

# ANNUAL HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN OUTLINE 2022/2023

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INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW



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The European Law Students' Association

## 1. What is the Annual Human Rights Campaign (AHRC)?

Each year the Network organises a Europe-wide Human Rights Campaign to raise awareness of the importance of human rights protection and create a forum for the voice of law students and young lawyers across Europe. During the Annual Human Rights Campaign, the entire ELSA Network, throughout 43 countries and more than 350 local groups, works together to realise a unique human rights forum where our members have the opportunity to discuss national and international standards of protection and implementation of human rights. The AHRC takes place throughout the academic year. In 2021/2022, ELSA organised an information campaign on the importance of the interplay between privacy in the digital age and human rights. In 2022/2023, ELSA's Human Right Campaign will focus on **International Humanitarian Law**.

## 2. What is ELSA Day?

ELSA Day is part of the Annual Human Rights Campaign and was first introduced to the ELSA Network in 2012. It takes place on the last Wednesday of November, which falls on 30 November 2022. ELSA Day aims to jointly demonstrate our Human Rights commitment by providing legal education and opportunities that enable law students to be independent and critical members of society. The event is also dedicated to raising awareness of human dignity and cultural diversity. Its structure unifies the Network and has hosted over 1,000 ELSA Day events throughout the previous ten editions. Make sure to use **#ELSADay** and **#alldifferentaltogether** when sharing the news regarding your ELSA Day event in order to achieve efficient joint promotion.

As said by Federica Toscano, the Vice President in charge of Seminars and Conferences of ELSA International 2012/2013 and the founder of ELSA Day:

*A culture of sharing and understanding shall not halt at some political borders, but should go beyond these frontiers: human dignity is not connected with a certain passport or the place where we are born. Let us ensure then that we move the discussions from the constraints of national borders and unite them under ELSA Day.*

## 3. How is the Annual Human Rights Campaign (AHRC) organised?

Each National Group appoints a National Coordinator, who is in charge of encouraging and supporting the Local Groups in organising events, passing on information from international to the national and local level, and reminding and helping the Local Groups in filling in the Specification and Evaluation Forms. ELSA

International is in charge of guiding the network through the National Coordinators by creating guidelines and unified marketing materials.

### **3. Topic of the AHRC and the 11th ELSA Day: International Humanitarian Law**

The general topic of the Annual Human Rights Campaign and ELSA Day is **Human Rights**, and any event on this topic will be appreciated. However, as the field of human rights is very diverse, the Campaign focuses on a more specific topic each year. This year's focus will be on **International Humanitarian Law (IHL)**.

The United Nations provides the following definition for IHL:

International humanitarian law encompasses the principles and rules that regulate the means and methods of warfare, as well as the humanitarian protection of civilian populations, sick and wounded combatants, and prisoners of war. ([link](#))

The definition of the International Committee of the Red Cross complements:

International Humanitarian Law (IHL) is a set of rules that seeks, for humanitarian reasons, to limit the effects of armed conflict. It protects persons who are not, or are no longer, directly or actively participating in hostilities and imposes limits on the means and methods of warfare. ([link](#)).

There are several areas which may be explored in this domain that relate to human rights are:

- Bodies of law that are designed to regulate situations of armed conflict, limiting the number of victims and the impact on them
- Bodies of law that provide protection to specific categories of vulnerable individuals such as citizens, stateless persons, minorities, women, children and prisoners.
- History of conflicts and the historical development of IHL
- The principles that lay at the foundation of IHL, such as humanity, military necessity, the distinction between civilians and combatants, and proportionality.
- The evolving role of civil society in the difficulties of implementing and enforcing the law of armed conflict.
- Deciding what law applies to occupied territories.

- Legal uncertainties surrounding new-age military capabilities, namely drones and other weaponry systems.

Central legislation for IHL is the Geneva Conventions (more specifically, the 1949 Geneva Convention for the Protection of War Victims) and the three accompanying Protocols.

#### **4. Non-political vs advocating for human rights**

As you may know, ELSA was founded as an association that is characterised by a **non-political status**, aiming to bridge law students and young lawyers throughout Europe despite political circumstances. This entails that ELSA's purpose is not to approach topics from a political perspective. Therefore, ELSA cannot serve as a stage for political discourse. The non-political nature does not detract from ELSA's purpose of promoting social responsibility on topics such as human rights. In that sense, the non-political character poses no problem to AHRC events advocating human rights.

