

Follow-up to UNGA Res 73/204 ("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 on new developments and activities undertaken during the reporting period 2018-2020**

*In line with Operative Paragraph 15 of UNGA Resolution 71/144, the UK has used a template questionnaire in the hope that it might be of interest and help to encourage others to adopt a similar format in future. The UK would welcome comments from other States and UN officials on this approach.*

**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**

Not applicable.

**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. In March 2019, the United Kingdom voluntarily reported to the UN on its domestic implementation

produce a report which details their activities to implement IHL at the domestic level. Among other advantages, States will be equipped with a practical mechanism to measure and record IHL implementation at national level and the report may help to identify best practice. We have also produced a toolkit to provide guidance for countries to research and draft their own reports. 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 UK government website<sup>1</sup>, and is presently available in Arabic and French, as well as English. Additional translations are planned.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/international-humanitarian-law-implementation-report-toolkit>

3. The United Kingdom supports the Dissemination Activities of the British Red Cross including the joint British Red Cross/ICRC project which ensures that the practice section of the ICRC Study on Customary IHL is kept up-to-date and is accessible on a database: <https://www.icrc.org/customary-ihl>. The 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the launch of the database was marked on 12 August 2020.
4. On 27 August 2020, the UK published its approach paper on Protection of Civilians. The paper builds on the published 2010 Protection of Civilians strategy, highlighting the work done by the UK Government in the past 10 years to further this important agenda. The UK is firmly committed to promoting the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict and has been at the forefront of initiatives in recent years promoting the issue, including in strengthening state capacity and encouraging all States to respect IHL. This publication brings up to date the UK's public commitment, taking into

draw upon Service, government and external academic legal experts to ensure that the new manual will be comprehensive and authoritative.

8. The fourth edition of Joint Doctrine Publication 1-10, Captured Persons<sup>5</sup>, was published in September 2020. This gives detailed directions and guidance to members of the UK Armed Forces who are involved in planning, training for or conducting activities concerning captured persons.
9. Under the Armed Forces Act 2006, service personnel are bound by the criminal law of England and Wales wherever in the world they are serving. This enables those who commit war crimes to be held to account.
10. The standards of conduct required of UK Armed Forces are, and have always been, in accordance with relevant international law, and the domestic criminal law that applies to United Kingdom forces at all times. Allegations of unlawful conduct by personnel

15. The PSVI International Conference was postponed in the light of the global COVID-19 pandemic. We will revisit plans for a conference once the international situation allows.
16. In collaboration with the British Red Cross, the UK has also published a joint open pledge on responding to sexual and gender-based violence in armed conflict, in connection with the 33rd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.
17. More generally, the United Kingdom published its national a(R)-2(e)4(d)-9( )10(C)-2(ross )11(a)4(

War Crimes/crimes against humanity referral guidelines. It too can be found on the government's website.

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

Not applicable.

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

21. The United Kingdom National Committee on International Humanitarian Law meets biannually to develop further, and disseminate understanding of, international humanitarian law policy and practice nationally and to discuss ways to encourage international partners to do likewise, particularly with the Commonwealth. The UK National Committee on International Humanitarian Law also encourages the dissemination and training of international humanitarian law to the armed forces, police, civil servants (practitioner level training courses by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office), teachers, the judiciary, the medical profession, journalists and others as necessary. The UK has also promoted the formation of national International Humanitarian Law committees and has offered practical assistance to those wishing to do so.
22. In July 2018, the Terms of Reference<sup>10</sup> of the UK National Committee were published on the government's website. A dedicated webpage<sup>11</sup> on IHL was also published, providing an overview of the topic, including relevant principles, treaties and institutions.
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of the judiciary, government representatives, military officers, Parliamentarians and journalists.

26. In January 2020 the UK National IHL Committee joined the new Online Digital Community for National IHL Committees.

27. The Committee has continued to be kept informed, and training provided, throughout the period of the coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions.

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

28. In April 2018, the United Kingdom endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration. This underlined the UK's political support for the protection of schools and the continuation of education during armed conflict. A cross Government working group was subsequently set up to consider reporting and administrative actions arising from endorsement. The UK has encouraged relevant international partners to endorse the Declaration and we continue to champion the Declaration through bilateral and multilateral engagements.

29. In January 2019, the UK published a Joint Service Publication<sup>12</sup> on Human Security in Military Operations and guidance on how the UK military can better liaise with

32. The United Kingdom continued to engage on weaponry matters. This included discussions in arms control fora around Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems and the use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas.
33. The UK participated in the 5<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Red Cross and Red Crescent Conference on International Humanitarian Law, held in Kigali, Rwanda, in June 2019. A delegation was also sent to the 33<sup>rd</sup> International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, held in Geneva, Switzerland, in December 2019. At the latter, among other activities, the United Kingdom co-sponsored a side event on the protection of media professionals in armed conflicts.