

UNGA 79 / Sixth Committee

Agenda Item 81 “Status of the Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and relating to the protection of victims of armed conflicts”

Statement by Varduhi Melikyan, Counsellor of the Mission of Armenia to UN

4 November 2024

Mr. Chairman,

Geneva Conventions and the Additional Protocols thereto are the cornerstone of international humanitarian law, representing the legal commitment and moral promise of the global community to protect the human rights and human dignity even in times of armed conflict.

The 75th Anniversary of the Geneva Conventions marks a milestone in international humanitarian law. Honoring this legacy is a good occasion to reflect on the achievements and on the future actions aimed at protecting the very principles enshrined in IHL. The protection of these principles becomes even more critical, as conflicts and crises continue to deteriorate in unprecedented ways.

Armenia attaches utmost importance to the full compliance to the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols and regrets the practical consequences when a State chooses to disregard those treaties.

As an impartial and independent organization, the ICRC has a mandate rooted in the Geneva Conventions to protect and assist the civilians during armed conflicts. Armenia highly values the ICRC’s role as a neutral intermediary bridging communication gaps to negotiate humanitarian access, protect civilians and the prisoners of war.

From the international humanitarian law perspective, the ICRC has a critical role to protect the principles of IHL and promote its universal adherence. We note that adopting the principles of Geneva conventions to current realities and remaining steadfast in its commitment to place the human life and dignity at the center of its mission is becoming even more challenging for ICRC, as the IHL is confronted with a multitude of emerging threats, such as cyber warfare and autonomous weapons.

Additionally, the artificial intelligence poses significant challenges to the identification of responsibility and control in the context of the application of the Conventions.

Another worrisome trend is the false pretexts and smear campaigns against international humanitarian organisations, including ICRC, that are utilized to jeopardize the vital activities and life-saving support for thousands of innocent people in areas of armed conflict and humanitarian settings.

Mr. Chairman,

Geneva Conventions, the Additional Protocols thereto, other legally binding instruments and initiatives aimed at progressively developing IHL lay down the legal framework, while enforcement of these laws remains the most critical and pressing issue of our times. It is regrettable that there remain States that choose not to become Parties to the Additional Protocols of the Geneva Conventions and opt for the arbitrary application and the distortion of the concept of the “Customary international law”.

We took note of the report of the Secretary-General on the Status of the Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 relating to the protection of victims of armed conflicts. We would urge States choosing to refer to customary international humanitarian law in their submissions for the report of the Secretary-General to reflect whether their invocation of the law as the ostensible basis for prosecutions of the prisoners of war and detainees is matched by the reality of their own conduct in respecting and applying the law.