

# UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

*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  
2024-2026**

26 May 2026

**Follow up to UN General Assembly Resolution 79/123<sup>1</sup>**  
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*In line with Operative Paragraph 15 of UNGA Resolution 79/123, 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 website.<sup>2</sup>*

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**

1. The most recent United Kingdom ratification was Protocol V (on Explosive Remnants of War) to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. This entered into force on 13 November 2024 and featured in the United Kingdom's 2024 Report.

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

2. No new legislation is required in the United Kingdom to implement the above Treaty (Protocol V to the CCW).

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

***Promotion and dissemination of IHL***

3. In October 2024, the Government of the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and Ministry of Defence (MOD) jointly published the United Kingdom's second '*Voluntary Report on the Implementation of International Humanitarian Law at Domestic Level*' (hereafter '*Voluntary Report*'). This second edition Voluntary Report was produced under the auspices of the United Kingdom's National IHL Committee and with support from the British Red Cross (BRC), and includes reporting on new topics such as the protection of civilians in armed conflict, mutual legal assistance, human security in military operations, media professionals in armed conflict, public curiosity, cyber warfare, outer space and autonomous weapons systems. It is publicly available online.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 'Status of the Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and relating to the protection of victims of armed conflicts', adopted on 4 December 2024 ([www.docs.un.org](http://www.docs.un.org))

<sup>2</sup> 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](http://www.gov.uk))

<sup>3</sup> Voluntary Report on the Implementation of International Humanitarian Law at Domestic Level (second edition) (2024) – GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)).

4. The United Kingdom, in collaboration with the BRC, continues to offer drafting support where appropriate to States wishing to develop their own Voluntary Report.
5. In May 2025, the FCDO and MOD, with support from BRC, jointly published ‘*Conflict, Hunger and International Humanitarian Law: A Practitioner’s Legal Handbook*’ (hereafter ‘Handbook’). The Handbook was developed by IHL Committee members after identifying a gap in practical legal literature on the topic of food insecurity in armed conflict. The Handbook considers key issues such as the prohibition of deliberate starvation as a method of warfare, humanitarian relief operations and the conduct of hostilities, with the aim of increasing knowledge, sharing best practice and identifying pathways for better implementation of IHL. The IHL rules are accompanied by practical guidance, case studies and recommendations on good practice. The publication was launched at a joint FCDO, MOD and BRC panel event that included contributions from Government officials and academics, and featured remarks from Lord Collins of Highbury, the then FCDO Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State. The United Kingdom’s National IHL Committee continues to seek opportunities and forums to publicise and disseminate the Handbook, which is also publicly available online.<sup>4</sup>
6. Throughout the reporting period, UK officials and Service officers contributed to expert meetings, panel discussions and launch events. These included Chatham House research, supported by the BRC, on “Identifying co-parties to armed conflict in international law”<sup>5</sup>, “Enhancing the Security of Civilians in Conflict”<sup>6</sup> and “The Law on Medical Care in Armed Conflict”.<sup>7</sup>

### ***Armed Forces***

7. The United Kingdom’s MOD is continuing to conduct a project to revise the Joint Service Manual of the Law of Armed Conflict (JSP383). The project is drawing upon Service, Government and external academic legal experts to ensure that the new manual will be comprehensive and authoritative. A Royal Navy lawyer has represented the United Kingdom as a member of the Group of Experts at the first of a series of meetings to update the *San Remo Manual on International Law Applicable to Armed Conflicts at Sea* (San Remo, Italy, 1-5 September 2025). The UK representative worked constructively with the Drafting Committee and international colleagues to analyse for revision an initial set of the existing rules under consideration, with amendments to draft proposals made *in situ* in response to expert submissions. The next meeting is due to take place in Singapore later this year.
8. An example of UK national joint doctrine which was updated during the reporting period and contains reference to IHL is JDP 0-10 UK Maritime Power (February 2026).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Conflict, Hunger and International Humanitarian Law: A Practitioner’s Legal Handbook (2025) – GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)).

<sup>5</sup> Identifying co-parties to armed conflict in international law (2024). Chatham House ([www.chathamhouse.org](http://www.chathamhouse.org)).

<sup>6</sup> Enhancing the security of civilians in conflict: Notifications, evacuations, humanitarian corridors, suspensions of hostilities and other humanitarian arrangements (2024). Chatham House ([www.chathamhouse.org](http://www.chathamhouse.org)).