#### **5. Target audience**

The need for International Humanitarian Law and the purpose of raising awareness on this topic are uncontested. It is important, however, to consider amongst what target audience you wish to raise awareness on this topic. Try to clarify whether your events have a **quantitative impact or a qualitative impact**. Quantitative impact means that your event reaches persons unfamiliar with the topic yet. Qualitative events focus on core discussions and dilemmas that require prior knowledge and interest amongst a more select target audience (such as humanitarian law students). The latter allows for more concrete output, such as a policy paper, for example.

#### **6. Which board member is in charge?**

In principle, the Vice President in charge of Academic Activities is in charge and takes the initiative for events that fall Annual Human Rights Campaign. It is recommended that National Vice Presidents for Academic Activities appoint an Officer dedicated to coordinating and organising AHRC events throughout the National Network. The fact that the AHRC and ELSA Day fall under the responsibility of the Academic Activities Officer does not exclude that other Officers (such as the VP PD or VP S&C) organise events that fall under the AHRC.

Consider organising a Multi-Area Project (MAP), where lectures, visits and research can be combined, for example.

## 7. What events could be organised?

**Legal debates** can be organised on a local level. To make an impact on society, remember to advertise the debate among non-lawyers as well. However, always bear in mind the non-political status of ELSA.

**Institutional visits** (S&C) or “**Lawyers at work**” (PD) are another key event for this topic, where ELSA members will have the opportunity to get in touch with experts and lawyers and acquire practical knowledge on the topic at hand.

The National Groups can conduct **surveys** via questionnaires prior to the ELSA Day on what people think about International Humanitarian Law and how familiar they are with the IHL issues.

To focus on the qualitative aspect of International Humanitarian Law, **input papers, Legal Research Groups, and ELSA Webinars** can be helpful. They allow students to dive into the topic and find a use for their results afterwards.

## 8. Specification Form and Council of Europe Materials

During each AHRC, the Council of Europe (CoE) chooses the 40 most impactful, relevant and creative national or local initiatives. The CoE sends promotion materials to the organisers to promote the initiatives. The exact content includes pens, notebooks, calendars, information brochures, etc. As it takes some time to pack and ship materials, we operate with deadlines (see the timeline at the bottom). When your event idea is hatched, please fill in the Event Specification Form. ELSA International will forward your event to the Council and save your form for the Competition and Report.

## 9. Evaluation Form and AHRC Competition

To develop our association and improve our activities, we need to evaluate our achievements. Furthermore, an Annual Human Rights Competition will be held, which differs from the competition for the visibility Materials from the Council of Europe. The best AHRC initiative will be chosen and celebrated during the Spring ICM in 2023 in Malta. The prize will be eternal honour and glory – together with an object you proudly can bring back to your ELSA office.

## 10. Partaking in the AHRC Competition

All National and Local Groups that fill in the Specification and Evaluation Forms automatically compete in the Competition. The Evaluation Form should be filled out at the beginning of March 2023. Remember that your event will not be considered for the Competition or final statistics in the Report if there is no Evaluation Form.

Upon the discretion of ELSA International, the guiding criteria are:

1. **the required forms must be filled in;**
2. at least one ELSA Day event and one event later in the year must be organised;
3. the topic of the events must be relevant to International Humanitarian Law;
4. the academic quality of the events;
5. impact on society of the events,
6. the level of creativity; and
7. online and offline visibility of the events.

To support your application, you are encouraged to submit materials such as pictures, videos, promotion materials etc., to [humanrights@elsa.org](mailto:humanrights@elsa.org).

## 10. Timeline

Below you will find the schedule used by the International Board as regards the organisation of the Annual Human Rights Campaign. Please note, however, that the timeline may be subject to minor changes due to unforeseen circumstances. Nevertheless, compliance with the deadlines below will ensure a well-organised ELSA Day as part of the Annual Human Rights Campaign.

Call for National AHRC Coordinators closes (form <a href="#">here</a> )	16 October 2022
International Board appoints National AHRC Coordinators	17 October 2022
Deadline for submitting the AHRC specification forms	
- if you wish to compete for CoE visibility materials	28 October 2022
- if you do not wish to compete for CoE visibility materials	25 November 2022
ELSA Day and the beginning of the AHRC	30 November 2022 (Last Wednesday of November)
Deadline for submitting the AHRC Evaluation Form	5 March 2023
Award ceremony of the competition	Spring ICM 2023 (Malta)