

OPTIMIZATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS TOWARDS THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

Subakdi^{1*)}, Marina Ery Setiyawati²

^{1,2}Fakultas Hukum, Universitas Pembangunan Nasional “Veteran” Jakarta, Jakarta,
Indonesia

subakdiupn@yahoo.com^{1*)}, marinaerysetiawati@upnvj.ac.id²

Received 10 Sep 2025 • Revised 20 Oct 2025 • Published 3 Nov 2025

Abstract

The International Committee of the Red Cross or ICRC is an international organization that carries out humanitarian missions in the health sector. The ICRC helps international countries that are in criminal conflict to protect the human rights of civilians affected by the conflict. The purpose of this study is that the authors hope to find out the ICRC's optimization of the protection of human rights in the international community. This research uses a literature study research method on the ICRC's optimization of the protection of human rights of the international community in countries that have been given assistance by the ICRC before.

Keywords: ICRC, Protection of Human Rights, Optimization, International Community

INTRODUCTION

The International Committee of the Red Cross or ICRC is an international organization that carries out voluntary humanitarian missions in the field of health. The ICRC is a neutral and independent international organization whose mission is solely humanitarian, namely to protect the lives and dignity of victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence and to provide assistance. The ICRC was first established in 1863 as the precursor to the Geneva Conventions and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

The ICRC's actions are based on the 1949 Geneva Conventions, additional protocols, the Statutes of the ICRC and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and the Resolutions of the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. The ICRC carries out its mission by providing assistance to civilians and members of armed forces affected by war crimes, genocide and other forms of violent conflicts in the health sector. At the initiative of the ICRC, countries recognized and ratified the 1949 Geneva Conventions. The international recognition of the Geneva Conventions has resulted in all Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to support the ICRC in encouraging governments to adapt international humanitarian law to changing circumstances, particularly in relation to the latest developments in equipment and methods of warfare, in order to provide more effective protection and assistance to victims of conflict.

The ICRC will provide assistance in the health sector such as opening emergency posts for first aid, health clinics, emergency hospitals around conflict areas, providing medicines, personnel, and medical equipment, and other assistance. The ICRC program is based on a vision of humanitarian mission that focuses on protecting the human rights of all people regardless of tribe, race, ethnicity, culture and religion. In addition, the ICRC is also in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs or sustainable development goals are a world development agenda that aims for global human welfare. The ICRC is in accordance with SDGs, one of which is in accordance with number 16, namely to achieve peace, justice and strong institutions. The ICRC as an international organization that carries out humanitarian missions helps to realize the conditions of an international community that is peaceful, just, and uphold the human rights values in every society.

Therefore, it is necessary to optimize the ICRC in protecting the human rights of the international community. Given that the ICRC is an institution with a humanitarian mission whose task is to protect human rights that must be upheld and provide assistance to civilians and members of the armed forces affected by the conflict. The ICRC also assists international countries to realize one of the SDGs' agendas to achieve peace, justice and strong institutions.

RESEARCH METHOD

The type of research used in this scientific article is qualitative research using the literature study method. Literature study can be defined as a series of activities related to library data collection methods, reading and recording, and processing research materials. The literature study method is carried out by looking and searching for literature that is already available online and offline in papers, journals, books, and news that has been widespread, as well as information based on relevant institutional reports on the topics discussed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Definition of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is a neutral international organization that upholds humanitarian missions. The ICRC was founded in 1863. The ICRC is the forerunner of the Geneva Conventions, the International Red Cross and Crescent Movement. The ICRC was formed in the midst of the second world war by a commission consisting of Gustave Moynier, Guillaume Henri Dufaur, Louis Apia, Theodore Maunoir and Henry Dunant who formed the International Committee for the Relief of the Wounded and later became the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The duties and functions of the ICRC include providing protection for civilians, providing protection for prisoners of war, restoring family ties, providing medical assistance and operations, and disseminating international humanitarian law.

