This section contains a detailed presentation of the major features of IHL. The salient aspects of each of the 14 topics highlighted are outlined in short introductory texts, followed by references to articles from the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, and to the rules set out in the ICRC’s study, Customary International Humanitarian Law. These are supplemented by bibliographical references for those who wish to delve deeper into the subject matter. Each topic offers direct links to pertinent cases.

**FUNDAMENTALS OF IHL**

What is IHL? What is its place within the international legal order? What is the difference between ius ad bellum and ius in bello? When does IHL apply? What are its origins and how has it evolved? What are its sources?

**PRINCIPLE OF DISTINCTION**

What is the principle of distinction (between civilians and combatants, between military objectives and civilian objects) and what does it encompass? Why is it one of the cornerstones of IHL? How and why is the principle of distinction challenged at times in contemporary armed conflicts?
### COMBATANTS AND POWS

Who is a combatant? What is combatant status? What are the rights and obligations of combatants? Can one lose combatant status? Who is entitled to the status of prisoner of war (POW)? How must POWs be treated? What are the rights of POWs? When must POWs be repatriated?

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Who is a protected civilian? What are the rules governing the protection of civilians? Are there specific provisions of IHL for the protection of women and children? Are there specific rules protecting refugees and IDPs? What is occupation? Why are there separate rules governing situations of occupation? When does occupation start? When does it end? May civilians be detained?

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How are civilians protected against the effects of hostilities? Can they lose their protection? What is a military objective? What does the principle of precaution encompass? What are the "means and methods" of warfare? How are they
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**NAVAL WARFARE**

What are the specific rules governing the conduct of naval warfare?

**AIR WARFARE**

What are the specific rules governing the conduct of air warfare?

**NON-INTERNATIONAL ARMED CONFLICT**

What situations qualify as non-international armed conflict? What are the rules governing this type of conflict? What are the differences and similarities between the legal regimes applicable to international and to non-international armed conflicts? Who is bound by the law of non-international armed conflict? What are the legal consequences of this type of conflict on the status of the parties?

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How is IHL implemented? What measures can or must be taken in peacetime? In the midst of an international armed conflict? In times of non-international armed conflict? May or must third States ensure compliance with IHL by belligerents? What is the role of Protecting Powers? Of the ICRC? Of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies? Of non-governmental organizations (NGOs)? Of the United Nations? What factors contribute to violations of IHL?
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