

International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights

HELP

Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals
Council of Europe



INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS HELP ONLINE COURSE

Duration : 12 hours

Available for free on the CoE HELP
e-learning platform

Statement of Accomplishment

START COURSE 

Council of Europe | 2024
Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals (HELP) Programme

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Human Rights and Rule of Law Training
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Background

In today's interconnected world, where conflicts occur in several parts of the world and also on European soil, legal practitioners play a crucial role in **upholding justice, promoting accountability, and safeguarding the rights of individuals** affected by armed conflicts and crises.

The contemporary legal landscape is marked by intricate challenges arising from armed conflicts, humanitarian crises, and human rights abuses. European countries are signatories to numerous international treaties and conventions governing human rights and humanitarian affairs. It is incumbent upon legal professionals to ensure compliance with these obligations, both at the domestic and international levels. By fostering expertise in international humanitarian law (IHL) and international human rights law (HRL), **legal practitioners can contribute to upholding their countries' commitments under international law and promoting a culture of respect for human dignity**. Moreover, by promoting adherence to legal norms, legal professionals can contribute to preventing future violations and fostering sustainable peace and justice.

Since February 2022, Ukraine has faced the Russian Federation's brutal and unprovoked military aggression. As gross violations of IHL and IHRL are committed by the Russian military forces and other armed groups controlled by the said state on Ukrainian soil, there is a strong need for training of European legal practitioners (prosecutors, investigators, lawyers, academics and students) on (i) **IHL** - the legal framework applicable to situations of armed conflict and occupation and which aims, for humanitarian reasons, to limit the effects of the said conflict and (ii) related standards of the **IHRL**, and in particular the ECHR, as the protection afforded does not cease in the case of armed conflict, as confirmed by the ICJ and ECtHR. Aligned with the Committee of Ministers' decision CM/Del/Dec(2022)1442/2.3, it emphasises the prevention of impunity and further violations.

Training on international humanitarian law and human rights is not only justified but imperative in the current context. By equipping legal professionals with the **knowledge, skills, and tools** necessary to **address complex legal challenges, uphold human rights, and promote accountability**, such initiatives contribute to the advancement of justice, peace, and respect for human dignity within European societies and beyond.

About the HELP course

The course unfolds how human rights law continues to apply in situations of armed conflict alongside international humanitarian law – a special regime in public international law designed to protect the basic values of humanity during the war. It explains the interplay between the two branches of law, exploring how they are applied in practice when it comes to key human rights, such as right to life, the absolute prohibition of torture and other forms of ill-treatment, right to liberty, right to a fair trial and so forth. The course pays special

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attention to the implementation of human rights law and international humanitarian law at the domestic and international levels, as well as to the ways of ensuring accountability for their violation. It also presents the relevant case-law of the European Court of Human Rights and international criminal tribunals.

This HELP course was developed in 2024 by the Council of Europe HELP programme, within the framework of the Project "HELP (Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals) for Ukraine, including during wartime", implemented as a part of the Council of Europe Action Plan for Ukraine "Resilience, Recovery and Reconstruction"(2023-2026).

Target audience

The course is primarily addressed to legal and justice professionals (judges, prosecutors, lawyers) wishing to enhance their knowledge on international humanitarian law and its interplay with human rights law. The course can also be used by anyone interested in the topic.

Course outline

The course has an introductory module and 13 substantive modules:

1	Introduction to IHL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is IHL? • IHL and other branches of international law
2	Legal Framework <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview • Sources in international law, including IHL • Soft Law • Challenges ahead
3	Scope of Application <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ratione Temporis • Ratione Loci • Ratione Personae • Ratione Materiae
4	Core Principles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fundamental principles • Operational principles for the conduct of war victims • IHL-IHRL interplay
5	Implementation and Enforcement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who should implement and enforce IHL? • What do IHL implementation and enforcement entail? – Preparation; Oversight; Accountability
6	Interplay between IHL and IHRL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main differences • Applicability of IHRL in times of conflict • Complementarity

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7	Right to Life <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whose life is protected? • Whose life is not protected? • When is a state responsible for the protection of the right to life? • Obligations related to the protection of the right to life
8	Prohibition of Torture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prohibition of ill-treatment • Specific cases
9	Right to Liberty <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Security grounds for deprivation of liberty • International armed conflicts (IACs) – prisoners of war • IACs – Civilians • Non-international armed conflicts (NIACs)
10	Right to a Fair Trial <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction • Legal framework • Fair trial guarantees • Fair trial and international criminal courts
11	Protecting Media Actors during Armed Conflict <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal framework • Attacks against media actors • Detention and media actors
12	Right to Property <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction • International armed conflict (IAC) • Non-International armed conflict (NIAC) • Property-related war crimes
13	Protecting People Displaced During or Fleeing Armed Conflicts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection under IHL • Protection from refoulement • International protection in the asylum context • Temporary protection

How to access the course

The course is freely available in self-learning format on the [CoE HELP e-learning platform](#). Those who complete it in self-learning format can obtain an electronic 'Statement of accomplishment'. To access the course, you need to have a HELP account. If you haven't created one yet, you can sign up [here](#) - it only takes a few minutes.

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