



College of Europe
Collège d'Europe



Natolin



ICRC

Standing Up for IHL:

Building a Common Understanding Around the Law that Protects in War

Detailed programme

25th Bruges Colloquium on IHL
Bruges, 13-14 November 2025

Overview of the programme

All sessions will take place at the College of Europe (Dijver 11, 8000 Bruges), in-person and in English

Thursday 13 November 2025, 08:45 - 18:00 (CET)

Opening Statements

First session – Introductory session

What Should Political Support for IHL Look Like in Practice?

Second session – Panel 1

Standing Up for Humanity through the Protection of Civilian Infrastructure

Third session – Panel 2

Standing Up for a Meaningful Protection of Medical Facilities: Implementing Legal Safeguards

Fourth session – Panel 3

Standing Up for IHL in Cyber Operations: Strengthening Protection in Digitalized Warfare



Friday 14 November 2025, 09:00 - 13:00 (CET)

Fifth session – Panel 4

Standing Up for IHL at Sea: Taking Stock of Protection Challenges in Contemporary Naval Warfare

Sixth session – Panel 5

Standing Up for IHL Before, During, and After Conflict: Creating Pathways for Peace

Day 1 – Thursday, 13 November 2025

08:45 - 18:00 (CET)

08:45 - 09:15 WELCOME AND REGISTRATION

09:15 - 09:45 OPENING STATEMENTS

- **Eloi Fillion**, Head of Delegation, ICRC Delegation to the EU, NATO and the Kingdom of Belgium
- **Gilles Carbonnier**, Vice-President of the ICRC
- **Federica Mogherini**, Rector of the College of Europe

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09:45 - 10:45 INTRODUCTORY SESSION: WHAT SHOULD POLITICAL SUPPORT FOR IHL LOOK LIKE IN PRACTICE?

- **Judge Theodor Meron**, Professor at Oxford University and NYU Law School, former President of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY)
- **Kajsa Ollongren**, EU Special Representative for Human Rights, International Humanitarian Law and International Criminal Justice
- **John Swords**, Legal Adviser and Director of the Office of Legal Affairs, NATO HQ

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10:45 - 11:15 *Coffee break*

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11:15 - 12:45 PANEL 1: STANDING UP FOR HUMANITY THROUGH THE PROTECTION OF CIVILIAN INFRASTRUCTURE

- **Protecting civilian infrastructure by good faith application of the concept of “military objective” under IHL**
 - Arjen Vermeer, Assistant Professor of Military Law, Netherlands Defence Academy
- **Good practices to ensure the protection of civilian infrastructure: a military perspective**
 - Brigadier Joanna Bowen, Head of Operational Law, British Army, HM Forces
- **Legal issues relating to targeting of dual-use objects**
 - Laurent Gisel, Head of the Arms and Conduct of Hostilities Unit, ICRC

Chaired by Julia Grignon, Professor, Paris-Panthéon-Assas University & Member of the French National Committee on Implementation of IHL

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12:45 - 14:15 *Lunch (Auditorium A and B)*

Day 1 – Thursday, 13 November 2025

08:45 - 18:00 (CET)

14:15 - 15:45 **PANEL 2: STANDING UP FOR A MEANINGFUL PROTECTION OF MEDICAL FACILITIES: IMPLEMENTING LEGAL SAFEGUARDS**

- **Specific protection of medical facilities: what does the law say?**
 - Dr. Nele Verlinden, Senior Legal Advisor, ICRC Delegation to the EU, NATO and the Kingdom of Belgium
- **Hospitals misused for military purposes: addressing the loss of specific protection in military practice**
 - Brigadier Lisa Ferris, Defence Advisor to the United Kingdom & Senior Military Representative to NATO & EU, New Zealand Defence Force
- **Medical facilities under attack: implementing safeguards to prevent humanitarian consequences**
 - Claude Maon, Intersectional Legal Director, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)

Chaired by Silvia Delgado, Deputy Director General for United Nations and Multilateral Affairs, Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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15:45 - 16:15 *Coffee break*

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16:15 - 17:45 **PANEL 3: STANDING UP FOR IHL IN CYBER OPERATIONS: STRENGTHENING PROTECTION IN DIGITALIZED WARFARE**

- **How IHL rules impose limits on cyber operations during armed conflict: a State perspective**
 - Marie van Hoofstat, Legal Advisor, Belgian Ministry of Defense Cyber Command
- **The legal implications of the military use of civilian ICT infrastructure, and the involvement of civilians in cyber operations during armed conflict**
 - Dr. Heather Harrison Dinniss, Senior Lecturer, Swedish Defense University
- **The protection of civilians and other protected persons from the spread of harmful information during armed conflict**
 - Chantal Joris, Senior Legal Officer, ARTICLE 19

Chaired by Laurent Gisel, Head of the Arms and Conduct of Hostilities Unit, ICRC

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18:30 - 20:30 *Reception at the Bruges City Hall (Burg 12, 8000 Bruges)*

Day 2 – Friday, 14 November 2025

09:00 - 13:00 (CET)

09:00 - 09:15 WELCOME

09:15 - 10:45 **PANEL 4: STANDING UP FOR IHL AT SEA: TAKING STOCK OF PROTECTION CHALLENGES IN CONTEMPORARY NAVAL WARFARE**

- **Think before you sink: the position of merchant vessels under the law of naval warfare**
– Tom Ruys, Professor of International Law, Ghent University
- **The humanitarian impact of naval warfare on land and at sea**
– Commander Peggy McGregor, Head of the Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC) Office, Legal Department, French Ministry of Armed Forces
- **Protection of the natural environment at sea during armed conflict: the law and the practicalities**
– Alexander Lott, Researcher Professor, Norwegian Centre for the Law of the Sea, University of Tromsø - The Arctic University of Norway

Chaired by Romina Morello, Legal Advisor on the Global IHL Initiative, ICRC

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10:45 - 11:15 *Coffee break*

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11:15 - 12:45 **PANEL 5: STANDING UP FOR IHL BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER CONFLICT: CREATING PATHWAYS FOR PEACE**

- **How respect for IHL can support peace processes: enabling dialogue, building and creating space for mediation and reconciliation**
– Itonde Kakoma, President and CEO, Interpeace
- **Disarmament treaties and their contribution to lasting peace: the importance of continued adherence**
– Frank Meeussen, Deputy-Director for Arms Control, Disarmament and Non-Proliferation, Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- **IHL obligations beyond active hostilities and their impact on post-conflict recovery**
– Romina Morello, Legal Advisor on the Global IHL Initiative, ICRC

Chaired by Vaios Koutrouli, Professor of International Law, Université libre de Bruxelles

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12:45 - 13:00 CONCLUDING REMARKS