

**Office of the President**  
**of the Philippines**  
**Malacañang**

**MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR NO. 179**

**ENJOINING ALL CABINET MEMBERS AND HEADS OF GOVERNMENT-OWNED AND CONTROLLED CORPORATIONS TO OBSERVE THE INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW (IHL) DAY ON AUGUST 12, 2009 AND ACTIVELY SUPPORT AND PARTICIPATE IN THE ACTIVITIES RELATIVE THERETO**

Pursuant to Executive Order No. 134 dated July 31, 1999, all Cabinet Members and heads of government-owned and controlled corporations (GOCCs) are enjoined to support the initiatives lined up for the observance of the **International Humanitarian Law (IHL) Day** on August 12, 2009. The theme for this year's observance is "Geneva Conventions: Pagiging Makatao sa Gitna ng Hidwaan".

Another significantly related event on August 12, 2009, is the world-wide observance of the **60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the 1949 Geneva Conventions**, which is the most universally accepted IHL treaty in the world for having been acceded to or ratified by 194 countries.

In particular, you are hereby enjoined to undertake any, or a combination, of the following activities:

1. During your flag ceremony on August 10, 2009 (Monday), give a brief message on the significance of the 1949 Geneva Conventions. Please find the attached Fact Sheet for your reference;
2. Create a human formation of the letters "IHL" on office grounds by your personnel, or on school grounds by high school/college students after the flag ceremony on August 10, 2009, or in the morning of August 12, 2009. Please refer to the attached sample design of the IHL formation;
3. Mobilize your personnel to join the 2009 Walk for Humanity on August 15, 2009 (Saturday), which will simultaneously start at 3 o'clock in the afternoon at the regional centers nationwide, to be lead by the Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC) in partnership with the Department of Education (DepEd), Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), Commission on Higher Education (CHED), and Armed forces of the Philippines (AFP) and their respective regional offices;

4. Conduct a voluntary blood-letting activity in coordination with the Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC) either on the IHL Day itself (August 12, 2009) or any day in August 2009;
5. Campaign for the proper use of the Red Cross logo by removing its symbol or any imitation thereof on ambulances, signages, first aid kits, etc. Under Republic Act 95, as amended, and the 1949 Geneva Conventions, only members of the Red Cross Movement and the AFP Medical Services may use the symbol;
6. Publicize the observance of IHL Day and the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the 1949 Geneva Conventions by the Philippine Information Agency (PIA) and their regional counterparts and other government media stations, and put up streamers in conspicuous area in your respective offices. Please refer to the attached design;
7. Administer seminars in coordination with PNRC and International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Furthermore, you are encouraged to provide other support that may be deemed necessary to make the celebration more meaningful.

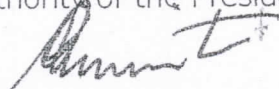
The DFA and the DND, in cooperation with PNRC and ICRC, shall spearhead the implementation of the activities lined up for this celebration, and carry out the necessary coordination among the participating government agencies, bureaus, and GOCCs. Concerned regional offices are likewise urged to hold similar meetings.

As the Chairman of this year's observance, the Secretary of Foreign Affairs shall submit a report to the President, through the Executive Secretary, on the conduct of IHL Day activities. Other Cabinet Members and Heads of GOCCs shall submit their narrative report and photographs to the DFA for consolidation.

This Memorandum Circular shall take effect immediately.

**Manila, Philippines, 06 August 2009.**

By authority of the President:



**EDUARDO R. ERMITA**  
Executive Secretary

# Fact Sheet: The 1949 Four Geneva Conventions

Sixty (60) years ago on August 12, 1949, an international conference of diplomats built on the earlier treaties for the protection of war victims, updating them into four new conventions comprising 429 articles of law, and known as the Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949. These treaties apply in during international armed conflicts and non-international armed conflicts.

Nations that ratify the Geneva Conventions must abide by certain humanitarian principles and impose legal sanctions against those who violate them. Ratifying nations must "enact any legislation necessary to provide effective penal sanctions for persons committing or ordering to be committed any of the grave breaches (violations)" of the Conventions.

Presently, the 1949 Geneva Conventions is the most widely accepted worldwide with 194 countries having ratified or acceded to the treaty. The Republic of the Philippines ratified the same in 1952.

Certain provision of the Geneva Conventions can be seen in Philippine domestic law particularly Republic Act 95 (as amended) the Charter of the Philippine National Red Cross, Republic Act 7610 for the Protection of Children and the Indigenous People's Right Act.

Pending in the Philippine Congress now are bills to penalize serious violations of the Geneva Conventions and also the unauthorized use of the Red Cross, Red Crescent and Red Crystal emblems.