<sup>7</sup> The Law on Medical Care in Armed Conflict (forthcoming 2026). Chatham House ([www.chathamhouse.org](http://www.chathamhouse.org)).

<sup>8</sup> UK Maritime Power (JDP0-10) – GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

9. In 2016, the United Kingdom published its process for conducting ‘weapon reviews’ in accordance with Article 36 of 1977 Additional Protocol 1 to the Geneva Conventions.<sup>9</sup> In 2024, the United Kingdom clarified that it will adapt its existing weapons review processes with respect to recent advances in weapons technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI) enabled systems.<sup>10</sup>

### ***Enforcement***

10. Support for international criminal justice and accountability is a fundamental element of the United Kingdom’s foreign policy. The United Kingdom is a strong supporter of an effective International Criminal Court (ICC) and views the ICC as the primary institution for investigating and prosecuting the most serious crimes of international concern, holding perpetrators to account and achieving justice for victims. The United Kingdom is one of the ICC’s major funders, providing support of £14.2 million to the ICC’s 2026 budget.
11. The United Kingdom continues to be strongly supportive of the United Nations’ process to develop a Convention on Crimes Against Humanity (CAH), substantive treaty negotiations for which are currently scheduled for 2028 and 2029. The United Kingdom has actively engaged in discussions on this during Sixth Committee sessions (2024 and 2025) as well as at the first Preparatory Committee meeting (January 2026).
12. The United Kingdom maintains a specialist War Crimes Team (WCT) within Counter Terrorism Policing London, which holds responsibility for the investigation of all allegations relating to war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide, and torture. The team conducts a series of structural investigations aimed at the identification, preservation, and assessment of evidential material in support of the ICC, other competent jurisdictions, or potential future United Kingdom proceedings. The WCT is also a core member of the UK War Crimes Network, a multi-agency partnership comprising law enforcement agencies, government departments, and non-governmental organisations, established to uphold the United Kingdom’s “no safe haven” policy for individuals suspected of committing core international crimes.

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

13. During the reporting period, the following domestic case addressed matters relating to IHL: *Al-Haq, R (on the application of) v Secretary of State for Business and Trade*.<sup>11</sup>

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

14. The United Kingdom’s National IHL Committee, established in 1999, continues to meet 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 BRC. As part of its Terms of Reference (available online),<sup>12</sup> the IHL Committee encourages the

<sup>9</sup> UK weapon reviews – GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)) .

<sup>10</sup> Government response to the House of Lords AI in Weapon Systems Committee Report – GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)), paras 23-26.

<sup>11</sup> [2025] EWCA Civ 1433.

<sup>12</sup> National Committee on International Humanitarian Law: terms of reference – GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)).

dissemination and training of IHL to the Armed Forces, Police, civil servants, teachers, the judiciary, medical professionals, journalists and others as necessary.

15. Members of the IHL Committee are playing a key role in Workstream (WS) 2 (National IHL Committees) of the ICRC's Global IHL Initiative (further information on the Initiative can be found in section VI). The United Kingdom is pleased to be one of the co-chairs for this WS, alongside Germany, Peru and the Philippines. Since the launch of the Global Initiative (autumn 2024), the Chair and members of the IHL Committee have acted as speakers and conveners at several of the WS consultations, as well as at the European Meeting of National IHL Committees (in Warsaw in May 2025). A key message has been the importance of respecting the diversity of mandates, structures, and legal systems amongst States. Over the past few months, members of the IHL Committee have worked collaboratively with fellow co-chairs, States and ICRC representatives to draft recommended outcomes for the WS. The United Kingdom's goal is for these recommendations to be of practical use, aimed at capacity building and supporting States who already have IHL Committees as well as those who do not.
16. On behalf of the co-chairs of WS2, the Chair of the UK's National IHL Committee participated in a panel on 'Preventing Violations and Implementing IHL' at the ICRC and NYU School of Law's joint 43rd Annual IHL Seminar on IHL for Legal Advisers and other Diplomats Accredited to the UN in March 2026. The overarching theme of the seminar was 'Building a common understanding around IHL through the Global Initiative to Galvanise Political Commitment to IHL'.
17. The 75th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions was marked in October 2024 by an event at the FCDO, supported by the IHL Committee. The event signalled the United Kingdom's continuing commitment to the rule of law at the national and international levels.
18. Throughout the reporting period, the IHL Committee has engaged in peer-to-peer exchanges with the National IHL Committees/Commissions of other States. This included the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ukrainian IHL Commission (signed at the 34th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in October 2024).

