

## **The Role of International Committee of the Red Cross on the Russia-Ukraine War**

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### **Abstract**

*This article aims to analyze and describe how many victims there are in the current Russia-Ukraine war. Basically humanity is the basis of life anywhere. So the importance of presence of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) as part of humanitarian law to deal with existing casualties. We can see how the war that occurred could not be finished simply. So besides focusing on the war, first aid is also needed for victims of the war. This article uses a qualitative approach with a literature review design related to the role of ICRC in this war. The data was collected by compiling sources from various kinds of literature such as reading books, websites and discussions with experts and competent groups. The results show that there were many casualties from both the Russian and Ukrainian sides in the war that took place. The ICRC as an important body in humanitarian law is needed to be able to carry out its duties properly.*

**Keywords: Role, ICRC, Humanitarian Law, Victim**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

On February 24, 2022, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine finally broke out (Munthe, 2022). President Vladimir Putin announced an attack carried out by Russia with an explosion against a number of cities in Ukraine, such as Kyiv, Odessa, Kharkiv and Mariupol. The attack launched by Russia has a very complex background related to political sentiments between countries.

In its history before 1990, Ukraine and Russia were a unit in a federative state called the Soviet Union. A country with a strong communist ideology at that time. After the victory of World War II, the Soviet Union had influence in eastern Europe. That was the reason why countries in the eastern European continent also became communist countries. In 1991, after the onset of the Cold War, the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact broke up. Later in its development Ukraine voted for independence from the Soviet Union in a referendum. Russian President Boris Yeltsin, who was then in office, agreed to this. Then Russia, Ukraine and Belarus form the *Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)* (Ray, 2022).

However, the dynamics of government politics are not as simple as what is seen on the ground. During its development, Ukraine considered that the CIS was Russia's attempt to control the countries under the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union which later became the cause of the split. In May 1997, Russia and Ukraine signed a friendship agreement. It is an attempt to resolve disagreements. Russia was allowed to retain majority ownership of the ships in the Black Sea fleet based in Ukraine's Crimea. Russia also has to pay Ukraine a rental fee for using the Port of Sevastopol (Bebler, 2015).

In the past decade, to be precise in 2014 relations between Russia and Ukraine have heated up, at which time there was a revolution against Russian supremacy. In Ukraine there was an anti-government group that succeeded in overthrowing the pro-Russian former president of Ukraine, Viktor Yanukovich. Riots even broke out before making peace in 2015 with the Minsk accords (Kamasa, 2015). The revolution also opened Ukraine's desire to join the European Union (EU) and NATO, a defense pact initiated by America and EU countries. This then made the Russian president, Vladimir Putin angry because of the prospect of establishing a NATO base next to the Russia-Ukraine border. This is also supported by the closer relations between a number of Eastern European countries and NATO. Call it Poland and the Balkan countries. This is getting Russia's attention because of course the presence of NATO will create a deterrence effect for the sovereignty of Russia and one day could become a very serious threat to the country.

One of the important milestones in the development of humanitarian law was its establishment of the International *Committee Of The Red Cross* (ICRC) or the International Red Cross Organization and the signing of the Geneva Convention in 1864 (Muin, 1999). At about the same time in the United States President Lincoln asked Lieber, an expert on German immigrant law, to draw up rules for war. The result is *Instructions for Government of Armies of the United States* or so called *dear code*, published in 1863. This Lieber Code contains detailed rules on all stages of land warfare, proper conduct of war, treatment of the civilian population, treatment of certain groups of persons such as prisoners of war, wounded and so on. From the importance of the ICRC's presence in the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, it is certainly necessary to reduce the number of victims that fell.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This research was conducted with seeing how high the number of victims was due to war, then the subject of this research is the presence of ICRC that became important in efforts to reduce the number of victims due to war. For that researchers use type of research with qualitative methods analytical descriptive approach, research procedures that produce descriptive data in the form of written words or verbal of people and behavior observed. The technique of data collection with literature study and focus group discussion analyzed using qualitative analysis. So that then the author can reach to conclusions and can present and present data and solution solutions about the problem that occurred.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### International Red Cross Organization

The formation of the 1864 Geneva Convention, relates to the establishment of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The formation of the 1864 Geneva Convention was heavily influenced by the ideas contained in the book "*A Memory of Solferino*" written by one of the founders of the ICRC, namely Henry Dunant. In the book, Henry Dunant describes his experience of witnessing the suffering of soldiers who were victims and never received help on the battlefield in Solferino, Italy on June 24, 1859 (Kusumaatmadja, 2012).