In recent and ongoing armed conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, Georgia, Sri Lanka, Nepal and even the Philippines, warring parties are obliged under the treaty to protect the victims of the conflict.

The **First Geneva Convention** protects soldiers who are *hors de combat* (out of the battle). The 64 articles of the treaty details their application to:

- Wounded and sick soldiers.
- Medical personnel, facilities, and equipment.
- Wounded and sick civilian support personnel accompanying the armed forces.

The **Second Geneva Convention** adapts the protections of the First Geneva Convention to reflect conditions at sea. It protects wounded and sick combatants while on board ship or at sea. Its 63 articles apply to—

- Armed forces members who are wounded, sick, or shipwrecked.
- Hospital ships and medical personnel.

The **Third Geneva Convention** sets out specific rules for the treatment of prisoners of war (POWs). The Convention's 143 articles require that POWs be treated humanely, adequately housed, and receive sufficient food, clothing, and medical care. Prisoners of war may include—

- Members of the armed forces.
- Resistance movements.

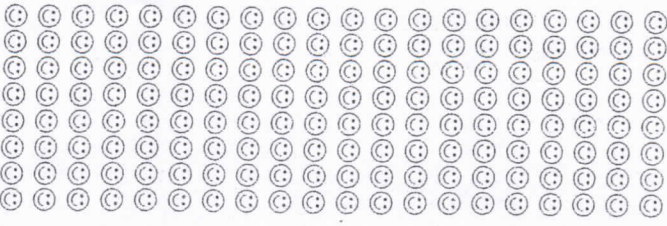
The **Fourth Geneva Convention** has 159 articles which enumerates how to protect civilians in areas of armed conflict and occupied territories.

## Common Article 3 for Non-International Armed Conflicts

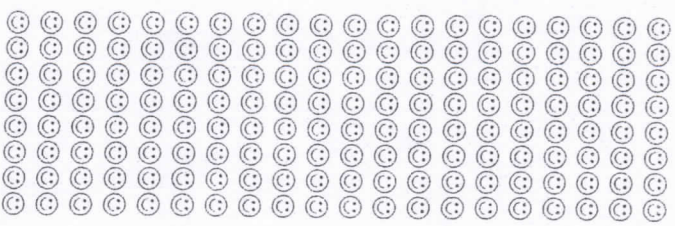
All four Geneva Conventions contain an identical Article 3 extending general coverage to non-international conflicts. Under this article, those who have put down their arms or are out of the conflict due to injury or sickness must be treated humanely, without any adverse discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, social status, or wealth, or any other such criteria. Article 3 specifically prohibits—

- "Violence to life and person, in particular murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture;
- Taking of hostages;
- Outrages upon personal dignity, in particular, humiliating and degrading treatment;
- The passing of sentences and the carrying out of executions without previous judgment pronounced by a regularly constituted court, affording all the judicial guarantees which are recognized as indispensable by civilized peoples."

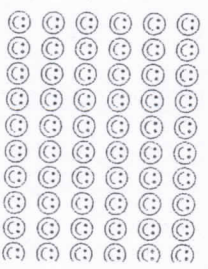
The wounded and sick are also to be collected and cared for. The ICRC or other impartial humanitarian body may offer its services.



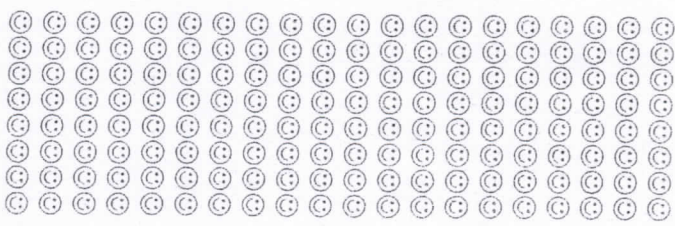
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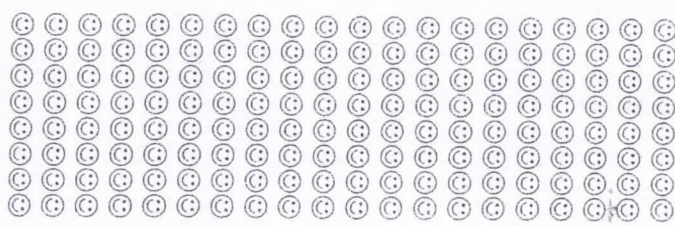
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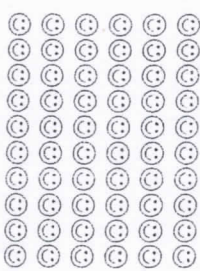
60



160



160



60

760 people

Note: The number of people can be increased / decreased depending on the capacity of agencies / schools / organizations and the size of the letters will adjust accordingly