The legal basis for the ICRC in carrying out its mission as an international organization that is neutral and upholds human rights includes the 1949 Geneva Convention and the 1977 Additional Protocol. The 1949 Geneva Convention as the legal basis for the ICRC in achieving the protection of human rights of the international community has regulated the ICRC in 4 parts of the convention. Geneva Convention 1 concerning the improvement of the condition of wounded and sick members of the armed forces in the emergency battlefield, Geneva Convention 2 concerning the improvement of

the condition of members of the armed forces at sea who are wounded, sick, and shipwreck victims, Geneva Convention 3 concerning the treatment of prisoners of war, and Geneva Convention 4 concerning the protection of civilians in time of war. In addition, the 1977 Additional Protocol as a legal basis also regulates the ICRC into 2 parts. Additional Protocol 1 concerning the protection of victims of international armed disputes, and Additional Protocol 2 concerning the protection of victims of non-international armed disputes.

The ICRC as an international organization that carries out humanitarian missions has principles that must be upheld by all its members. These principles were stated at the 20th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent held in Vienna in 1965. The ICRC principles are humanity, equality, neutrality, independence, volunteerism, unity and universality. The principle of humanity states that the ICRC is a voluntary organization that carries out humanitarian missions in accordance with the call of conscience. The principle of equality states that the ICRC must help all people without discrimination. The principle of neutrality states that the ICRC is a neutral institution and does not involve itself in political, racial, religious or ideological conflicts. The principle of volunteerism states that the ICRC carries out humanitarian missions free of charge and not for profit. The principle of unity states that the ICRC is an institution that must be open to everyone and carry out humanitarian tasks throughout the territory of the State concerned. Then, the last principle is the principle of universality, namely the ICRC is an institution that is present throughout the world.

The ICRC as an international organization that carries out a humanitarian mission to serve and provide free protection of human rights is in accordance with one of the leadership theories, namely the servant leadership theory initiated by Robert Greenleaf. The servant leadership theory is a theory that states that a good leader is a leader who serves around selflessly. Therefore, this is in accordance with the understanding and principles of the ICRC itself which states that it is an international organization that carries out humanitarian missions free of charge and does not see any differences. The ICRC is an international organization that sincerely serves the community in order to achieve the fairest protection of human rights for the international community.

B. ICRC Working Mechanism

As an organization whose main focus is implementation humanitarian action, the ICRC cannot be separated from its role as implementer, maintainer, and facilitator in every activity in which it is involved. The existence of ICRC is seen as contributing to the resolution of conflicts in various parts of the world. The ICRC has mechanisms to protect life, health, and dignity of all people affected by domestic conflict, civil, and military conflicts.

The ICRC takes a supportive, protective and preventive approach in its operations. Then as a neutral body, the ICRC plays an important role in every situation it is involved in. By its right as a committee of the Red Cross, the ICRC reserves the right to adopt ideas for the benefit of humanity in accordance with the ICRC's principles of impartiality and independence. In addition, it is their duty to uphold the Red Cross principles and pay tribute to international Red Cross organizations.

However, in carrying out their role, the ICRC is not free from all smoothness and obstacles, internal and external, as will be explained below.

1. The Rohingya Conflict in Myanmar

The conflict in Rakhine in Myanmar has been going on for a long time and resulted in material losses, injuries and casualties lives between authorities Myanmar security, the Rakhine people and the Rohingya ethnic group itself Therefore, as an international non-governmental organization that plays a role in international humanitarian law and the international mission to protect victims of conflict, as stipulated in the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the 1977 Additional Protocols, it is the duty of the ICRC to protect victims of conflict in Rakhine state based on humanitarian law.

The ICRC as a non-governmental organization, has structures and procedures, as well as beliefs and goals related to humanity. The ICRC has played an important role due to its history and experience and it should be noted that the ICRC is often involved in armed wars and humanitarian crises. The ICRC also has the exclusive right to provide humanitarian assistance to all refugees without active intervention.

