



One Day Workshop

on

IHL in the Contemporary World

by *The Centre for Advanced Study in International
Humanitarian Law (CASH), RGNUL*

Chaired by **Mr Aftab
Mohammad**, a senior expert in
public policy, multilateralism, law
and global governance.

Date: 25 February, 2026

Time: 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM

Venue: Conference Hall 2



✉ cash@rgnul.ac.in

📷 [@cash_rgnul](https://www.instagram.com/cash_rgnul)

REPORT ON ONE-DAY WORKSHOP BY MR. AFTAB MOHAMMAD ON INTERNATIONAL
HUMANITARIAN LAW IN CONTEMPORARY ERA

25th February 2026

The Centre for Advanced Study in International Humanitarian Law (CASH), Rajiv Gandhi National University of Law (RGNUL), Patiala organised a one-day workshop titled “*International Humanitarian Law in the Contemporary World*” on 25 February 2026. The session was chaired by **Aftab Mohammad**, a senior expert in public policy, multilateralism, law, and global governance, with over twenty-five years of professional experience across South Asia and the Middle East.

Mr. Mohammad began by reflecting on his professional journey into international law, tracing it to his involvement in disaster response legal work following the 1990 super cyclone and the Gujarat earthquake, where he engaged with UNDP-linked legal interventions. These early experiences, combined with field exposure facilitated through the Bar Council, shaped his understanding of the intersection between law, humanitarian response, and diplomacy. He emphasised that in diplomatic practice, even “one word or a comma can fundamentally alter meaning,” underscoring the precision required in international negotiations.

The workshop highlighted humanitarian negotiations as a distinct yet interconnected field involving law, diplomacy, and humanitarian action. Mr. Mohammad explained the layered nature of professional engagement in conflict contexts, ranging from purely legal work, to legal-diplomatic engagement, and finally to the most complex triad of legal, diplomatic, and humanitarian practice. In this context, he discussed Track I and Track II diplomacy and their relevance in conflict resolution and humanitarian access.

Providing a historical grounding to International Humanitarian Law (IHL), the workshop traced its origins to Henry Dunant’s *Memory of Solferino* (1859) and explored moral and religious traditions influencing humanitarian norms, including concepts of *dharmayuddha* in the Mahabharata, Islamic humanitarian principles, Christian just war theory, and practices within tribal societies. The development of modern IHL was situated against the backdrop of World War I and World War II, culminating in the Geneva Conventions, which emerged alongside the formation of the United Nations.

The contribution of individuals such as Hansa Mehta to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was highlighted, followed by a discussion on treaties and customary international law

as sources of IHL. Mr. Mohammad underscored the unique position of the ICRC as a humanitarian actor that often commands greater operational neutrality than the UN, which remains inherently political.

A critical segment of the lecture addressed the classification of armed conflicts into International Armed Conflicts (IACs) and Non-International Armed Conflicts (NIACs), with case studies including Palestine, Rwanda, Naxal-affected regions, and Kashmir. He stressed that conflict classification is often shaped by diplomatic considerations and that international law is not entirely value-neutral.

The workshop concluded with an in-depth discussion on contemporary IHL principles—distinction, proportionality, military necessity, and humanity. Using examples such as schools and hospitals, Mr. Mohammad explained the expanding understanding of civilian status. He also examined the UN Security Council's Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) under Resolution 1612 in contexts such as Yemen, focusing on the six grave violations against children in armed conflict.

Overall, the workshop provided a comprehensive and practice-oriented understanding of IHL, blending doctrinal clarity with real-world experience. It offered valuable insights for students and practitioners interested in humanitarian law, diplomacy, and access to justice in conflict-affected settings.