



# Assistance Under Attack

## *What it is*

Assistance Under Attack is an activity designed to help young people understand the principles of international humanitarian law (IHL) that apply during times of conflict. In this activity, players in a traditional dodge ball game take on various roles found in conflict situations, such as wounded soldiers, civilians, and health care workers. These young people are required to make crucial decisions throughout the dodge ball game to simulate the complexity of conflict situations.

## *How it helps*

Current armed conflicts affect the lives of 1.5 billion people around the world. It is crucial, now more than ever, that the next generation of leaders know and understand the importance of IHL. The American Red Cross educates the public about IHL regarding the protections for civilians and the rules setting limits on war. Knowledge and awareness about IHL helps create young people who are engaged global citizens who understand humanitarian issues that arise from armed conflict. Through Assistance Under Attack, you understand the challenges that combatants and health care workers face in conflict situations.

## *Get started*

Before beginning your activity, contact your local Red Cross chapter for assistance. They will be able to guide you to available resources that can make this an impactful and successful event. Once you have established contact with your chapter, there are three steps you should complete to begin:

- 1.** Identify your target audience and an appropriate location with adequate space for a dodge ball game. Think about reserving your school's gym, a park with a fence, or another spacious area. You will need to request permission from staff and parents. If your school prohibits playing dodge ball, contact [IHLyouth@redcross.org](mailto:IHLyouth@redcross.org) for other activity ideas.
- 2.** Collect all necessary materials: whistle, megaphone, dodge balls, ICRC badges, SOS cards, landmines, poster board, masking tape, and different colored bandanas to indicate the different teams. See the Red Cross Manual in the Resources section for some of these materials. Please remember that the Red Cross prohibits the use of fake weapons.

Want more information?  
Email us!

[IHLyouth@redcross.org](mailto:IHLyouth@redcross.org) for more ideas and materials for this and other IHL activities.

## *DID YOU KNOW?*

Landmines used in armed conflict are subject to specific rules regulating and banning their use in certain situations based on the danger they pose to children even after conflict has ended.

3. Gather a group of volunteers to help plan the activity. You may need additional volunteers, such as parents, teachers, or Red Cross staff, to provide materials or transportation.

## What's next?

### Before Simulation

- Before participants arrive, use signs to clearly divide the battlefield into two sides, and then place multiple landmines (cut out of paper and tape to plastic water bottles), in each side's territory.
- Once participants arrive, separate them into two teams. Distribute the badges or bandanas to easily identify the two opposing teams.
- Select two or three people from each team to be health care workers. All other participants are combatants.
- Give each participant an SOS card. Take this opportunity to explain that the SOS card can be used if the participant is feeling uncomfortable during the simulation and needs to step out.
- Make sure all volunteers running the event are wearing badges or vests that identify them as ICRC delegates. They will remain neutral throughout the game, provide clear rules and instructions, and monitor the simulation, including if a participant uses an SOS card to exit the game.
- Tell the teams to each select an area to mark with masking tape as their "hospital". The hospital is a safe area and combatants cannot attack the hospital.

### During Simulation

- Have the ICRC delegates announce that the goal of the game is to protect health care workers and the hospital, which are both protected under IHL. Then, have the ICRC delegates explain the rules of the game:
- Health care workers should remain in the hospital unless they are tending to an injured combatant.
- If a combatant gets hit in the chest or back, that combatant is considered dead and must lay down on the battlefield.
- If a combatant gets hit in the arm or leg, the combatant must sit down until attended to by a health care worker.
- If someone catches a ball thrown by a combatant, the combatant who threw the ball is "dead", and must lay down on the battlefield.
- In order for combatants to come back into the game, health care workers need to walk them to the hospital first.
- Combatants who step on a landmine should hop on one leg for the remainder of the game. If they step on a landmine a second time, they are considered dead and must lay down on the battlefield.
- Health care workers should not be targeted; however, if they are hit, they should respond in the same way as they do for combatants. If a health care worker is hit,

### Shake it up!

- » Halfway through the game, use a whistle or megaphone to pause the fighting and announce that 1/3 of the players have been killed by chemical warfare and therefore are eliminated from the game.
- » Select two or three people from each team to be civilians. Civilians cannot be targeted during battle, but if they are hit they should follow the same rules as health care workers who are hit.

### Show and Tell

- » Use photos from your event to promote your next Red Cross Activity on social media.
- » Write a short blog post to share with [IHLYouth@redcross.org](mailto:IHLYouth@redcross.org), along with some of your photos, and we'll post it on [humanityinwarblog.com](http://humanityinwarblog.com).

### Resources

- » [Raid Cross Manual](#)
- » ["Respecting and Protecting Health Care in Armed Conflicts and in Situations not Covered by International Humanitarian Law"](#)
- » [Health Care in Danger Project](#)
- » [ICRC Video Summary of IHL](#)

a health care worker on the other team dies. If the other health care worker was only injured, other health care workers can respond.

- The game is over when either all combatants are laying on the ground or all health care workers are dead.

### **After Simulation**

- Facilitate a discussion about what happened during the game. Invite a Red Cross staff member, local professor, or IHL expert to lead the conversation and answer questions about IHL.
- You can also ask participants about their experiences during the activity, such as: What was your role? Were you protected under IHL? How did you feel during the game? Why is it important that health care workers be protected under IHL? Who else is protected under IHL?
- Thank each of the volunteers and players for participating in the activity.

When you have completed these steps and organized a successful Assistance Under Attack, continue to spread knowledge about IHL! Follow [@HumanityinWar](https://twitter.com/HumanityinWar) on Twitter and tweet using #warhaslimits and #healthcareindanger to follow up with participants and get more people involved in future Red Cross activities.