

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Follow-up to UN General Assembly Resolution 77/107 ("*Status of the Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and relating to the protection of victims of armed conflicts*")

Submission from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland on new developments and activities undertaken during the reporting period 2022-2024.

31 May 2024

In line with Operative Paragraph 16 of UNGA Resolution 77/107, the United Kingdom has used a template questionnaire in the hope that it might be of interest and encourage others to adopt a similar format in future. The United Kingdom would welcome comments from other States and UN officials on this approach. A copy of the template questionnaire can be found on the United Kingdom Government website¹.

Please set out briefly any new developments or activities undertaken in the following areas:

I. Ratifications or Accessions to the Geneva Conventions of 1949, their Additional Protocols and other relevant international humanitarian law (IHL) treaties

In May 2024, the United Kingdom ratified Protocol V (on Explosive Remnants of War) to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

II. Adoption of national legislation to implement the above-mentioned instruments

Not applicable.

III. Adoption of other measures of implementation and for the dissemination of IHL

Promotion and Dissemination of International Humanitarian Law

¹ [Status of the Protocols Additional to the 1949 Geneva Conventions and relating to the protection of victims of armed conflicts: template questionnaire - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/118888/Status_of_the_Protocols_Additional_to_the_1949_Geneva_Conventions_and_relat...)

1. The United Kingdom has encouraged and supported other States to draft Voluntary Reports on the Domestic Implementation of IHL, following publication of the United Kingdom's Voluntary Report in 2019.
2. In this regard and in collaboration with the British Red Cross, the United Kingdom continues to provide practical assistance and support to selected States to produce their own report detailing their activities to implement IHL at the domestic level. This brings benefits in equipping States with a practical mechanism to measure and record IHL implementation at a national level and the report itself may help to consolidate best practice. The United Kingdom has also produced a toolkit, which provides guidance to help States research and draft a Voluntary Report. It includes two optional templates, for short and more detailed implementation reports, as well as guidance on how to publish a report. The toolkit is accessible online at the United Kingdom Government website² and is available in Arabic, French, Spanish, Portuguese (both European and Brazilian), Simplified Chinese, Swahili and Russian, as well as English.
3. Under the auspices of the United Kingdom's National Committee on International Humanitarian Law and with the support of the British Red Cross, the United Kingdom is in the process of preparing a second edition of its Voluntary Report. In May 2023, the Chair of the Committee was also invited to speak on the topic of voluntary reporting at a seminar convened by the Commonwealth Secretariat and the British Red Cross.

Armed Forces

4. The United Kingdom Ministry of Defence's Joint Service Manual on the Law of Armed Conflict³, which sets out the United Kingdom's interpretation of IHL remains available on the United Kingdom Government website together with amendments⁴. A Ministry of Defence programme to update the Manual is underway. It will draw upon Service, Government and external academic legal experts to ensure that the new manual will be comprehensive and authoritative.

² [International humanitarian law implementation report: toolkit - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

³ [Joint service manual of the law of armed conflict \(JSP 383\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

⁴ [Manual of the law of armed conflict \(JSP 383\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

5. In December 2021, the United Kingdom published a Joint Service Publication (JSP 985)⁵ on Human Security in Defence, which provides direction for the incorporation of a Human Security approach into military operations. JSP 985 builds upon JSP 1325 (Human Security in Military Operations, published in January 2019) and provides direction as to how United Kingdom Defence integrates seven human security cross-cutting themes into operational work, including gender and age-related considerations. This includes military training, and the planning and execution of military operations. Human Security training is already provided on military career courses and basic training, and Human Security is included as part of the pre-deployment training for personnel deploying on operations. A revised edition of JSP 985 will be published in due course.
6. The United Kingdom has also produced a number of joint doctrine publications (JDPs) during this time: JDP 0-01 - UK Defence Doctrine (November 2022)⁶; JDP 0-20 - UK Land Power (October 2023)⁷; JDP 0-30 - UK Air Power (September 2022)⁸; JDP 0-40 - UK Space Power (September 2022)⁹; and JDP 2-00 - Intelligence, Counter-Intelligence and Security Support to Joint Operations (August 2023)¹⁰.

Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI)

7. The United Kingdom remains a global leader in tackling conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV). In November 2022, the United Kingdom hosted the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI) Conference with over 1,000 delegates in attendance, including survivors, civil society, multilateral partners and states. At the conference, the then Foreign Secretary launched the United Kingdom's new PSVI Strategy, backed by up to £12.5m of new funding with four clear objectives – to strengthen global response, prevent sexual violence in conflict, promote justice, and support survivors.
8. The United Kingdom also launched a new Political Declaration at the conference, which sent a clear message that these heinous crimes must end and outlined the steps needed to

⁵ [Human security in Defence \(JSP 985\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/human-security-in-defence)

⁶ [UK Defence Doctrine \(JDP 0-01\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-defence-doctrine)

⁷ [UK Land Power \(JDP 0-20\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-land-power)

⁸ [UK Air Power \(JDP 0-30\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-air-power)

⁹ [UK Space Power \(JDP 0-40\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-space-power)

¹⁰ [Intelligence, Counter-intelligence and Security Support to Joint Operations \(JDP 2-00\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/intelligence-counter-intelligence-and-security-support-to-joint-operations)

achieve this. 53 countries and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Pramila Patten, endorsed the Political Declaration, with 42 countries making national commitments detailing the tangible actions they would take to tackle CRSV.

9. In 2022, the United Kingdom launched our ACT for Survivors initiative, which provided up to £8.6m towards projects that strengthened accountability for CRSV in affected countries. The initiative has supported capacity building with national institutions to prevent and respond to CRSV, including in Ethiopia, Ukraine, and Colombia. Under this initiative, the United Kingdom provided further funding to the Global Survivors Fund (GSF). In November 2022, the United Kingdom announced up to £5.15m of funding for GSF for the next three years, bringing the total figure up to £7.85m since its inception in 2019. In 2023, in partnership with the Mukwege Foundation, the United Kingdom launched the Guidebook on State Obligations for Conflict-Related Sexual Violence, designed to improve states' understanding of their obligations and to empower civil society and survivors to hold states to account.

10. Since 2022, a member of the PSVI Team of Experts has supported the Ukrainian Office of the Prosecutor General in developing its CRSV strategy and to help ensure survivor-centred justice. The United Kingdom has provided £6.2m to support projects aimed at building the domestic capacity of war crimes investigations.

11. The United Kingdom also supported progress at the UN towards a Convention on Crimes Against Humanity, which has the potential to strengthen the international legal architecture on preventing and prosecuting atrocity crimes, including CRSV. We have also led work to develop drafting ideas for how such a Convention could tackle CRSV. Following feedback from survivors and civil society, including at our Wilton Park event on the Convention in March 2023, the UK submitted proposals to the UN Sixth Committee to strengthen the CRSV elements of the draft convention.

12. In 2023, the United Kingdom launched the International Alliance on PSVI, which drives forward global action on tackling CRSV and currently has 26 confirmed members including governments of conflict-affected states, such as Ukraine and Colombia, civil society, multilateral organisations and survivors.

13. In supporting survivors, the United Kingdom's PSVI Survivor Champions and Survivor Advisory Group remain integral to the development of PSVI policies and programmes. In March 2023, the United Kingdom hosted a Survivor Retreat to discuss strengthening survivor input and lessons learned. The United Kingdom continues to fund the Global Survivors Fund, totalling £7.85 million committed to date, and sits on the Board.
14. In August 2023, the United Kingdom deployed a Senior Officer to the office of the UN Special Representative to the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. Tasked with the design and testing of a theory of change and methodology for upstream training and capability development for armed forces, to support prevention of CRSV, they are expected to be in post until March 2025.

Enforcement

15. The United Kingdom believes that the International Criminal Court (ICC) has an important role to play in ending impunity for the most serious crimes of international concern. The United Kingdom continues to support the ICC's aims to encourage States to become party to the Rome Statute and to put in place legislation to give the Rome Statute effect. The United Kingdom contributes to the ICC, and international and hybrid tribunals.
16. The United Kingdom co-chaired a meeting with ministers from across the world in March 2023 to formulate an international package of support for the ICC following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The United Kingdom donated an additional £1 million in funding to the Trust Fund for Advanced Technology and Specialised Capacity of the ICC.
17. The United Kingdom has a specialist war crimes team, which sits within the Metropolitan Police Counter Terrorism Command (SO15), and which is responsible for the investigation of all allegations of war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide and torture. They work with the Crown Prosecution Service, other Government Departments and civil society to ensure that the United Kingdom is not a safe haven for war criminals. The team is also involved in gathering evidence in relation to the commission of war crimes in Ukraine and in other situations of armed conflict.

