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Armed Conflicts: The Geneva Conventions turn 75 – What can we celebrate and How can we honor them?

On the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the adoption of the Geneva Conventions, which are confronting contexts that attempt to undermine their essence, the National Consultative Commission on Human Rights (CNCDDH), as [National Commission for the Implementation of International Humanitarian Law](#), wishes to highlight the essential nature of these instruments designed to protect individuals affected by armed conflicts and the role that France can play in promoting and ensuring their respect.

Ratified by all countries around the world, the 1949 Geneva Conventions (and their 1977 Additional Protocols) remain today the fundamental cornerstone of international humanitarian law, the law applicable during armed conflict.

While contemporary conflicts undeniably demonstrate the difficulty of achieving full application, and despite evidence of massive violations, respect for international humanitarian law is also a reality. Every time a humanitarian organization accesses civilian populations in need to ensure their supply of food or healthcare, every time a family separated due to conflict is reunited, every time the wounded and sick are taken in and treated, every time the civilian population is shielded from hostilities, every time prisoners are not subjected to public curiosity or are released, every time a hospital and its staff are respected and protected, or every time a military objective is not placed nearby, a provision of the Geneva Conventions is being implemented.

Seventy-five years on, these Conventions remain relevant and a fundamental reference in armed conflict situations. It is essential that all parties to armed conflict interpret them in good faith, in a manner consistent with their letter and spirit. Current conflicts demonstrate that they are not obsolete, but

suffer only from a lack of political will to implement them.

“It is fundamental that States, including France, strongly reaffirm their commitment to ‘respect and ensure respect’ for the Geneva Conventions in all circumstances, in accordance with common Article 1. This is about our shared humanity. This requirement must remain ours in the name of those who endure the consequences of armed conflicts and those who come to their aid on the front lines – those who, without the existence of the Geneva Conventions, would find themselves in even more extreme situations. Respect for these Conventions is also the only guarantee towards building a lasting peace,” stated Jean-Marie Burguburu, President of the CNCDDH.

The CNCDDH supports all measures aimed at ensuring the widest possible dissemination of international humanitarian law and its reinforcement and emphasizes France's role in this regard. It also takes this opportunity to reiterate its recommendation to French authorities to accept the competence of the International Fact-Finding Commission provided for in Article 90 of Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions. Furthermore, the CNCDDH encourages France, when competent, to systematically prosecute and judge those responsible for serious violations of the Geneva Conventions, which constitute war crimes.

[The 2024 edition of the French Republic's Human Rights Prize "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity"](#) will focus on "the protection of the rights of civilians in any situation related to an armed conflict," to highlight that international humanitarian law is neither a promise nor an act of charity, but is realized through concrete actions that make a real difference for the individuals it protects.