As mentioned earlier, the international non-governmental organization can make a difference in any armed conflict by providing humanitarian aid and assistance, as the ICRC is not affiliated with any government, is not associated with politics, and is not tied to the ruling government of any bound country. Known for its global humanitarian efforts, the ICRC focuses on accommodating reinforcements

to people caught in crisis. Their approach involves practical programs designed to improve lives in difficult situations.

When the ICRC first became involved in the Rakhine conflict, they strengthened their role by working closely with the government, which enabled them to expand their assistance and make a broader impact in the region. The ICRC was able to contact communities (Rohingya and Rakhine ethnic groups) especially in Rakhine. Then, the ICRC and PMM strengthened their capacity to deal with crises caused by hostilities and disseminated information on international humanitarian law. In addition, the ICRC assisted the wounded to be taken to hospital by providing logistical, medical and evacuation assistance. Other implementations in 2012 focused on providing clean drinking water to refugees, installing water tanks and hand pumps, and improving sanitation and hygiene in refugee camps. The ICRC provided family liaison services for refugees when needed.

In 2013, Myanmar's Ministry of Health worked with the ICRC to improve health care for an estimated 636,000 Muslim and neighboring Rakhine residents, as well as internally displaced people in Sittwe and five other townships. A total of 183 facilities and 282 midwives affiliated with the Ministry of Health continue to serve patients with financial, material, rehabilitation infrastructure and logistical support from the ICRC. Furthermore, the ICRC continued to promote and train on the importance of applying international humanitarian law in conflict settings. The ICRC and PMM continue to develop the skills of volunteers to improve skills in responding to the needs of people affected by conflict. On the economic front, the ICRC successfully encouraged the economic recovery of several Muslim families through its cash-for-work program, in which the ICRC financed them to farm, and become self-sufficient.

In the same year, internally displaced people in Sittwe and five other townships, as well as some 636,000 Muslims living in nearby Rakhine, received improved health services thanks to close cooperation between the Myanmar Ministry of Health and the ICRC. ICRC patients continue to receive financial, material, logistical and rehabilitation infrastructure support from a total of 183 Ministry of Health facilities and 282 midwives. The ICRC continues to disseminate information and disseminate information on the importance of applying international humanitarian law in times of conflict. The ICRC and PMM empowered volunteers to increase their capacity to respond to the needs of people affected by violence. By financing their farms through a cash-for-work program, the ICRC was able to provide financial assistance to many Muslim households and restore their self-reliance.

Injured children and patients in Rakhine and Kachin received better treatment in hospitals in late 2014 as a result of improvements to hospital infrastructure, water supply and hygiene carried out by the ICRC. After numerous attacks in March, PMM and ICRC evacuated people from Rakhine for medical treatment. The refugees received training for a better economy and also received supplies and scholarships from the ICRC. When prison authorities follow ICRC advice, prisoners are treated better in prisons and labor camps. In order to discuss ICRC police and military standards that adapt international humanitarian law in their duties, Myanmar police and military have taken part in national workshops and international conferences.

The ICRC worked to assist refugees and local residents in Rakhine State in 2015 following Cyclone Komen. The ICRC with the cooperation of PMM provided assistance in the form of supplies, water and food. With full support from the ICRC, health services were improved, and those with disabilities were rehabilitated at ICRC support facilities. Detainees now have access to clean water and sanitation facilities, reducing their health hazards. The ICRC provided financial assistance, seeds, equipment, and training to help armed government-controlled Rakhine people improve their living standards in the next year. New technicians were added to the prison to provide more comfort for prisoners. In accordance with ICRC recommendations. As such, the ramp-up accelerated this year as threats and turbulence delayed the ICRC's aid program.

As the level of violence in Rakhine escalated in 2017, PMM and the ICRC intensified efforts to assist victims. In addition, the ICRC also sought to assist those internally displaced by the Myanmar military's counter-offensive against ARSA. The ICRC works closely with UNHCR to provide assistance to internally displaced persons or refugees traveling to Myanmar. Even when necessary, the ICRC provides logistical and administrative support.

