

Translated from Arabic

Measures taken by the State of Qatar to enhance implementation of international humanitarian law (IHL), including dissemination and implementation at the national level

The State of Qatar is party to the four 1949 Geneva Conventions and the two 1977 Additional Protocols thereto. It has been and remains scrupulous about carrying out its international commitment to respect and to ensure respect for those instruments. The Qatari parties responsible for implementing those Conventions and other international instruments related to IHL have been and remain vigorous in the performance of their duty to disseminate and implement a culture of IHL. Activities include the following:

I. Dissemination of international humanitarian law within the Qatari Armed Forces

1. Many officers of the Qatari Armed Forces have taken part in specialized regional and international training courses in IHL, including IHL instructor training in a number of States, most notably Italy (San Remo), Switzerland (Geneva), Turkey, Egypt and Lebanon.

2. From 11 to 18 February 2009, an eight-day IHL instructor training course for 20 officers of various ranks and from various commands was held at the headquarters of the Department of Legal Affairs of the Qatari Armed Forces. The course was held in cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and was attended by members of the ICRC regional delegation to the States members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). It consisted of intensive lectures and research assignments on various topics in IHL. Participants were awarded certificates from ICRC qualifying them as IHL instructors and were supplied with textbooks and pamphlets.

3. Material on IHL has been integrated into most of the Qatari Armed Forces training courses for officers and regular army personnel alike, and lectures on the subject are given by officers and advisers from the Department of Legal Affairs.

4. There has also been coordination with the ICRC regional delegation to the GCC States with regard to the development of curricula for the teaching of IHL at the Ahmed bin Mohammed Military College and the Armed Forces Academy. The chief and members of that delegation were hosted in Doha on 27 and 28 October 2008, where they met with Qatari Armed Forces officers and visited Ahmed bin Mohammed Military College and the Armed Forces Academy. The Department of Legal Affairs has begun developing curricula for all basic military courses for officers, non-commissioned officers and regular army personnel. Those curricula are expected to be ready by the end of 2009.

5. On 29 January 2009, the Qatari Armed Forces formed a committee on international humanitarian law. It is responsible for disseminating a culture and awareness of IHL among Armed Forces members, providing facilities for that purpose, coordinating with relevant regional and international associations and organizations, and following up implementation of IHL within the Armed Forces.

6. The Department of Legal Affairs of the Armed Forces General Staff has issued a publication entitled "Overview of the Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC)," which addresses major topics in LOAC that Armed Forces members need to be aware of and understand. They include the basic principles of LOAC, protection of civilians and civilian objects during armed conflict, conduct of combatants in the field, protections for prisoners of war and the combat-disabled, protection of humanitarian workers and respect for the insignia of humanitarian organizations, accountability of officers and personal responsibility for violations of LOAC, and other issues relating to the four 1949 Geneva Conventions and the two 1977 Additional Protocols thereto. The publication has been distributed to all Qatari Armed Forces commands, departments and units.

7. A branch of the library of the Department of Legal Affairs has been set aside for books and pamphlets on IHL, which are available to all members of the Qatari Armed Forces.

8. Many Qatari Armed Forces officers have taken part in workshops held by Qatari civil society organizations, and prepared studies in particular on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict. The Qatari Armed Forces is in the process of incorporating material on the rights of the child into the curricula of the Military College and the Armed Forces Academy.

II. Measures taken by the Ministry of Justice to strengthen international humanitarian law

1. The Ministry has made every effort to take part in the annual IHL sessions held by the Centre for Legal and Judicial Studies in cooperation with ICRC.

2. From 13 to 15 May 2008, the Ministry held an introductory course on IHL through the Centre for Legal and Judicial Studies in cooperation with the Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) and the ICRC regional delegation to the GCC countries. More than 100 lawyers from various ministries, agencies and institutions took part. Lectures were given on the principles of IHL, the Geneva Conventions, and practical mechanisms for the implementation of their provisions. The lectures were given by law professors and experts from both Qatar and abroad, and by members of QRCS and the ICRC regional delegation to the GCC States. Pamphlets on the text and interpretation of IHL conventions were handed out to attendees, who were awarded certificates of attendance issued by the Centre. The session covered a wide range of material.

3. On 2 February 2009, the Centre for Legal and Judicial Studies held a lecture on "The aggression against Gaza in the light of international humanitarian law", which was attended by a large number of prominent specialists and others. It was open to the general public and covered by all the media.

4. During April 2009, the Centre plans to hold a joint seminar with QRCS on the role of the International Court of Justice in implementing IHL. Representatives of ICRC will be in attendance, and the Centre expects a large number of lawyers to take part, including many of those who take part in its ongoing training courses.

5. The Centre is trying to incorporate materials that enhance awareness of the principles of IHL into the curricula of its relevant training courses.

III. Major regional and international activities conducted by the Qatar Red Crescent Society during 2008

1. QRCS took part in the preparatory advisory meeting for the first conference of humanitarian organizations of the Member States of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), which was organized by OIC and the Qatari Charitable Works Agency.
 2. QRCS held a seminar on the humanitarian implications and political dimensions of the siege of Gaza at its headquarters. The seminar was given by prominent professors and experts in IHL and human rights.
 3. QRCS held a seminar on religion and the media in humanitarian activities in conjunction with the Al Jazeera satellite channel and the Arab Committee for the Defence of Journalists.
 4. QRCS took part in an IHL training course held by the Saudi Red Crescent Society and the Arab Red Crescent and Red Cross Organization.
 5. On 29 May 2008, a training course was held for QRCS and human rights volunteers.
 6. From 16 to 17 December 2008, a Gulf-Asia conference on reuniting separated families was held jointly by QRCS and ICRC.
 7. On 22 December 2008, a seminar on the humanitarian implications and political dimensions of the Darfur crisis was held jointly by QRCS and the British Embassy in Qatar.
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