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

19. The United Kingdom is actively engaging in the ICRC's Global IHL Initiative, drawing from expertise across Government departments – including from FCDO and MOD – as well as the Armed Forces and BRC. The United Kingdom welcomes the Initiative and the efforts made by the ICRC to promote it, and has participated to different extents in all the different WS, noting the unique importance of each one to discussions on IHL.
20. The 34th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (hereafter '34IC') took place in October 2024. 172 State Parties and 184 National Societies attended. The United Kingdom delegation included official representatives from FCDO, MOD, and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). It worked in close collaboration with the BRC delegation. The United Kingdom welcomed the passing of five resolutions by consensus, covering: building a universal culture of compliance with IHL, protecting civilians from the

humanitarian impact of digital technologies in armed conflict, strengthening disaster risk governance, enabling local leadership and strengthening resilience in humanitarian action, and protecting people from climate related humanitarian impacts.

21. At 34IC, the United Kingdom jointly submitted with the BRC two open pledges. The first United Kingdom-BRC pledge is entitled ‘Open Pledge to Promote the Establishment, Enhancement and Effective Functioning National Committees or similar entities on IHL’ and was made in alignment with Resolution 1 of 34IC, on ‘Building a universal culture of compliance with IHL’. It encourages States to strengthen the role of their national committee or similar entity on IHL or to consider establishing such a committee where none exists, and to ensure that States know where they can draw on support and good practice from others. In addition to the United Kingdom’s FCDO and the BRC, the pledge has four signatories: Austria, Honduras, Switzerland and Portugal.<sup>13</sup>
22. The second pledge is entitled ‘Open Pledge to Report on the Domestic Implementation of IHL’ and also aligns with Resolution 1 of 34IC, which highlights the growing practice of States voluntarily publishing reports on their domestic implementation of IHL and encourages more States to engage in this practice, with the support from National IHL Committees, the National Societies or the ICRC as appropriate. The pledge encourages those who have already published a voluntary report to consider regularly updating it. In addition to the United Kingdom’s FCDO and the BRC, the pledge has six signatories: the Tuvalu Red Cross, the Italian Red Cross, Switzerland, the Spanish Red Cross, Spain and Portugal.<sup>14</sup>
23. The United Kingdom has signed several other open pledges as follows, which serve as important indicators of the United Kingdom’s commitment to upholding IHL: ‘Enhancing the Protection of Humanitarian Personnel’ (opened by Australia); ‘Support for the International Humanitarian Fact-Finding Commission’ (IHFFC) (opened by Switzerland); and ‘Enhance the protection and inclusion of persons with disabilities during situations of risks, including situations of armed conflicts and disasters’ (opened by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Italian Red Cross).
24. The United Kingdom has also signed ‘The 6th Commonwealth Conference Joint Pledge on Unified efforts towards reinforcing respect for IHL’.<sup>15</sup> This pledge was opened by South Africa on behalf of the Commonwealth in February 2025, following the 6th Commonwealth Red Cross and Red Crescent Conference on IHL, held in April 2024 in Pretoria. It aims to build upon the valuable work done by Governments and National Societies of the Commonwealth in implementing Resolution 1 of the 33rd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, entitled ‘Bringing IHL Home: a road map towards better implementation of IHL’, and to give effect to Resolution 1 of 34IC ‘Building a universal culture of respect for IHL’. In addition to the United Kingdom’s FCDO, the pledge has eight signatories, including the BRC.

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<sup>13</sup> Open Pledge to Promote the Establishment, Enhancement and Effective Functioning of National Committees or similar entities on IHL (2024-2028) ([www.rcrcconference.org](http://www.rcrcconference.org)).

<sup>14</sup> Open Pledge to Report on the Domestic Implementation of International Humanitarian Law (2024-2028) ([www.rcrcconference.org](http://www.rcrcconference.org)).