Thanks to the support of Indonesia and ASEAN, the ICRC is the only organization allowed to enter the battle zone in Rakhine. Since 2017, the Burmese government has banned humanitarian organizations from entering the country to help victims in Rakhine state. As a result, the ICRC's mission has become increasingly difficult in 2018. The organization continues to monitor Rohingya movements with local authorities and remains vigilant in case of conflict. The ICRC continued to provide humanitarian assistance by providing logistics, sanitation, food, clean water and donations.

The ICRC provided humanitarian assistance from at least August 2017 to June 2018, feeding 280,000 people and providing food and basic necessities to 216,000 households, including medical kits, mosquito nets, blankets, tarpaulins, ORS, etc. 800,000 liters of water from the ICRC for those in need in Myanmar, particularly for refugees in the Rakhine region. A total of 13,200 people received financial assistance grants and 10,000 people also received clean and hygienic latrines. The grants received are used as capital for their future independence.

2. Humanitarian Crisis in Syria

The ICRC's role in the humanitarian crisis in Syria is not limited to its main task as a humanitarian agency, but also plays a role in negotiations and cooperation with other international organizations. The activities carried out by the ICRC, which are usually limited to humanitarian activities, this time are involved in armed conflict. This time, the ICRC is involved in the armed conflict, so that the ICRC is involved in ceasefire activities and others. In addition, the ICRC also promotes understanding of and compliance with international humanitarian law. The ICRC's operational activities support its legal activities. The ICRC monitors the application of international humanitarian law, the day-to-day problems of victims of armed conflict, initiates the drafting of new laws, and assists vulnerable populations.

The ICRC's role in Syria has provided many positive responses to the mental development of the war-torn population. The ICRC's duties include:

1. Providing basic needs
2. Conducting prisoner visits
3. Reuniting lost families
4. Offering technical assistance
5. Evacuating and registering victims
6. Conducting investigations and surveys
7. Protecting children and women
8. Promoting international humanitarian law and providing training

As mentioned above, the ICRC participated in the ceasefire. Jacob Kellenberger, former president of the ICRC, traveled to Syria to discuss with warring factions about access to detainees and advocated for a daily ceasefire so that the organization could carry out its mission effectively. James visited Russia and the United States and requested assistance from the warring parties in order to achieve the desired ceasefire.

In the hope that the parties to the conflict would change their policies, the ICRC engaged in political talks with them rather than humanitarian diplomacy. In 2014, ICRC President Peter Maurer visited Bashar al-Assad twice to meet with prominent Syrian figures and ask the Syrian government for a ceasefire. This was just one of the initiatives the organization undertook. Two hours per day allows the ICRC to visit projects overseen by the ICRC and SARCs as well as combat zones, SARCs, and victims.

To maximize humanitarian assistance and better meet their needs, the ICRC has also always been committed to coordinate its efforts with those of the UN and other humanitarian actors. The development of organizations dedicated to refugee assistance and protection under the auspices of the UN reflects the framework of cooperation between the ICRC and other agencies. In 1999, the UN's Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) established an organization known as the "Collaborative Response" with the following "Collaborative Response" using a cluster approach. Changes made by the IASC to improve humanitarian assistance cover a range of topics, including funding, coordination and capacity. The UN Office for the Coordinator of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), which oversees all global humanitarian initiatives, including funding, organizes the IASC. If they have collaborated with UN organizations, humanitarian organizations or other agencies working in the field will receive funding.

The ICRC as an NGO that works in the humanitarian field, especially in armed conflicts, cannot necessarily move freely and be involved in armed conflicts anywhere. The activities carried out by the ICRC, despite having legal force and a strong mandate from international law, cannot be denied that it has encountered obstacles in carrying out its duties, especially in Syria. Each conflict varies in intensity and motive. This is a challenge for the ICRC. Sometimes countries consider the ICRC to have violated their sovereignty, which no one, including the ICRC, has the right to violate, especially when it comes to their own internal affairs.

