

## United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

### **IHL Instruments:**

1. The United Kingdom ratified the Arms Trade Treaty on 2 April 2014 and the Treaty entered into force on 24 December 2014. In March 2014 the United Kingdom updated the EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria (the Consolidated Criteria) to include the Treaty as an international obligation in Criterion One, and to add international humanitarian law and gender-based violence in Criterion Two.
2. The United Kingdom is a State Party to the Convention on Cluster Munitions which entered into force for the United Kingdom on 1 November 2010. In December 2013 the United Kingdom completed the destruction of its entire stockpile of over 38 million sub-munitions. The destruction process was carried out in a safe, secure, and environmentally-friendly manner.
3. On the 19th May 2016 the United Kingdom Government introduced legislation into the House of Lords which will enable the United Kingdom to ratify the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and accede to its two Protocols. The United Kingdom has also committed £30 million of funding to a new Cultural Protection Fund. The fund will seek to support countries in global conflict zones to protect and restore their cultural heritage, with grant applications opening in June 2016. Together the ratification of The Hague Convention and the Cultural Protection Fund will create a package of measures which underline the United Kingdom's strong commitment to protecting cultural heritage for future generations.

### **Promotion and Dissemination of International Humanitarian Law:**

4. The United Kingdom published information on its weapons review process in March 2016:  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/507319/20160308-UK\\_weapon\\_reviews.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/507319/20160308-UK_weapon_reviews.pdf);
5. The United Kingdom will host an Article 36 Weapons Review conference in October 2016 to better understand and share best practice in this area of international humanitarian law, this will build on a similar conference held in September 15 which discussed the methodologies used to ensure weapons are capable of legal use;
6. Defence Medical Services held an annual Ethics Symposium in October 2014 and in September 2015, both of which were supported by the British Red Cross;
7. Army Legal Services continues to second a Military Lawyer (currently a Colonel) to act as Director of the Military Department at the International Institute of Humanitarian Law, San Remo, Italy;
8. The United Kingdom supports the International Dissemination Activities of the British Red Cross including the joint British Red Cross/ICRC project which

keeps up-dated the practice section of the ICRC Study on Customary IHL and is accessible on a database: <https://www.icrc.org/customary-ihl> .

**Armed Forces:**

9. In the United Kingdom, all Armed Forces receive training on international humanitarian law throughout their careers, which covers the four fundamental principles of Necessity, Humanity, Distinction and Proportionality. International humanitarian law training is also provided as part of the mandatory pre-deployment training for all personnel deploying on military operations in which international humanitarian law may apply.
10. The United Kingdom Ministry of Defence has published a Manual on Law of Armed Conflict which sets out our interpretation of international humanitarian law. Each service will deploy lawyers to operational theatres where there is a requirement to do so; when deployed, the lawyers will advise on all legal issues and provide refresher training where practicable.
11. Under the Armed Forces Act 2006 service personnel are bound by the criminal law of England and Wales wherever in the world they are serving. There is no special treatment or dispensation and if they break the criminal law, they can face the consequences in court just like any other citizen. This enables those who commit war crimes to be punished.
12. The standards of conduct required of United Kingdom Armed forces are, and have always been, in accordance with relevant international law, and the domestic criminal law that applies to United Kingdom forces at all times. Allegations of unlawful conduct by personnel who fail to uphold the high standards expected are taken extremely seriously.
13. The United Kingdom Government does not condone any unlawful behavior by our forces. It is for this reason the United Kingdom set up the independent Iraq Historic Allegations team (IHAT) to carry out independent investigations into allegations arising from operations in Iraq.

**Education and Training:**

14. The curriculum framework in each part of the United Kingdom provides opportunities for teaching about international humanitarian law in schools.
15. The United Kingdom offers general international humanitarian law training to governmental policy and legal advisers in addition to ad hoc events and training as required. The United Kingdom also provides information on relevant international humanitarian law issues to the media in connection with events current at the time, including armed conflicts.
16. The United Kingdom National International Humanitarian Law Committee meets annually to develop further and disseminate understanding of international humanitarian law policy and practice nationally and to discuss ways to encourage international partners to do likewise, particularly within the Commonwealth. The United Kingdom has also promoted the formation of

national International Humanitarian Law committees and has offered practical assistance to those wishing to do so.

**Enforcement:**

17. The United Kingdom continues to contribute to activities carried out by the European Union to encourage States to become party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and to put in place legislation to give the Statute effect.
18. The United Kingdom contributes to the International Criminal Court, international and hybrid tribunals. United Kingdom support helps to strengthen the rules-based international system and tackle impunity for serious violations of international humanitarian law.

**Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative:**

19. In May 2012, the former United Kingdom Foreign Secretary, William Hague, and the Special Envoy of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Angelina Jolie Pitt, co-founded the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI). The aim of the initiative is to raise awareness and rally global action to do more to (i) address the culture of impunity that exists for these crimes, (ii) increase the number of perpetrators held to account, and (iii) ensure better support for survivors.
20. In 2013, the United Kingdom, endorsed the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict. The Declaration recognises that serious sexual violence and rape constitute grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions and amount to war crimes. To date, it has been endorsed by 156 UN Member States. By endorsing the Declaration, these countries have agreed there should be no peace agreements that give amnesty to people who have ordered or carried out rape. Suspects wanted for war zone rape can now be arrested in any of these countries.
21. The 2014 Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, held in London, was the largest ever meeting of its kind, bringing together representatives from more than 120 countries, 100 NGOs and international organisations and more than 900 experts. The Summit was a milestone in bringing this issue to the world's attention and resulted in a number of tangible achievements and outcomes, notably the launch of the first International Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict. The first of its kind, the Protocol sets out the basic principles of documenting sexual violence as a crime under international law, gleaned from best practice in the field. The Protocol is not binding on states. Since its launch at the Global Summit we have translated the International Protocol into 11 languages (French, Spanish, Bosnian, Arabic, Albanian, Kurdish, Burmese, Albanian, Serbian, Nepali and Swahili) and provided training to governments, the judiciary, police, military and civil society to gather evidence and strengthen the prosecution of sexual violence in Bosnia, Colombia, the DRC, Nepal, Uganda and Kosovo.
22. In 2015, Baroness Anelay of St Johns DBE was appointed Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict. Her

appointment reflects the United Kingdom Government's continued determination to do all it can to end the scourge of sexual violence in conflict. Baroness Anelay has identified tackling "survivor stigma" as a PSVI priority for 2016 and calls on all UN Members States – including the PSVI Champions network - to do more to ensure that survivors of sexual violence do not suffer further hardships as a result of negative social attitudes, misconceptions or a lack of understanding after their ordeals.