

Annex to Bulgaria’s Official Submission

Contribution of the Bulgarian Red Cross to the UN Secretary-General’s Report on the Implementation/Status of the Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions *(Pursuant to operative paragraphs 12–15 of A/RES/79/123)*

1. The Bulgarian Red Cross (BRC) submits this annex in support of Bulgaria’s official submission to the Secretary-General’s report on the implementation and status of the Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions of 1949. The BRC considers the Additional Protocols essential for strengthening the protection of victims of armed conflict and for ensuring that international humanitarian law (IHL) remains relevant in contemporary armed conflicts.
2. Bulgaria has ratified both Additional Protocols of 1977 and incorporates IHL into its domestic legal order under the Constitution and relevant legislation, including the Law on the Bulgarian Red Cross, which explicitly requires the Society to act in compliance with the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols. In this framework, the BRC functions as the main humanitarian partner of the State in the field of IHL, supporting national implementation through dissemination, training, and cooperation with public authorities and other stakeholders.
3. The BRC actively participates in the work of the National Committee on International Humanitarian Law, including in the preparation of Bulgaria’s national review of IHL-related legislation and in the drafting of national voluntary reports on IHL implementation. The Society has also contributed to the quadrennial report “*International Humanitarian Law and its Implementation in Bulgaria*”, which assesses the degree of alignment of Bulgarian law with the Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocols and identifies follow-up measures for further harmonization.
4. In line with operative paragraph 12 (dissemination and promotion of IHL), the BRC has conducted a range of concrete activities in 2023, 2024 and 2025, including:

- Organizing IHL training sessions and workshops for BRC staff, volunteers, and youth members, focusing on the rules of the Additional Protocols on the protection of civilians, prisoners of war, and persons *hors de combat*.
- Delivering IHL lectures and briefings for students and academic staff at Bulgarian universities, including preparation of students for the All-European IHL and Refugee Law Moot Court Competition. In 2025, the Bulgarian Red Cross organized a dedicated event on the nexus between climate change and international humanitarian law (IHL), bringing together experts, practitioners, and youth volunteers to explore how climate-related disasters and environmental degradation intersect with the protection of persons affected by armed conflict. The event featured panel discussions on the relevance of IHL principles—such as distinction, proportionality, and protection of the natural environment—in situations where climate-induced crises compound armed violence or displacement. Participants also examined the role of humanitarian actors, including the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in addressing climate-related risks while upholding humanitarian law and humanitarian principles, reinforcing Bulgaria’s broader engagement with climate-sensitive humanitarian action and IHL implementation. In 2025, the Bulgarian Red Cross participated in a court simulation held at the Court Palace in Sofia, organized in cooperation with a students’ organization specializing in moot courts. The event brought together law students, legal practitioners, and representatives of the Red Cross to simulate proceedings before an international tribunal, focusing on cases involving international humanitarian law and the protection of victims of armed conflict. The Bulgarian Red Cross contributed by providing substantive input on IHL standards, assisting in the drafting of case files, and offering feedback on the students’ pleadings, thereby strengthening the practical understanding of humanitarian law among the next generation of legal professionals.
- Running public information campaigns on social media and through local events to raise awareness of the Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocols, including the proper use and protection of the distinctive emblem of the Red Cross. In 2023, the Bulgarian Red Cross conducted an online survey and a dedicated Facebook campaign to raise awareness of international humanitarian law (IHL) among the general public. The survey gathered input from BRC volunteers, youth members, and interested citizens on

their knowledge of the Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocols, as well as their perceptions of humanitarian action in armed conflict. Based on the results, the Society developed a targeted Facebook campaign featuring short educational posts, infographics, and interactive content explaining core IHL rules, the protection of civilians, and the role of the Red Cross emblem, which reached tens of thousands of users and encouraged wider public discussion on humanitarian principles.

