IHL, Human Rights, and Ethics: The Medical Mission

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ICRC/RC/RC Movement

National Societies

American Red Cross

Red Cross

Red Crescent

Syrian Arab Red Crescent

Myanmar Red Cross Society

Palestine Red Crescent Society
ICRC around the World

- Delegations in over 70 countries
- Activities in more than 80 countries
- Over 14,000 employees
- 2015 field budget: $1.6 Billion
IHL in Context
What is IHL?
- Rules established by treaty or customary law aiming to attenuate the effects of armed conflict.
  - Protects people
  - Restricts *how* wars are fought

When does IHL Apply?
- Applies during times of armed conflict.
  - International armed conflict
  - Non-International armed conflict
  - IAC
Scope of Application

International human rights law & Ethics

Art. 3

API
GC I-IV
Art. 3

National law

Internal conflict

CIHL

Art. 3

CIHL

CIHL

Non-International

International

Tensions or Disturbances

CONFLICT

PEACE
Basic Principles of IHL

1) Military necessity
2) Distinction
3) Proportionality
4) Precaution
5) Humanity
   (limitations on means and methods of warfare)
IHL and Medical Care

- Health-care personnel, facilities and medical transports must be respected by all.

- Impartial medical care must be provided to the wounded and sick.

- Safe access to patients, facilities and equipment shall not be unduly impeded.

- Health-care personnel should be identified by internationally recognized symbols.

- Health-care personnel shall never be punished for executing their duties in compliance with legal and ethical norms.
Human Rights

• **Availability**: functioning public health and health-care facilities, goods and services must be available in sufficient quantity.
• **Accessibility**: facilities, goods & services must be accessible.
• **Acceptability**: facilities, goods & services should also respect medical ethics.
• **Good quality**: be scientifically and medically appropriate and of good quality.
• **Non-discrimination**: no discrimination on any grounds.
• **Participation**: The beneficiaries of health care services, should have a voice in the design and implementation of health policies which affect them.
• **Accountability**: Duty bearers should be held accountable for meeting human rights obligations in the area of public health.
• **Underlying determinants**: The right to health encompasses not only health care but also the underlying determinants of health such as adequate sanitation and safe drinking water and adequate housing.
# IHL v. Human Rights

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IHL</th>
<th>Human Rights</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obligates all parties and individuals involved in an armed conflict</td>
<td>Obligates States only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applies only in armed conflict</td>
<td>Applies at all times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulates the conduct of hostilities (attacks, types of weapons, etc)</td>
<td>Does not address conduct of hostilities</td>
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**Re: Medical Care**

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<tr>
<td>Protects the wounded, sick, medical personnel and medical facilities from direct attack</td>
<td>Guarantees individual access to adequate healthcare facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requires medical personnel to respect medical ethics</td>
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Global Medical Ethics in Context

Refugee Law

Right to Resort to Force

Laws governing Diplomatic Relations

International Humanitarian Law

Human Rights Law

Laws governing State Responsibility

Global Medical Ethics

Environmental Law

Laws governing Air and Space

Laws governing Economic Relations

Laws governing the peaceful settlement of conflicts

Laws governing international organizations
Relationship between Law & Ethics
Ethical Principles of Health Care in times of Armed Conflict and other Emergencies
General Principles

Preserve human physical and mental health and to alleviate suffering.

Act in accordance with international & national law, ethical principles their conscience.

Ethical principles of health care do not change in times of armed conflict.

Never accept acts of torture or any other form of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

Provide necessary care with humanity. Respect dignity of patients. No discrimination.
Relations with Patients

• Act in the best interest of patients.
• Render immediate attention and requisite care to the best of ability.
• No distinction between patients, except in respect of decisions based upon need and resources.
• Respect patients’ right to confidentiality and patient’s privacy.
Cultural Differences to Medical Ethics

• Most graduating medical-school students will swear to some form of the oath.

• 24% of medical schools administered the oath in 1928

• Nearly 100% of medical schools administer it today

Hippocrates lived in the 5th Century B.C., he is known as the father of medicine.
1993 Survey of 150 U.S. and Canadian Medical Schools

- 14% of modern oaths prohibit euthanasia
- 11% hold covenant with a deity
- 8% foreswear abortion
- 3% forbid sexual contact with patients
- Above are all maxims held sacred in the classical version of the Hippocratic Oath
Humanitarian Access and Safe Zones: A Case Study

**Main IHL Rule:**

- Impartial humanitarian activities undertaken in situations of armed conflict are subject to the consent of the parties to the conflict concerned. Under IHL, the parties to the conflict must consent to such activities when the needs of the population under their control are not met.

- Once impartial humanitarian relief schemes have been agreed to, the parties to the armed conflict as well as all States which are not a party to the armed conflict must allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded passage of these relief schemes, subject to their right of control.
Humanitarian Access in Syria