Until finally the thought of Henry Dunant resulted in its formation *International Committee of the Red Cross* (ICRC) or International Committee of the Red Cross in 1863, which is a neutral and independent body. *International Committee of the Red Cross* (ICRC) is not an organization owned by several countries or is not part of the United Nations (UN)

organizational body. But as an independent institution and act as a neutral mediator between warring or hostile countries in international armed conflicts, non-international armed conflicts and in cases of international violence (Pratiwi, 2016).

*The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)* strives to ensure that victims of violence, both civilians and military, receive protection and assistance. The ICRC is the protector of the basic principles of movement and decision-making on the recognition of national associations, it also works to develop international humanitarian law by explaining, disseminating and also promoting the Geneva Conventions. In its movement the ICRC also carries out the obligations assigned to it under the conventions and ensures that the conventions are implemented. The ICRC conveyed its mandate, among others, as follows: Provide protection to military and civilian victims as a result of armed conflict; Uniting families separated by war; Providing clothing and food, medical or sanitation assistance to victims of armed conflict; Dissemination of international humanitarian law and the basic principles of the ICRC.

### **Russia-Ukraine War**

Tensions between Russia and Ukraine have resurfaced since November 2021 (Haryanto, 2022). This is related to Ukraine's closeness to NATO and America. Since being led by president Volodymyr Zelensky, the movement of the Ukrainian government with its efforts to join NATO has created political turmoil with Russia. Until finally it became known how Russia adopted a policy by accumulating troops on the border with Ukraine. The US mobilized 100,000 troops along with tanks and other military hardware present on the border.

In December, many statements from world leaders such as US President Joe Biden warned Russia about Western economic sanctions if it attacked Ukraine due to increasingly intense reports of military problems on the border. A number of European leaders such as French President Emmanuel Macron and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan also "went down the mountain" to initiate negotiations between the two. On the other hand, Russia has also started carrying out massive military exercises since early January 2022. All navies have been deployed. This exercise is also carried out on land. Russia cooperates with Belarus, its close neighbor and ally.

Russia actually just wants to ask NATO to stop all military activities in Eastern Europe and Ukraine. Russia asked the alliance to never accept Ukraine or other former Soviet countries as members. The Russian Ambassador to Indonesia, Lyudmila Georgievna Vorobieva, said Russia never intended to attack its neighbor. He said this issue emerged after the US, NATO and its allies. As the saying goes All the hysteria that is happening between Russia and Ukraine has been targeted to divert the issue from our country's security regarding the Russian Federation. We are seeing the expansion of NATO which has been going on for 30+ years and now NATO's infrastructure is getting closer to our borders. If we look at the current Ukraine it is only used as a tool to inflame information war against Russia. While Russia is pursuing diplomacy, the West continues to fuel war rumors and create tension on the Russian-Ukrainian border. Actually, Russia does not intend to declare war on Ukraine, this is just an attempt to reveal how NATO has carried out five phases of expansion, from 1999 to 2020 (Harbani, 2022).

Until then on February 24, 2022 the Russian attack on Ukraine occurred. Many experts argue that Putin did this for the purpose of forcing change in Ukraine. Russia wants the leadership of Ukraine to be replaced to be pro-Moscow and get rid of the influence of NATO and America. As stated by Putin, "*The West has corrupted Ukraine and pulled it out of the Russian orbit through forced identity changes.*"

The cold Russia-Ukraine conflict that has been going on has finally presented a real attack launched by Russia on Ukraine. Real action in the form of a massive invasion by the Russian military into several areas in Ukraine, including eastern Ukraine, is claimed by Russia to have almost completely controlled it. The attacks launched by Russia on several areas in Ukraine were seen to also target/hit civilian populations or civilian buildings.

What happened to the Russia-Ukraine conflict has received attention from international law of war (humanitarian law) or internationally it is called *International Humanitarian Law Applicable in Armed Conflict* which has been agreed upon by countries in the world where in a war situation it should only be allowed to target military installations or government offices.

