluto, 2010, 252 pp.

MERON Theodor, "The Geneva Conventions as Customary Law", in *AJIL*, Vol. 81/2, 1987, pp. 348-370

MERON Theodor, "The Geneva Conventions and Public International Law: British Foreign and Commonwealth Office Conference Commemorating the 60th Anniversary of the 1949 Geneva Conventions, London, 9 July 2009", in *IRRC*, Vol. 91, No. 875, pp. 619-625.

PERRIGO Sarah, WITHMAN Jim, *The Geneva Conventions under Assault*, London, New York, Pluto, 2010, 252 pp.

PICTET Jean, "The New Geneva Conventions for the Protection of War Victims", in *AJIL*, Vol. 45/3, 1951, pp. 462-475

PICTET Jean (ed.), *The Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949: Commentary*, Geneva ICRC, 4 Vol.: Vol. I, *Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field*, 1952, 466 pp.; Vol. II, *Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of Wounded, Sick and Shipwrecked Members of Armed Forces at Sea*, 1960, 320 pp.; Vol. III, *Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War*, 1960, 764 pp.; Vol. IV, *Geneva Convention for the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War*, 1958, 660 pp. [See Commentaries online: <http://www.icrc.org/ihl>] <sup>[35]</sup>

SANDOZ Yves, "Le demi-siècle des Conventions de Genève", in *IRRC*, No. 834, 1999, pp. 246-263. SOLIS Gary & BORCH Fred, *Geneva Conventions*, New York, Kaplan, 2010, 316 pp.

RATNER Steven R., "Geneva Conventions", in *Foreign Policy*, March/April 2008, pp. 26-32

---

**Source URL:** <https://casebook.icrc.org/glossary/geneva-conventions>

**Links**

[1] <https://casebook.icrc.org/glossary/dunant-henry>

[2] <https://casebook.icrc.org/glossary/solferino>

[3] <https://casebook.icrc.org/glossary/combatants>

[4] <https://casebook.icrc.org/glossary/protected-persons>

[5] <https://casebook.icrc.org/glossary/civilians>

[6] <https://casebook.icrc.org/glossary/medical-personnel>

[7] <https://casebook.icrc.org/glossary/wounded-and-sick>

[8] <https://casebook.icrc.org/glossary/shipwrecked>

[9] <https://casebook.icrc.org/glossary/prisoners-war>

[10] <https://casebook.icrc.org/glossary/international-armed-conflict>

[11] <https://casebook.icrc.org/glossary/non-international-armed-conflict>

[12] <https://casebook.icrc.org/glossary/additional-protocols>

- [13] <https://casebook.icrc.org/glossary/treaties>
- [14] <https://casebook.icrc.org/glossary/law-hague>
- [15] <https://casebook.icrc.org/glossary/law-geneva>
- [16]
- <https://www.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Treaty.xsp?documentId=477CEA122D7B7B3DC12563CD002D6603&action=open>
- [17]
- <https://www.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Treaty.xsp?documentId=C64C3E521F5CC28FC12563CD002D6737&action=open>
- [18]
- <https://www.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Treaty.xsp?documentId=09DFB7A98E19533AC12563CD002D6997&action=open>
- [19]
- <https://www.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Treaty.xsp?documentId=0BDEDDD046FDEBA9C12563CD002D69B1&action=open>
- [20]
- <https://www.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Treaty.xsp?documentId=4825657B0C7E6BF0C12563CD002D6B0B&action=open>
- [21]
- <https://www.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Treaty.xsp?documentId=2F5AA9B07AB61934C12563CD002D6B25&action=open>
- [22]
- <https://www.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Treaty.xsp?documentId=77CB9983BE01D004C12563CD002D6B3E&action=open>
- [23]
- <https://www.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Treaty.xsp?documentId=AE2D398352C5B028C12563CD002D6B5C&action=open>
- [24] [https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/sudan-report-un-commission-enquiry-darfur#para\\_640](https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/sudan-report-un-commission-enquiry-darfur#para_640)
- [25] [https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/case-study-armed-conflicts-great-lakes-region-1994-2005#part\\_a](https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/case-study-armed-conflicts-great-lakes-region-1994-2005#part_a)
- [26] <https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/ictr-prosecutor-v-jean-paul-akayesu>
- [27] <https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/ictr-prosecutor-v-jean-paul-akayesu#parta>
- [28] [https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/ictr-prosecutor-v-jean-paul-akayesu#parta\\_492](https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/ictr-prosecutor-v-jean-paul-akayesu#parta_492)
- [29] [https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/ictr-prosecutor-v-jean-paul-akayesu#parta\\_523](https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/ictr-prosecutor-v-jean-paul-akayesu#parta_523)
- [30] [https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/switzerland-niyonteze-case#part\\_b\\_iii\\_b](https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/switzerland-niyonteze-case#part_b_iii_b)
- [31] <https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/usa-al-shimari-v-caci-premier-technology-inc>
- [32] <https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/usa-guantanamo-end-active-hostilities-afghanistan>
- [33] <https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/spain-universal-jurisdiction-over-grave-breaches-geneva-conventions>
- [34] <https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/belgium-prosecution-terrorist-crimes-context-armed-conflict>
- [35] <http://www.icrc.org/ihl>