



## Reporting Workshop on International Humanitarian Law

An introduction to the Geneva Conventions  
for the protection of combatants and civilians in time of war

**Dubai, 24 February 2009** – The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN), in partnership with the Dubai Press Club and sponsored by the International Humanitarian City (IHC), today opened a two-day training programme on ‘International Humanitarian Law’ for journalists reporting on conflicts.

International Humanitarian Law (IHL) is a set of rules which seek, for humanitarian reasons, to limit the effects of armed conflict and protect persons who are not participating in the hostilities. Speaking at the opening of the workshop the spokesperson for IHC, Ms. Elise Bijon, said,

“The recent events in Gaza and ongoing emergencies in countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan, and Sudan remind us of the importance of International Humanitarian Law, and that we all share a duty to make sure that codes of conduct are respected during times of war. By sponsoring this training workshop, the IHC hopes to give journalists a deeper understanding of these complex issues, and allow them to play a role in ensuring that civilians are protected during armed conflicts”.

This is the third in a series of humanitarian reporting workshops that have been held in partnership between UN OCHA, IRIN, IHC and the Dubai Press Club. Explaining the rationale for holding a workshop on this particular topic, the head of UN OCHA’s regional office, Mr. Abdul Haq Amiri, said,

“We decided to hold training on this topic to help journalists report on conflicts in a more accurate manner. After all, conflict is a daily reality in many parts of this region, and it is up to all of us to monitor whether the rights of civilians are being respected. We hope that, after today, they will be confident in their use of legal terminology while supporting the interests and well-being of civilian populations”.

Throughout the course, participants are being invited to reflect on recent and ongoing international armed conflicts and civil wars from the perspective of International Humanitarian Law. The course was also an opportunity for participants to learn about the status and rights of journalists in time of war, and consider the role of the international community in promoting these laws and prosecuting war criminals.

Maryam bin Fahad, Executive Director of Dubai Press Club, said: “It is part of our commitment to provide journalists with key enabling tools that will help them effectively handle challenging field assignments and ensure accurate dissemination of information. The workshop is in line with our efforts to enhance the role of the media in humanitarian reporting. Providing useful guidelines, the event highlighted the right approach to maintaining objectivity while filing human interest stories and we are happy to have been part of this important initiative.”.

The trainer, Urs Stirnimann of the Swiss Academy, shared his field experience in the Middle East and Latin America with the participants, highlighting the pivotal role of International Humanitarian Law in preventing abuses, torture and unnecessary human losses and destructions during wars, protecting civilian populations under siege and indicting war crimes.

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