



RAJIV GANDHI NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF LAW, PUNJAB

(Established under Punjab Act No. 12 of 2006)

RGNUL/PRO/233

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RGNUL Hosts International Symposium on “The Geneva Conventions at the 76th: Contemporary Challenges”

The Centre for Advanced Studies in International Humanitarian Law (CASH) at Rajiv Gandhi National University of Law (RGNUL), Punjab, successfully organised a one-day symposium on “The Geneva Conventions at the 76th: Contemporary Challenges” at the university campus in hybrid mode. The event commemorated 76 years since the adoption of the four Geneva Conventions of 1949, which form the cornerstone of international humanitarian law, protecting the wounded and sick on land, shipwrecked members at sea, prisoners of war, and civilians during armed conflicts.

The programme commenced with a welcome address by Prof. (Dr.) Jai Shankar Singh, Vice Chancellor, RGNUL, who emphasised the enduring relevance of the Geneva Conventions and the urgent need to address modern-day challenges in their implementation.

The symposium brought together distinguished experts. Major General P.K. Goswami highlighted disturbing trends including targeting of civilian areas, urbanisation of warfare, disinformation, and the use of autonomous systems and cyber tools. He urged regulation of new technologies, governance of private military companies, and stronger mechanisms to protect civilians, concluding that while we cannot change the beginning, we can change the ending.

Wing Commander Dr. U.C. Jha examined the humanitarian impact of modern conflicts, referencing the Israel–Gaza war, Syrian civil war, and threats to civilians, journalists, and children. He discussed cyber warfare, lethal autonomous systems, AI targeting, and hypersonic missiles, stressing that these challenge the IHL principles of distinction, proportionality, and precaution. He emphasised that the Geneva Conventions, framed in a pre-digital era, require regular updates to address threats from space, biotechnology, and non-state actors in twenty-first century conflicts.

Ms. Areti Sianni, Chief of Mission, UNHCR India and the Maldives, underlined the growing global displacement crisis and UNHCR’s role in protecting refugees and internally displaced persons. Commending India’s humanitarian tradition towards Tibetan, Sri Lankan, and other refugees, she urged the adoption of a national refugee policy framework to replace ad hoc measures. She called on India to



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leverage its leadership in the Global South to address root causes of displacement and urged universities to develop innovative solutions for conflict victims.

Dr. Ivneet Walia, Associate Professor of Law and Registrar concluded the session with the remarks on the evolving landscape of warfare and humanitarian protection. She noted that emerging cyber developments, including advanced AI systems, autonomous weapons, and even concepts such as cyborg technology, pose novel challenges to International Humanitarian Law (IHL). Dr. Walia reiterated that adapting IHL to modern realities is essential to safeguarding civilians and preserving humanitarian principles in future conflicts.

An Open House Discussion, moderated by Dr. Sunod Jacob, Government Liaison Officer with the UNHCR, provided a platform for in-depth dialogue between speakers, faculty, and students on pressing humanitarian issues, including compliance challenges in contemporary armed conflicts.

The event concluded with presentations by RGNUL Research Centres to the UNHCR, showcasing the university's research capabilities and commitment to advancing international humanitarian law scholarship.

Reflecting on the success of the symposium, Dr. Sangeeta Taak and Dr. Sukhwinder Kaur Virk, Assistant Professors of Law at RGNUL and Convenors of the event, expressed their gratitude to the esteemed speakers, participants, and the UNHCR for their support. They highlighted that the symposium not only honoured the legacy of the Geneva Conventions but also created a space for meaningful academic exchange and critical reflection on contemporary humanitarian law challenges.

Registrar

Public Relation Officer



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