<sup>15</sup> The 6th Commonwealth Conference Joint Pledge on Unified efforts towards reinforcing respect for IHL ([www.rcrcconference.org](http://www.rcrcconference.org))

25. The Declaration for the Protection of Humanitarian Personnel was launched on 21 September 2025, led by Australia and supported by key partners, including the UK. The Declaration outlines four key pillars: compliance with international law, secure and unhindered access, equal protections for all humanitarian staff, and accountability after incidents. The Declaration has since been endorsed by over 112 States. The Declaration supports UN Security Council Resolution 2730, by focusing on practical implementation at both national and operational levels, helped by a Geneva-based Group of Friends.
26. The United Kingdom has provided funding for the ICRC, to ensure that it can continue to conduct its important work, including working bilaterally with the ICRC to fund its country and regional-level appeals. From Financial Year 2022-2023 to 2025-2026 inclusive, the United Kingdom has provided £196 million in unearmarked core funding to the ICRC. Total core and bilateral UK funding to ICRC in 2025 alone was £169 million.
27. The United Kingdom provided £2m per year core funding to the BRC for its humanitarian activities from 2024–2026. Throughout the reporting period, the BRC used part of such funding to support its contribution to the joint ICRC – BRC Customary IHL Database project.<sup>16</sup> This work helps to keep the practice section of the customary IHL database.<sup>17</sup> The MOD (Army Legal Services) has also shared practice with the BRC for the purpose of updating UK practice on the database.
28. The United Kingdom is an active supporter of the IHFFC’s mission to contribute towards the implementation and respect for IHL in armed conflict situations and acting as an investigative body at the service of parties to an armed conflict to conduct enquiries into alleged violations. The United Kingdom provides core funding to the IHFFC as well as diplomatic and operational support. For 2025, the United Kingdom’s IHFFC contribution amounted to over £28,990. Dr Robin McNeill Love, one of the 15 independent experts within the IHFFC, was nominated by the United Kingdom and has been a member since 2017.
29. The United Kingdom remains a world leader in supporting the protection of cultural heritage in conflict zones. Protection of physical monuments as well as traditions, livelihoods, and social networks is vital to local and international stability. During the reporting period, the United Kingdom’s Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) has provided £1 million to UNESCO heritage protection funds, and funds organisations such as Blue Shield International to provide support and capacity building.
30. In November 2025, the United Kingdom participated in the Second International Conference of the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas (EWIPA) in which it reaffirmed its support and commitment to the implementation of the EWIPA Declaration.<sup>18</sup>
31. During the reporting period, the United Kingdom co-chaired the summit on the Responsible Use of AI in the Military Domain (REAIM) in Seoul (2024) and contributed to the subsequent

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<sup>16</sup> Customary IHL Project, Lauterpacht Centre for International Law, Cambridge, UK ([www.lcil.cam.ac.uk](http://www.lcil.cam.ac.uk)).

<sup>17</sup> Customary IHL Database, ICRC ([www.icrc.org](http://www.icrc.org));

<sup>18</sup> Statement by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (<https://cms.ewipa.org/>).

summit in Coruña (2026). REAIM is a State-led, multistakeholder initiative that seeks to provide an agile, robust, and evidence-based platform to incubate and nurture ideas to complement and reinforce parallel initiatives for the promotion of responsible AI in the military domain. In the Coruña declaration, the United Kingdom and other signatories “invite all stakeholders, as applicable - including States, industry, academia, civil society, and regional and international organizations - to: Uphold compliance with applicable international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law, as required throughout the life cycles of AI capabilities in the military domain...”<sup>19</sup>

32. The United Kingdom is co-chair of the International Contact Group on Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response (CHMR) and it hosted the 6th International Contact Group on CHMR in January 2026.
33. The FCDO International Academy Law Faculty continues to work in partnership with the BRC to offer Practitioner-level courses and workshops for diplomats and officials of the FCDO and other Government Departments, including a half-day course 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.
34. Since 2024, the British Red Cross’ long-standing Summer School on IHL is being held more frequently (annually, rather than every two years). The 2026 edition of the British Red Cross Summer School on International Humanitarian Law will be held at Magdalene College, Cambridge, from 6 to 9 September 2026. This course is intended to provide a general understanding of IHL and its practical application. It features sessions led by United Kingdom and other experts from across the armed forces, government, the ICRC Movement and academia. Past participants have included armed forces personnel and government officials, as well as staff of NGOs volunteers and staff of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, journalists and university lecturers and students.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Coruña Declaration: A Coruña Declaration: "REAIM 2026 Pathways to Action" ([www.exteriores.gob.es](http://www.exteriores.gob.es)).

<sup>20</sup> British Red Cross Summer School on International Humanitarian Law ([www.redcross.org.uk](http://www.redcross.org.uk)).