

*Translated from Arabic*

The State of Qatar is a party to the majority of key humanitarian law instruments and other relevant conventions, including the four Geneva Conventions of 1949, which relate to the protection of victims of international conflicts, and the Protocols additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1977. Qatar also supports the International Humanitarian Fact-Finding Commission established pursuant to Additional Protocol I, article 90.

Additional Protocol I of 1977, which relates to international armed conflicts, was adopted because new means of combat had been developed and the rules applicable to the conduct of hostilities had become outdated. It prohibits indiscriminate attacks or reprisals against civilian populations, objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, cultural objects and places of worship. Protocol II relates to non-international conflicts taking place on the territory of a State between the armed forces of that State and armed groups that are under responsible command and control part of the national territory. It prohibits attacks as outlined above and the forced movement of civilians.

Although the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the Additional Protocols established principles and rules that must be respected during periods of armed conflict, the International Committee of the Red Cross has repeatedly emphasized in international forums, and particularly at the international conferences of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent, that certain dangerous trends challenge the application of international humanitarian law.

The State of Qatar believes that those trends, particularly non-compliance with international humanitarian law, have given rise to actions that have harmed civilians and caused their forced movement, destroyed infrastructure that is critical to preserving civilian lives and led to the use of starvation and blockades to achieve military gains on the ground. In turn, this has complicated armed conflicts and efforts to achieve enduring peace agreements.

The State of Qatar believes that, in order to address the ever more serious challenges to the application of international humanitarian law, States must abide by common article 1 of the Geneva Conventions, namely, to ensure respect for those Conventions. The Conventions must be respected in all international and non-international armed conflicts and applied without double standards.

However, the main obstacle continues to be States' lack of political will to shoulder their responsibility to prevent violations of international humanitarian law and to refrain from helping and encouraging other States to commit internationally unlawful acts. Such a position has encouraged certain parties to commit war crimes and crimes against humanity because they are convinced that the international community is unable to bring them to justice. Indeed, those parties have found ingenious ways to use internationally prohibited weapons, including poison gas, and they continue to do as they please with utter disregard for international humanitarian law.

In conclusion, although international humanitarian law, including the Additional Protocols, has proven to be flexible and remains broadly appropriate in modern armed conflicts, it should now be updated, taking into account the new reality of warfare, and all States, large and small, must abide by it. All parties to international humanitarian law instruments must put into effect the action plan for the implementation of international humanitarian law adopted by the thirty-first International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. They must also affirm their support for Additional Protocol I, article 90, which established the International Humanitarian Fact-Finding Commission, in order to promote its universality.