The obstacles began when the ICRC could not always move freely and get involved in violent conflicts everywhere as a non-governmental organization working in the humanitarian sector, especially in armed conflicts. It is undeniable that the ICRC faces various challenges in carrying out its duties,

particularly in Syria, even though its decisions are final and subject to a strict international legal mandate. Each battle has its own unique intensity and objectives. The ICRC faces difficulties from this. States sometimes think that the ICRC has overstepped its sovereign bounds, which no one, not even the ICRC, has the right to do, especially when it comes to its own internal matters.

The internal obstacles that the ICRC experiences are more or less the problem of the organization's funding, which is usually invested annually to the tune of about 20 billion, which at certain times cannot be expected to be received. Unlike other organizations that will wait for the receipt of funds, the ICRC prioritizes acting immediately with very limited reserve funds in carrying out its mission.

Beyond the internal obstacles they experience, the ICRC also experiences external obstacles such as in the areas of security, revenue levels, and regulations in conflict areas. In an armed conflict like Syria, security is a major issue that needs to be addressed. Every party will worry about how the organization will benefit which side, so not every aid will run smoothly. The higher level of acceptance also leads to specific rules for approving and accepting facilities provided by international aid. Each country's national regulations also react to the influx of international humanitarian aid in the context of natural disasters or armed conflict, which can sometimes have a significant impact on meeting the needs of victims. Customs barriers, visa issues and taxes on humanitarian goods entering their country are just some of the issues that arise.

C. The Role of the ICRC in the International Community

Due to The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has the following duty as an organizer and representative of International Humanitarian Law, which is a science that is the law of war that has been modified based on the reality and development of phenomena in the world, the law talks about the protection of human groups who do not participate in war (non-combats), about the means and methods of war, as well as laws and customs in war (law and methods of war). Therefore, the ICRC has an important role in the protection of human rights.

One of the ICRC's roles for the international community was after the US invasion of Iraq. The ICRC collaborated with the Iraqi Red Crescent Society (IRCS) in meeting all the needs of war victims due to the invasion of American troops. The ICRC provided assistance and protection for victims by focusing on life-saving activities and restoring the condition of victims by reuniting family members of victims of conflict due to war. These activities were carried out in providing protection to prisoners of war by overseeing the safety of prisoners of war by providing food and fulfilling all clothing and food needs. With the existence of the ICRC, the need for safety for the conditions of victims as well as clothing and food is maximally fulfilled even in the midst of the conditions of the American invasion.

In essence, the role of the ICRC to the world community, especially in Human Rights (HAM) is to provide protection and assistance to victims, both in international disputes and disputes in internal conflicts. In addition, the ICRC also takes part in providing coordination programs on strategic direction and financial support to protect civilians and their rights, as well as initiatives to ensure care and protection provided in accordance with the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) program.

CONCLUSION

The ICRC is an international humanitarian movement with the principle of impartiality, neutrality, and independence that upholds humanity. The organization that would become the birth of the Geneva Convention was created to provide protection for civil society civilians, provide protection for prisoners of war, restore family relationships, provide medical assistance and operations, and disseminate international humanitarian law.

In its optimization in protecting human rights of the international community, the ICRC protects the life, health and dignity of all people affected by domestic, civil and military conflicts by using a supportive, protective and preventive approach in its operations. The ICRC's mechanism of action prioritizes action before anything else, in accordance with the principles stated in the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

The ICRC's role is to provide protection and assistance to victims of both international conflict and internal conflict. The ICRC is also involved in the coordination of strategic direction programs and financial support to protect civilians and their rights, as well as initiatives to ensure that the care and protection provided is consistent with Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR).

Based on the results of the research that has been carried out previously, the author realizes that there are still many limitations and errors that exist in this study. However, this research is expected to provide knowledge to readers related to the Optimization of the International Committee of the Red

Cross (ICRC) towards the Protection of Human Rights (HAM) which contains what the ICRC is, the work mechanism carried out by the ICRC and the role of the ICRC for the international community. It is hoped that this research can be a reference for further research and make this research even better.

