

## **Promoting international humanitarian law in higher education and universities in the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States**

Any attempt to spread knowledge of international humanitarian law (the law of armed conflict) and its corresponding obligations among the military and political authorities of a country must be matched by an effort to introduce the subject into academic programmes, where the subject will be taught and studied in greater depth.

Today, international humanitarian law is a minor component of the academic curriculum at universities in the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), constituting only a small part of the public international law course offered at leading law faculties. Until very recently, although the relevant treaties and instruments of international humanitarian law existed in the Russian language, they were not readily available in libraries and were very seldom the subject of academic study and research.

At a time when economic difficulties and a lack of public funds are inducing a growing number of students and teaching staff to shun academic disciplines without immediate market value, support is needed to establish humanitarian law among regularly studied subjects - particularly if it is ever to gain any prominence in the training of a future political elite and decision-makers.

The ICRC regional delegation in Moscow is therefore currently running a programme for the dissemination of humanitarian law destined for academic circles in the CIS countries. Its primary aims may be described as follows:

***Promoting the inclusion of humanitarian law in the official standard programmes and curricula of target academic departments***, with priority given to faculties of law, international relations and journalism.

Following extensive contacts with the State Committee for Higher Education and the Legal Department of the Presidential Administration

of the Russian Federation, humanitarian law was introduced in 1996 into the Federal Standards for Higher Education for Jurisprudence at post-graduate level (degree for the training of *Specialists*).

In May 1997 the ICRC, together with the UNESCO Chair for Human Rights and Democracy at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO), organized a two-day conference at the University of Kazan on the subject "Dissemination and Promotion of International Humanitarian Law", which was attended by some 30 different law faculties in the Russian Federation and other CIS countries.

In its programme, the ICRC aims to work not only with law departments and faculties, but also with other social science departments. It has in particular initiated cooperation with the Journalism Faculty of Moscow State University, where a new one-semester pilot course on journalists and armed conflict (18 academic hours) was started during the spring semester of 1997 for all the faculty's second-year students. In May 1997, the ICRC financed the participation by a lecturer from the faculty in a three-day conference on the role of the media in reporting armed conflicts, held at Boston University (USA).

Plans are also currently being discussed to set up an interdisciplinary working group of Russian academics to discuss the inclusion of humanitarian law problems in the curricula of other courses of study (e.g. conflictology, sociology of international relations, history).

### ***Developing didactic and documentary tools to support the teaching of international humanitarian law at universities in CIS countries***

Several years ago the ICRC launched a large-scale programme for the translation and publication of specialized ICRC literature. Some 45 titles have meanwhile been issued on almost all aspects of the law, and are being widely distributed free of charge within academic circles.

Plans for the development of textbooks and model humanitarian law curricula for faculties of law and international relations are currently being considered in the various countries. The holding of an open competition for that purpose in Russian academic circles is for instance being discussed with the Department for Humanitarian Education at the Russian Federation's Ministry of Education.

The ICRC is at present also engaged in discussions with the Institute of State and Law of the Russian Academy of Sciences to support the publication and distribution across Russia of a new student textbook on humanitarian law by the academician Professor V.V. Poustagarov.

***Training young Russian university scholars and lecturers to teach humanitarian law***, by organizing advanced courses for them

In August 1996 the ICRC organized a 10-day seminar in Sergiyev Posad which brought together 38 young lecturers from different law and international relations faculties in Russia and other countries of the CIS region. Only a few months later, in the spring semester, several of the region's law faculties set up new specialized courses in humanitarian law (in Saint Petersburg, Cheboksary, Kazan, Baku and Yerevan).

Similar training seminars are planned in Russia in 1997 and 1998 for lecturers of faculties of law and journalism.

***Education and awareness-building among students*** through lectures and other events

Exposés and series of lectures on international humanitarian law are given by ICRC representatives in various academic fora, and a student moot-court competition between law faculties in the region, the De Martens Competition, was held as a pilot project in Moscow from 23 to 27 April 1997. Ten teams from different law faculties in the Russian Federation, the Ukraine and Belarus, each made up of three students and one accompanying faculty member, took part in the competition. For a period of five days, participants were asked to work on diverse international humanitarian law problems in relation to an imaginary conflict situation. The competition proved a great success and ended with a grand finale held at Moscow State University. The University of Saint Petersburg was proclaimed the winner of the 1997 event.

***Promoting cooperation and exchanges in the field of humanitarian law between Russian and specialized Western universities***

The promotion of ties and cooperation between universities in the CIS region and Western counterparts specialized in the teaching of humanitarian law is one of the key aims of the programme. For example, Western experts were invited to participate in and contribute to the seminar in Sergiyev Posad and the De Martens Competition.

One ICRC delegate with a legal background, who is based in Moscow, is currently responsible for coordination of the programme in the CIS

region, backed up by the seven ICRC dissemination delegates based in the northern Caucasus (Russian Federation), Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

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