5. In 2024–2025, the BRC also advanced emblem-protection work by reviewing national emblem-related legislation and case law, drafting recommendations for amendments, and developing a bilingual online IHL course with dedicated modules on emblem regulation and protection for both beginners and advanced users. In addition, the Society implemented an Emblem Report Procedure and designed a handbook for emblem-awareness campaigns, intended for sharing with other National Societies of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. In 2023, the Bulgarian Red Cross developed an online form to facilitate the reporting of misuse of the Red Cross emblem in Bulgaria. The form allows members of the public, BRC volunteers, and partner organizations to submit detailed information about suspected emblem violations, including photographs, location, and context of the misuse. Once submitted, reports are reviewed by the Society’s legal and IHL team, which then follows up with the relevant authorities or entities to request correction or removal of the improper use. This online mechanism strengthens emblem protection at the national level and supports Bulgaria’s obligations under the Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocols to safeguard the distinctive sign of the Red Cross.
6. In accordance with operative paragraph 13 (national implementation measures), the BRC has supported the development and updating of national IHL-related policies and procedures through its participation in expert working groups under the National Committee on IHL. In 2023–2024, BRC representatives contributed written inputs to the Review and Assessment of the Compliance of Bulgarian Legislation with IHL treaties, including on protection of humanitarian and medical personnel, methods and means of warfare, and protection of cultural property and the natural environment.
7. The Society has also engaged in civil-military cooperation activities, including meetings with representatives of civil-military formations in Bulgaria, participation in joint exercises and

trainings, and collaboration with the Military Academy to integrate IHL principles into military education and doctrine. These activities help ensure that national practice in armed conflict and related operations remains consistent with the Additional Protocols. A BRC volunteer Maria Zhelyazkova authored an article titled “Space and War: Rules and Challenges before International Law Applicable in Armed Conflicts”¹, in which she examines the intersection of international space law and international humanitarian law (IHL) in the context of potential armed conflicts involving outer space. The article analyzes how existing IHL principles—such as distinction, proportionality, and precaution—apply to space-related hostilities and discusses the legal challenges posed by the militarization of space, including the targeting of satellites and dual-use infrastructure. By bridging space law and IHL, Zhelyazkova’s contribution supports efforts to clarify the legal framework governing armed conflict in and through outer space and underscores the need for further State practice and doctrinal work in this emerging domain.

8. With regard to operative paragraph 14 (cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross and other components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement), the BRC maintains close operational and technical cooperation with the ICRC, including on IHL capacity-building, monitoring of IHL compliance, and humanitarian assistance to vulnerable persons affected by armed conflict. In 2024–2025, the BRC participated in working meetings organized by the ICRC Regional Delegation in Belgrade with IHL colleagues from the region, exchanging best practices and presenting national activities on emblem protection, civil-military cooperation, and IHL dissemination.
9. The BRC is also engaged in regional and global Red Cross and Red Crescent initiatives, such as the European Legal Support Group (ELSG), where it contributes to discussions on improving national implementation of IHL and addressing contemporary challenges such as urban warfare, cyber operations, and the protection of medical services and humanitarian personnel.

¹ Maria Zhelyazkova’s article “Space and War: Rules and Challenges Before International Law Applicable in Armed Conflicts” was published in the commemorative collection “30 Years of the Faculty of National Security and Defence (1994–2024)”, issued by the National Defence College in Bulgaria in 2024. The piece appears on pages 152–160 of the volume, which brings together contributions from academics and practitioners on national security, defence, and international law topics.

10. Finally, in line with operative paragraph 15 (follow-up and review), the BRC recommends that Bulgaria continue to submit regular national reports on the implementation of the Additional Protocols, building on the existing National Action Plan and the quadrennial IHL review process. The Society stands ready to further support the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other competent authorities in preparing future submissions to the Secretary-General, including by providing updated information on national practice, training activities, and measures taken to address gaps in IHL implementation, drawing on its ongoing IHL work in 2025–2026.