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Geneva Conventions 60 years
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Sixty years ago the universally recognized Geneva Conventions which are the cornerstone of International Humanitarian Law were adopted. Haunted by the ghastly memories of the Second World War the States Parties thereby declared their refusal to see those unprecedented horrors and atrocities witnessed again. The concept of "total war" was no longer acceptable and a legal framework had to be established to place limits on the barbarity of war and how it is waged.

Today the Conventions have an image problem being acknowledged by the media only when they have been violated. Some critics have even gone further and suggested that the Conventions are approaching retirement age and are no longer suited for the kind of temporary wars that pit regular armies against armed groups, and in an era when most wars are fought within states, not between them. No doubt there is room for improvement and this should be our work in the years to come. The Conventions still protect the victims of war and are as necessary and relevant today as they were 60 years ago. They have saved numerous lives, alleviated much suffering, given comfort to thousands of prisoners of war, helped reunite millions of families and contributed to the restoration of peace.

Unfortunately they have not been able to prevent millions of innocent people from falling victim to the conflicts that have ravaged our planet. We deeply deplore the persistent violations of the International Humanitarian Law. In today's conflicts the important distinctions between combatants and civilians have often become blurred, and children and other vulnerable groups have become the targets of the conflict. It's comforting to notice that these violations no longer pass in silence but are being exposed under the pressure of public opinion.

Albert Einstein once said and I quote " the world is a dangerous place to live; not because of the people who are evil, but because of the people who don't do anything about it. The anniversary of the four Geneva Conventions is a time to take stock and to promote the implementation of international humanitarian law in all armed conflicts and to stress the importance of full compliance with the provisions of the Conventions. The 194 High Contracting

parties as stipulated in article 1 of all the GC should undertake to respect and to ensure respect for the present Conventions in all circumstances.

The obligation to respect IHL cannot be fulfilled without domestic implementation. States need to adopt all the legislative, regulatory and practical measures that are necessary to incorporate IHL into domestic law and practice. For example in Jordan the JRC act of law was modified at the beginning of this year to cover the use and protection of the Red Crescent and the Red Cross emblems and any other emblem mentioned in a treaty where Jordan is party to it.

Dissemination is also called for. It leads to an increased knowledge of IHL and is clearly a prerequisite to better respect for the law.

States should promote respect for human dignity in all circumstances, compassion for those who suffer and to sparing civilians the agony of war, and for neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian action during armed conflicts.

Bridging the widening gap between existing international norms and respect for them should be the main objective and the issue should be put more forcefully on the agenda of the international community.

We know that “There are no humanitarian solutions to humanitarian problems” so while the Geneva Conventions provide a fundamental legal framework for the needed restraints to prevent human suffering in armed conflict, the political will to fully implement them remains insufficient.

Today when we should talk about the strength of the law, it is the law of the strong that prevails. Then we claim that we all stand equal before the law whereas reality takes us back to George Orwell's Animal Farm novel in 1945, 5 days after the birth of the conventions when one of the commandments was modified to read that all animals are equal but some animals are more equal than others. This equation should not be valid in our Human Kingdom. The law should be respected and we should all be equal before it. The world should be reminded of very essential values like equality, justice and peace. It does not take long to discover a universal common denominator for all human beings: people just want peace and security; they want to live their normal lives without fear of conflict, hunger, discrimination or injustice. They want safe jobs, secure access to food, water, health care, and

resources which are essential for a decent and meaningful life, worthy of human beings, and most of all they need your voice.

Thank you.