



**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF  
SIERRA LEONE TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

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**STATEMENT**

**BY**

**GEORGE SHADRACK KAMANDA**

**First Secretary**

**at the 79<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly**

**Agenda item 81:**

**“Status of the Protocols Additional to the Geneva  
Conventions of 1949 and relating to the protection of  
victims of armed conflicts”.**

**New York,  
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**Chair,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,**

1. On behalf of the Delegation of Sierra Leone, allow me to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General for the comprehensive report **(A/79/174)** on the Status of the Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and relating to the protection of victims of armed conflicts, as well as on measures taken to strengthen the existing body of International Humanitarian Law (IHL).
2. We also wish to acknowledge the work conducted in accordance with **resolution 77/107** and the valuable deliberations held during the seventy-seventh session of the Sixth Committee.
3. Sierra Leone reaffirms its **unwavering commitment to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional**

**Protocols**, particularly Protocol I. These instruments remain vital to **protecting victims of armed conflicts** and upholding the principles of human dignity. In our collective responsibility, we stress that full implementation of these frameworks is essential, and their **fundamental tenets must not be compromised**.

4. Sierra Leone is no stranger to the horrors of war. As **His Excellency, Dr. Julius Maada Bio, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone** recently said at the launch of the Sierra Leone Peace Exhibition at the United Nations, **“Sierra Leone has been to hell and back”**. Our history is marked by a brutal civil conflict that tested the very fabric of our society from 1999 - 2000.

5. Nevertheless, through resilience, reconciliation, and a steadfast commitment to justice and peace, we

have emerged stronger. It is this experience that drives our dedication to the Geneva Conventions and to ensuring that IHL is respected and upheld, not just in Sierra Leone but across the globe.

6. Our world has certainly made progress in upholding the fundamental principles of International Humanitarian Law (IHL). However, we must acknowledge the concerning reality of our current global situation. Conflicts continue in various regions, causing immense suffering and a clear disregard for IHL.

7. As reflected in the Secretary-General's report, **we note with concern** the ongoing **violations of international humanitarian law across numerous conflict zones**. The deliberate targeting of civilians, destruction of

infrastructure, and widespread disregard for the established rules of IHL represent serious setbacks in the progress we have collectively achieved.

8. **Protocol I**, adopted in 1977, expands the protections enshrined in the Geneva Conventions and emphasizes key principles, such as **distinction, proportionality, and precaution**. These principles are indispensable for ensuring that all parties to a conflict exercise restraint, particularly in avoiding harm to civilian populations.

**Mr. Chair,**

9. Sierra Leone emphasizes the need for the international community **to strengthen its resolve in addressing these persistent challenges** and safeguarding the principles that underpin IHL. We cannot ignore the troubling reality of our current global landscape. Conflicts rage on in

various parts of the world, bringing with them immense suffering and a blatant disregard for IHL.

10. **At the same time**, we recognize that the nature of contemporary conflicts has evolved. **Asymmetrical warfare**, involving non-state actors and irregular forces, has raised significant challenges in the application of Protocol I, particularly concerning the **classification of combatants and civilians**.

11. While these challenges are real, Sierra Leone strongly advocates that the humanitarian principles at the **heart of Protocol I must remain intact** and continue to guide our responses to modern conflicts. We encourage states to engage in **constructive dialogue** to ensure that Protocol I remains robust in its application while preserving its core objectives of civilian protection.

12. **At the national level**, Sierra Leone has taken decisive steps to ensure that our national legal framework is aligned with the principles of the Additional Protocols. The passage of the **Geneva Conventions Act in 2012**, which incorporates the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols into law, reflects our commitment to IHL.

13. This Act ensures that our **armed forces (RSLAF)** are trained in IHL and provides clear mechanisms for addressing violations, including those constituting grave breaches. Moreover, **the Act** applies to all persons, regardless of nationality, for offenses committed within and outside our borders, underscoring our determination to ensure accountability for serious violations of IHL.

14. Sierra Leone's commitment to accountability is further demonstrated through the legacy of the **Special Court for Sierra Leone** (SCSL) and the continued work of the **Residual Special Court for Sierra Leone (RSCSL)**. These institutions underscore our nation's belief in the necessity of holding perpetrators of grave breaches of IHL accountable. We urge the international community to continue supporting such mechanisms, as accountability is essential for effectively enforcing IHL.

15. We are pleased to see the growing ratification of the Additional Protocols and the **near-universal acceptance** of the Geneva Conventions. However, as emphasized in the Secretary-General's report, **the challenge remains in ensuring compliance and effective implementation at the national level**. It is critical that all states uphold their obligations under IHL, particularly those directly involved in ongoing armed conflicts. We echo the call for continued



dissemination of IHL principles through **education** and **capacity-building**, which is vital for strengthening national implementation.

16. **Finally**, Mr. Chair, Sierra Leone reaffirms its full support for the Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions. These instruments remain essential for protecting victims of armed conflict and guiding parties' conduct in both traditional and evolving conflict scenarios.

17. We call on all Member States that have not yet ratified the Additional Protocols to do so, and we encourage their full implementation to ensure that the principles of IHL are upheld in all conflict situations.

18. **In conclusion**, we thank the **International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)** and other humanitarian organizations for their tireless efforts in promoting compliance with IHL

and protecting those affected by armed conflict. Sierra Leone remains committed to working alongside the international community to safeguard the dignity of all war victims and uphold the humanitarian principles that guide us.

**Thank you, Mr. Chair.**

