Editorial

The *Journal of International Humanitarian Legal Studies* was founded with the aim of exploring and examining the role of international law in all aspects of humanitarian crises, both natural and those resulting from human action (or inaction). This approach to humanitarian legal studies encompasses a number of distinct but interconnected fields of international law, including human rights, refugee law, the law of armed conflict, disarmament and arms control, international criminal law, and the role of law in preventing and responding to humanitarian disasters. In this edition of the *Journal*, the role of international law in situations of armed conflict is of specific focus.

The first article comes from Karolina Aksamitowska, who explores the similarities and differences between current international humanitarian law principles, and traditional African laws of war. Employing a TWAIL approach, she examines the various laws of war evidenced in traditional African societies, ultimately arguing that IHL and African traditions of law in war are markedly similar, and that these similarities could assist in dissemination and enforcement efforts in the region.

The second article, by Cedric Cotter and Ellen Policinski, provides a review and analysis of one of the foundational journals in international humanitarian law – the *International Review of the Red Cross*. Cotter and Policinski examine the history of the Review over its 150-year life span, reflecting on its centrality to the study and practice of international humanitarian law, and how the *Review* serves as a history of IHL in itself.

Rob Grace's article explores how humanitarian laws, principles, and practitioners are perceived by those involved in armed conflicts, specifically in the context of implementation programs of humanitarian assistance and protection. Drawing on the practice of governments, non-State armed groups, and civil society actors, Grace employs social science techniques to analyse the factors that drive patterns of compliance and non-compliance with IHL.

The next article comes from Hyeran Jo, who engages with the burgeoning literature on the concept of an international rule of law, applying it to the

activities of non-State armed groups. In her paper, Jo looks at how non-State armed groups both engage with and reject international law, examining how such groups might be better encouraged to 'buy-in' to international law.

Building on the *Journal's* exploration of autonomous weapons in Volume 10(1), Diego Mauri looks at whether the Holy See's position on lethal autonomous weapons systems (LAWS) might provide new perspectives on the debate regarding the legality of LAWS. Mauri uses the Martens Clause to frame his argument, drawing parallels between Catholic doctrinal arguments against LAWS, and the legal moratorium against LAWS that can be grounded in the Martens Clause itself.

Tara Smith's article examines the important work currently being undertaken by the International Law Commission in relation to the protection of the environment in times of armed conflict. As Smith notes, the ILC has been examining the issue of environmental protection since 2013, finally producing twenty-eight draft principles in 2019. In her article, Smith makes the case for these principles being adopted as a framework convention. Framework conventions have been commonplace in environmental law but unknown to IHL; Smith argues that, as environmental protection in situations of armed conflict is both a IHL issue as well as an environmental law issue, a framework convention could overcome potential obstacles to the adoption of a binding convention, such as defining thresholds of harm, and would have the added benefit of allowing non-State actors to participate in standard-setting.

Finally, our last article comes from Margherita Stevoli, who looks at the principle of proportionality in relation to the practice of starvation of civilians in armed conflicts. Under the current law of armed conflict, only *intentional* starvation of civilians is prohibited as a method of warfare. Noting the regrettable increase in the practice of siege warfare and blockades in recent and ongoing conflicts in Syria, South Sudan, Yemen, and Gaza, Stevoli explores whether one of the fundamental principles of IHL – the principle of proportionality – could be used to prohibit *unintentional* enforced starvation.

Since our last edition was published, we have been privileged to welcome a number of new members to our Editorial Board, with Cheah Wui Ling, Anna Hood, and Sasha Radin joining our ranks. We have also been fortunate to continue to benefit from the expertise of Treasa Dunworth, who has graciously agreed to join our Advisory Board. We wish to extend our most sincere thanks to departing members of the Editorial Board – Chaloka Beyani, Maya Brehm, Marko Milanovic, and Nina Schrepfer, and to Horst Fischer and Abdul Koroma, who have left the Advisory Board. We are most grateful for the expertise and guidance that they have provided over the years.

We are always keen to hear from you, our readers and potential contributors. If you would like to discuss a potential symposium or article, please email us at editors@jihls.net, or individually at the below-listed addresses. Thank you for reading, and we hope to hear from you.

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