IV. Domestic case-law relating to the above-mentioned instruments

Not applicable.

IV. Activities carried out by national commissions or committees to support the implementation or dissemination of IHL

18. The United Kingdom National Committee on International Humanitarian Law (the IHL Committee)¹¹, established in 1999, continues to meet biannually to advance IHL policy and practice. Attendees include policy officials and IHL specialists from across Government, the single Services (Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force) and the British Red Cross. As part of its terms of reference, the IHL Committee encourages the dissemination and training of IHL to the Armed Forces, Police, civil servants, teachers, the judiciary, medical professionals, journalists and others as necessary.

19. The United Kingdom has promoted the formation of national IHL committees and has offered practical assistance to those wishing to do so. In this regard, the IHL Committee has also been establishing relations with the National IHL Committees/Commissions of other States.

20. The Chair and members of the IHL Committee have acted as speakers and chairs at a number of conferences as part of efforts to help promote IHL, including the Regional Conference of European National IHL Committees held in Vienna, Austria (in March 2023), the inaugural Ukrainian Red Cross IHL Summer School held in Kyiv, Ukraine (in July 2023), the ICRC Regional IHL seminar for Eastern Africa held in Nairobi, Kenya (in August 2023) and the 6th Commonwealth Red Cross and Red Crescent Conference on IHL held in Pretoria, South Africa (in April 2024).

21. The FCDO International Academy Law Faculty works in partnership with the British Red Cross to offer Practitioner-level courses and workshops for diplomats and officials of the FCDO and other Government Departments entitled '*The Laws of War – an introduction to international humanitarian law*'. Special sessions are sometimes arranged to help inform officials working on situations where IHL is of particular relevance.

¹¹ [UK National Committee on International Humanitarian Law: terms of reference - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/national-committee-on-international-humanitarian-law)

22. The United Kingdom has a growing body of humanitarian research focussed on promoting IHL and increasing its understanding, through focusing on six under researched themes of IHL. This includes for example, researching the humanitarian impacts of attacks on healthcare in conflict contexts, better understanding of Non-State Armed Groups' attitudes to IHL, and investigation on what promotes restraint by combatants. The most recent research project in 2024 - *Beyond Compliance*, is seeking to explore issues such as what types of humanitarian need are produced by armed conflicts, which specific IHL rules are most relevant to reducing humanitarian need and how such compliance, or restraint, might be promoted by outside actors.

VI. Other relevant initiatives to promote respect for the 1949 Geneva Conventions, their Additional Protocols and other relevant instruments.

23. Since endorsing the Safe Schools Declaration in April 2018, the United Kingdom has promoted its adoption and implementation to protect education during armed conflict. The Safe Schools Declaration also features in the United Kingdom's updated Human Security policy, JSP 985 (referred to above).

24. During the reporting period, members of the IHL Committee worked together with relevant Government Departments to re-issue United Kingdom Government and British Red Cross guidance¹² regarding the publication of images of prisoners of war (POWs) and the Geneva Convention rules concerning the protection of POWs against insults and public curiosity. Social media platforms have also been encouraged to develop policies to tackle online depictions of POWs.

25. The United Kingdom continued to engage on weaponry matters. This includes participation in the various fora set up under the auspices of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, which includes participation in the Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems Group of Government Experts.

26. In November 2022, the United Kingdom endorsed the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of

¹² [Public curiosity' in the 1949 Geneva Conventions: the interpretation developed by the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the British Red Cross - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/public-curiosity-in-the-1949-geneva-conventions)

Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas. The United Kingdom has worked with other States in encouraging universalisation of the Political Declaration, and, in April 2024, attended the conference hosted by Norway to review the implementation of the Political Declaration.

27. The United Kingdom also continues to promote the universalisation and effective implementation of the Oslo Convention on Cluster Munitions, the Ottawa Treaty on Anti-Personnel Mines and the Arms Trade Treaty, including through review conferences and meetings.