

NEW ICRC PRODUCTION

**ELECTRONICS AT THE SERVICE
OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW:
THE CD-ROM IHL**

Why a CD ROM-IHL?

A CD-ROM is a small (12-cm) disc which is almost identical to an audio compact disc, except that instead of music it reproduces a text on a computer screen.

Using the CD-ROM IHL one can immediately locate a specific treaty of international humanitarian law (IHL) and all that is related to it amidst thousands of pages, without having to handle and leaf through several books or go looking for works often kept in different places.

It is easy to find one's way around these texts in accordance with one's own research method or association of ideas, without the constraints of a conventional format. There is no difficulty in jumping intuitively from one reference to another: starting with an article, it is possible, for instance, to consult the commentary on it immediately; or, starting with a treaty, to look at any reservations and even the objections to the reservations, while being able to return to the main text at any time.

Moreover, a search can be made on the basis of a whole range of elements (subject, a word from the text, date, country, etc.), which may be combined to obtain an even more precise result. For example:

- starting with a given subject, all related articles ratified by a particular country can be consulted;
- one can call up all the countries bound by a given treaty, with dates of adherence and any reservations or declarations.

Lastly, the data on the CD-ROM can be printed or copied to a file for immediate use in a word-processing system.

In opting for this new technology, the ICRC has taken up one of the most efficient means of disseminating information. The objective is twofold:

- to make available on a single disc a *well-organized and periodically updated set* of key IHL texts (treaties, whether in force or not, and other selected texts);

- to promote *dissemination of IHL*, by providing a practical and attractive tool for consultation.

What does the CD-ROM IHL contain?

- 87 treaties and other texts: the law of The Hague, the law of Geneva and a selection of IHL treaties dating back to 1856;
- the commentaries on the First Geneva Convention of 1929 (in French only), on the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and on their two Additional Protocols of 1977;
- the current situation with regard to signatures, ratifications, accessions and successions, as well as reservations, declarations and objections concerning these treaties.

The user can therefore access treaties and conventions and indeed any useful document dealing with the following subjects: general rules governing the conduct of hostilities, methods and means of warfare, protection of the civilian population against the effects of hostilities, war victims, the protection of cultural property, air warfare, naval warfare, civil war, war crimes, neutrality, the peaceful settlement of disputes, and certain aspects of international human rights law.

For whom is it intended?

First and foremost:

- governments and government departments;
- armed forces;
- all parties to armed conflicts;
- National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies;
- governmental and non-governmental organizations;
- universities, research and training institutions, since the encouragement of new studies in this field is also a way of contributing to the development and dissemination of the law;
- anyone interested in IHL.

How is the CD-ROM used?

It is easy to use and requires no special training, as the user is guided by instructions appearing on the screen. In any case, the CD-ROM IHL comes with a very complete user's manual, which provides precise information if needed.

To be able to use the CD-ROM, the following equipment and software are necessary:

- a microcomputer that is IBM 286/386-compatible with a 640 KB base memory and a hard disk;
- a monochrome or, preferably, a colour monitor with a VGA graphics mode;
- MS-DOS version 3.1 or higher;
- a CD-ROM drive meeting ISO standard 9660 specifications.

A bilingual (*French/English*) version of the CD-ROM IHL is currently available at the price of 480 Swiss francs (400 Swiss francs for members of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement).*

All orders or requests for further information should be addressed to the ICRC's Public Information Division.

* Purchasers of the first edition (1993) will receive a complimentary copy of the update due out in 1994.