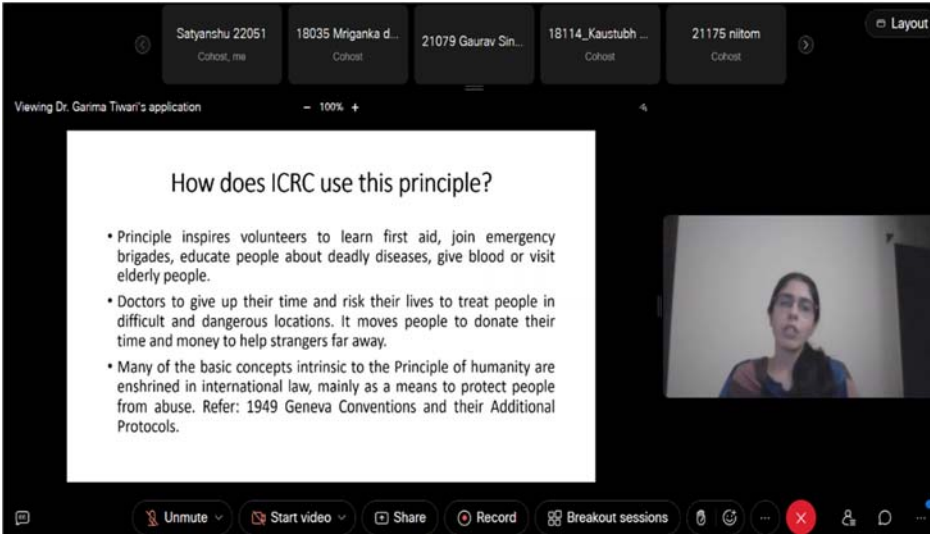


REPORT- Session 7

Two-credit certificate course on International Humanitarian Law

Topic: Role of International Committee of the Red Cross: Principles

Guest Speaker: Dr. Garima Tiwari



The screenshot shows a Zoom meeting interface. At the top, there are five participant names: Satyanshu 22051, 18035 Mriganka d..., 21079 Gaurav Sin..., 18114_Kaustubh..., and 21175 nitom. Below the names, it says "Viewing Dr. Garima Tiwari's application" and "100%". The main content is a slide with the title "How does ICRC use this principle?" and three bullet points:

- Principle inspires volunteers to learn first aid, join emergency brigades, educate people about deadly diseases, give blood or visit elderly people.
- Doctors to give up their time and risk their lives to treat people in difficult and dangerous locations. It moves people to donate their time and money to help strangers far away.
- Many of the basic concepts intrinsic to the Principle of humanity are enshrined in international law, mainly as a means to protect people from abuse. Refer: 1949 Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols.

At the bottom of the slide, there is a video feed of Dr. Garima Tiwari. Below the video feed, there are several icons: Unmute, Start video, Share, Record, Breakout sessions, and a red 'X' icon.

The session began with the introduction of the guest lecturer, Dr Garima Tiwari, who is currently serving as Associate Professor and Assistant Dean of Admissions at the School of Law at Bennett University (Times of India Group). She has also been to the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, University of Copenhagen, Denmark as an Associated Ph.D. Student for three months and also as an Academic visitor at the Centre for Socio-Legal Studies, Law Faculty, University of Oxford, UK.

Dr Tiwari began the session by explaining the International Federation of Red Cross (IFRC), Red Crescent Societies, and National Societies, their origin, significance, and the time period in which they operate, where the former two work as Auxiliaries to public authorities in the humanitarian field and the National Societies are independent all the time, acting impartially and neutrally, based solely on need. She began by outlining the timeline of principles and the ICRC's role. She discussed Jean Pictet's role as a key author and architect of the ICRC's work, as well as his contribution to the adoption of seven principles, "Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality, Independence, Voluntary Service, Unity, and Universality," at the 20th International Conference in Vienna, Austria in 1965.

She then explained the Pictet Pyramid, including the principles of Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality, Independence, Voluntary Service, Unity and Universality. Starting with Principle of Humanity, she explained that this principle is used to prevent and alleviate human sufferings, to protect life and health and ensure respect for the human being. This principle articulates common human values: compassion, empathy, mutual aid and a desire to reach out

to others. ICRC uses this principle through inspiring volunteers to learn first aid and educating people about deadly diseases.

She then elaborated on the second principle, that is, Principle of Impartiality where she mentioned that ICRC is to make no discrimination on the basis of nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. She laid emphasis on the fact that the volunteers/helpers need to avoid personal biases and affiliations, and the priority has to be given to the most urgent cases of distress including the combatants who are no longer able to fight. She exemplified by giving examples of 1864 Geneva Convention under which sick combatants had to be collected and cared for, irrespective of their nationality. Also, 1949 Geneva convention expanded the requirement of non-discrimination to include “any adverse distinction founded on sex, race, nationality, religion, political opinions or any other similar criteria”.

Further, she talked about the Principle of Neutrality which is used to continue enjoying the confidence of all; ICRC may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, religious, race or ideological nature. She mentioned that neutrality does not mean silence on issues of grave humanitarian concern but it is to send the communications to all those, not some/many, taking part in the hostilities, reminding them of their obligations under humanitarian law. The principle also helps in advocating bans on specific military weapons, such as nuclear weapons or landmines etc. It also means never getting involved in controversy, so as not to lose the confidence of any part of the population-even in peacetime. She told the participants that it is the duty of ICRC to speak out and observe breach of humanitarian law, generally not denouncing one side publicly, instead making it direct and bilateral representations, which sometimes comes with a cost, She also gave an example of Keysaney hospital in Mogadishu, Somalia which had treated over 200,000 people since it was founded in 1992 keeping its doors open for everyone.

She then talked about the Principle of Voluntary Service which is based on voluntary service and is not prompted in any manner for desire for gain. Further, the Principle of Unity ensures Covering of whole territory and non-discrimination in the recruitment of members, that the entire territory of the home country serves to ensure that certain religions will not be neglected in favour of others and diversity is to be embraced and the membership of ICRC is open to all.

With the final principle, Principle of Universality, we came back to the first principle of Humanity. It makes sure that societies must not ignore some parts of world or society, that global solidarity is inherent in the Principle of Humanity and expressed through the principle of Universality.

In order to make the session more insightful, Dr Garima raised many situations to elaborate on certain points and later also provided the listeners with case study on Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) which stayed close to the local communities through its local branches but also managed to maintain its relationship with the government in order to be granted access and get through checkpoints. Also talking about the challenges to ICRC and its principle, Dr. Verma mentioned the changing nature of conflicts which has made the role of ICRC more complex and difficult to maintain neutrality.

The event for the day culminated with an interactive question and answer session with the professor, who eagerly answered all of the students' questions. The session drew about 55 students from several different institutions.