REFERENCES

- ANALISIS TERHADAP INVASI AMERIKA SERIKAT TERHADAP IRAK DARI SUDUT PANDANG HUKUM INTERNASIONAL
- BBC NEWS INDONESIA. (2013). *Korban perang Irak 460.000 jiwa lebih*.
- BBC NEWS INDONESIA. (2013). *Perang Irak dalam angka*.
- Bilhaqqi, D. (2018). *Peranan International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) dalam Konflik Rohingya di Myanmar*.
- Britannica. (2023). *Perang Irak 2003–2011*.
- Council on Foreign Relations. (2005). *IRAQ: Iraqi Ties to Terrorism*.
- Council, Security. (2003). *Thirteenth quarterly report of the Executive Chairman of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission in accordance with paragraph 12 of Security Council resolution 1284 (1999)*.
- Dewi, M. N. K. (2016). *Tinjauan Yuridis atas Tindakan Tentara Amerika Serikat terhadap Tawanan Perang Irak*. Universitas Indonesia Timur Makassar.
- Fajrin, A. N. (2018). *Peranan ICRC dalam Perlindungan Korban Perang di Konflik*.
- Faizan, L. (2023). *Kenapa Saddam Hussein dihukum mati? Ternyata ini penyebabnya*.
- Hirsch, A. (2010). *Invasi Irak melanggar hukum internasional, demikian temuan penyelidikan Belanda*.
- Indmas, M. (2023). *Kisah kematian Saddam Hussein yang minta Al-Qur'an di tiang gantungan dan ucapan terakhir saat eksekusi mati*.
- International Committee of the Red Cross. (n.d.). *Tentang ICRC*. Retrieved November 3, 2025, from <https://blogs.icrc.org/indonesia/tentang-icrc/>
- Iswara, J. A. (2022). *Sejarah perang Irak vs Amerika: awal invasi, tewasnya Saddam Hussein, hingga pertempuran lawan ISIS*.
- Kompas. Retrieved November 3, 2025, from <http://www.kompas.com/kompas-cetak/0303/22/iptek/201492.htm>
- Luga, I. P. (2023). *Analisis terhadap Invasi Amerika Serikat terhadap Irak dari Sudut Pandang Hukum Internasional*.
- Marfuah. (2019). *Perlindungan terhadap International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) dalam Konflik Bersenjata Internasional menurut Konvensi Jenewa Tahun 1949 tentang Perlindungan Korban Perang*.
- Nurfahmi, E. (2017). *Keterbatasan International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) dalam Kemanusiaan di Suriah*. *Journal of International and Local Studies*, 1.
- Powel, L. C. (2003). [U.S. Department of State].
- Puspita, D., Syah, I., & Syaiful, M. (2013). *Irak Pasca Invasi Amerika Serikat*.
- Roring, E. B. (2025). *Dekonstruksi Marwah Mahkamah Konstitusi Terkait Krisis Legitimasi Tafsir Etika Konstitusional. Politika Progresif: Jurnal Hukum, Politik dan Humaniora*, 2(2), 152–164.
- Roring, E. B., Syalsabillah, H., Natasya, A. M., Fatimatuazzahra, F., & Subakdi, S. (2024). *Sosialisasi Peraturan Pemerintah No. 71 Tahun 2000 dalam Mewujudkan Jiwa Sadar Hukum dan Sikap Anti Korupsi kepada Siswa dan Siswi Kelas XI SMAN 34 Jakarta*. *ARDHI: Jurnal Pengabdian Dalam Negri*, 2(3), 1–9.
- Setiyono, J. (2017). *Peran ICRC dalam Perkembangan Hukum Humaniter Internasional di Era Global*. *Jurnal Law Reform*, 13.
- Zulchairman. (2018). *Peranan ICRC dalam Kemanusiaan pada Konflik Amerika Serikat–Irak*. *Jurnal Universitas Pasundan*.