This humanitarian law is a modern term for the law of war, which is referred to as humanitarian law to avoid the trauma of victims who are affected in war atrocities. Whether or not these attacks originate from the Russian military must also be ascertained. This is because the Russian authorities also deny the allegations were made by the Russian military.

However, in the current state of war, it is very difficult to find answers, because both sides are shifting responsibility to each other. If you look at the track record of the Russian state so far, it's hard to believe that the attack was carried out by the Russian military. The spirit of the Russian knights which had been instilled in their souls as a 'strong nation' for centuries certainly would not have been able to do such a heinous thing. In my view, the attacks carried out by Russia only attacked a few points that were their targets, namely special places in Ukraine which were places for storing weapons both owned by Ukraine and weapons or war aid from other countries. NATO. Certainly not places where the population is concentrated. This was done so that the Ukrainian side unconditionally surrendered to Russia. But of course in war there will always be victims who are not taken into account. Losses did not come only from the military, civilians also felt the impact of this war.

### **The ICRC's Presence in the Russia-Ukraine Conflict**

The International Committee of the Red Cross stated that human rights must be upheld both for civilians and the military, for this reason in this case the ICRC reminded that the ICRC's presence should receive attention and should not be disturbed in carrying out its humanitarian mission (Sujatmoko, 2016).

According to the latest news sources, at least more than 40,000 civilians were evacuated from Ukraine on Wednesday. So far the authorities are trying to keep civilians away from the conflict zones around the cities of Kyiv, Kharkiv and Mariupol. The Ukrainian Foreign Ministry claims that more than 12,000 Russian soldiers have died since Russia launched its invasion on February 24, 2022. Meanwhile, Russia says that around 498 of its soldiers have died in battle and have killed about 2,000 Ukrainian soldiers. Then the UN human rights agency said, between 24 February and 8 March, there were about 1,424 civilians who became victims of the war in Ukraine, 516 of whom were killed and 908 injured. However, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights believes the true toll is much higher but has yet to be detected (Pristiandaru, 2022).

In terms of assistance to victims of war, the ICRC is certainly impartial, both towards Russia and Ukraine. The ICRC focuses on providing appropriate humanitarian assistance in this regard. In overcoming this, the ICRC works very diligently to care for and help victims. One of them is the ICR's role in helping victims of the Russian army.

The International Committee of the Red Cross said that so far they had accepted the Ambassador's request Ukraine at the United Nations to repatriate the bodies of soldiers Russia who died in the invasion of Ukraine but did not have an identification number. Ukraine's UN Ambassador Sergiy Kyslytsya stated that Ukraine asked the ICRC to facilitate the return of the bodies of thousands of Russian soldiers killed during the invasion of Ukraine, while showing a chart of the Russian soldier's death toll which it claimed was 3,500 bodies.

Later Laetitia Courtois, an ICRC permanent observer for the United Nations told The Associated Press late Saturday, the current security situation was a major concern and a limitation for the ICRC team on the ground. He also added that ICRC can act as a neutral intermediary in the return of bodies and other humanitarian issues in conflict, including clarifying the fate of missing persons, reuniting families, and advocating for the protection of detainees in the eventuality.

## CONCLUSION

At war there's the right term "*winning into coal, losing into ashes*" meaning that when a war situation takes place, both the winning and losing parties will definitely suffer losses. It is inseparable from the losses of the victims, both civilian and military. For this reason, humanitarian law is present in minimizing and regulating wars, so that the wars that occur can at least be more humane and the impact does not move in a worse direction.

The Presence International Committee of the Red Cross is a form of development of humanitarian law. In the Russian-Ukrainian war, the presence of the International Committee of the Red Cross is really needed, we can see how the victims fall who of course need to get humane attention and treatment, both for civilians and the military.

For that, hopefully in the future the war that is happening can stop soon so that the victims do not increase and the situation can return to stability. Hopefully the situation in the Ukraine-Russia conflict area can also be more conducive so that the work carried out by the International Committee of the Red Cross in humanitarian missions can be carried out properly, which will ultimately show how Humanitarian Law is needed, especially in war situations.

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