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International humanitarian law, which contains provisions relating to the care of graves, requires that the dead must be interred honourably and, if possible, according to the rites of their religion. Their graves must be respected, grouped if possible according to the nationality of the deceased ^[1], and properly maintained and marked so that they may always be found. Bodies may not be cremated except for imperative reasons of hygiene or for motives based on the religion of the deceased.

At sea, burial ^[2] of the dead ^[1] should be carried out individually as far as circumstances permit. As soon as circumstances permit, the parties to an international armed conflict ^[3] must facilitate access to the grave sites by relatives of the deceased ^[1]. Remains ^[4] may be exhumed to facilitate their return to the home country, or in case of public necessity.

LEGAL SOURCE

GCI, 17 ^[5] (see ICRC updated Commentary ^[6])

GCII, 20 ^[7] (see ICRC updated Commentary ^[8])

GCIII, 120 ^[9]

GCIV, 130 ^[10]

PI, 34 ^[11]

CIHL, 115 ^[12]

BIBLIOGRAPHIC RESOURCES

PETRIG Anna, “The War Dead and their Gravesites”, in *IRRC*, Vol. 91, No. 874, June 2009, pp. 341-369

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Links

[1] <https://casebook.icrc.org/glossary/dead-persons>

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

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

[4] <https://casebook.icrc.org/glossary/remains>

[5]

<https://www.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Article.xsp?action=openDocument&documentId=6E2CC750300A2364C12563CD0>

[6] [https://ihl-](https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Comment.xsp?action=openDocument&documentId=3B9DE4D08498C74AC1257F150)

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[7]

<https://www.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Article.xsp?action=openDocument&documentId=1EE1A1A444C6C61AC12563CD0>

[8] [https://ihl-](https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Comment.xsp?action=openDocument&documentId=1130EDA24ADA3245C12581150)

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[9]

<https://www.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Article.xsp?action=openDocument&documentId=40E27CDD24CF64F3C12563CD0>

[10]

<https://www.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Article.xsp?action=openDocument&documentId=1589ACAA9E747780C12563CD0>

[11]

<https://www.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Article.xsp?action=openDocument&documentId=AA52BFEA7C5C5BC3C12563CD0>

[12] https://www.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_rul_rule115