

Losing Your Most Prized Possessions



DID YOU KNOW?

According to the UN Refugee Agency, worldwide displacement was at the highest level ever recorded in 2014. Globally, one in every 122 humans is now either a refugee, an internally displaced person, or an asylum seeker.

“Simulations such as this one give me the opportunity to put myself in the shoes of refugees and internally displaced people in an attempt to understand their struggles.”

– Hetal Shah, American Red Cross Volunteer

#HumanityinWar

Through this activity, you will have a chance to learn about the struggles facing refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) and their protections under international humanitarian law. Recruit participants to complete a simulation in order to educate the public on these important topics.

Want more information?
Email us!

Send an email to IHLYouth@redcross.org for more ideas and materials for this and other IHL activities.



**American
Red Cross**



Losing Your Most Prized Possessions

What it is

Losing Your Most Prized Possessions is an activity that increases participants' knowledge of the struggles facing refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) and their protections under international humanitarian law (IHL) and refugee law. In this activity, participants name their favorite person, favorite article of clothing, favorite place at home, and favorite item – many of which will be inevitably lost during their escape to a safer haven. After the activity is completed, a debriefing session allows participants to reflect on their experience of escaping and losing treasured items. Participants can also discuss whether the activity changed their perspective on the difficulties refugees and IDPs encounter daily.

How it helps

According to the UN Refugee Agency, 59.5 million people were displaced by war in 2014. As this number rapidly increases due to intensifying conflicts, it is especially important that young people – the next generation of civic and government leaders – understand the importance of IHL and its protections for refugees and IDPs. The American Red Cross educates the public about IHL, specifically the protections for civilians and other rules that set limits on warfare. Knowledge and awareness about IHL allows young people to become engaged global citizens who understand humanitarian issues arising from armed conflict. Through *Losing Your Most Prized Possessions*, you understand the challenges refugees and IDPs face, often as a result of armed conflict.

Get started

Before beginning your activity, contact your local Red Cross 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 the Red Cross, there are three steps you should complete before you begin:

1. Obtain permission from your school to hold the activity and ask to reserve a space large enough for the warzone simulation.

Shake It Up!

- ▶ Create a publicity video using clips from the debriefing session to inspire others to learn about IHL.
- ▶ Country spotlights! Have each participant research a country from which many people are fleeing, or a country in which many refugees are seeking protection. Then have all participants come together for a round-table discussion to present their information.



2. Gather the necessary supplies.
3. Recruit 3-5 volunteers to assist with the introduction of the activity, the simulation, and the debriefing.

What's next?

- Advertise your event through flyers, social media, and other methods in order to attract a large audience and spark an interest in learning about refugees, IDPs, and IHL. Remember to use #HumanityinWar on your social media posts.
- Run the simulation!
- Brainstorm ways to follow up with your audience after the debrief. Consider having them use social media to share their thoughts about the activity.

Now that you have completed these steps and organized a successful *Losing Your Most Prized Possessions* activity, continue to spread knowledge of IHL and the rules of war to other young people! Follow @HumanityinWar on Twitter and tweet using #HumanityinWar to follow-up with participants and get more people involved in future Red Cross activities.

Show and Tell

- ▶ Use photos from your event to promote your next Red Cross activity on social media.
- ▶ Write a short blog post and send in some pictures to **IHLYouth@redcross.org**, and we'll post it on the Humanity in War blog.

Additional Resources

[American Red Cross IHL Resources](#)

[ICRC IHL Resources](#)

[Humanity in War Blog](#)

[Geneva Academy Refugee Law Overview](#)

[IHL and Refugees/IDPs](#)

[Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees](#)

[UN High Commissioner for Refugees](#)



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Supplies

- Paper
- Pens
- Chairs
- Empty water bottles
- Blindfold
- 5-10 volunteers
- 1-2 facilitators



Before Simulation

1. Print pages 8-11 of this document (the landmine pictures).
2. Cut out each landmine picture from the printed pages.
3. Tape a landmine picture to each empty water bottle.
4. Choose a space to hold the simulation and put the empty water bottles on the floor throughout the activity space.



5. In another part of the space, place 1 chair for each facilitator and participant in a circle.
6. Gather paper and pens. Place them on the facilitator's chair.
7. Give the volunteers the following instructions for the simulation:
 - a. Volunteers stand in the area where the landmines are located;
 - b. Without moving from their spots, volunteers raise their arms horizontally and then start twisting their bodies;
 - c. Volunteers try to tag participants with their outstretched arms (without moving their feet from their location) as participants walk through the area;
 - d. When a participant is tagged, a volunteer yells "Lost Possession!" and the participant must give the volunteer one of his/her pieces of paper.

During Simulation

1. Have participants sit in the circle of chairs.
2. Give each participant a piece of paper and pen. Have all participants draw one vertical and one horizontal line on the paper to form 4 squares.
3. In each square, have participants write one of the following: their favorite person, their favorite item, their favorite place at home, and their favorite article of clothing.
4. Instruct the participants to tear the paper into four separate squares.
5. As a group, have each person share what s/he wrote.

Activity Extension: IDPs

Explain to the groups that they can choose to either be a refugee or an international displaced person (IDP) during the simulation. You will need to explain the difference between refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs):

Refugees are people who have left the country of their nationality due to a well-founded fear of being persecuted. Internally displaced persons have fled their homes, often for similar reasons, but remain inside the country of their nationality.

Emphasize that, while many obstacles faced by refugees and IDPs are the same, participants should keep the differences in mind while completing the simulation from their chosen perspective (refugee or IDP).



6. Depending on how many people are present, the participants should form groups of about 5-8 people each.

7. Guide them to the area with the landmines and volunteers.

8. Choose one group to go first. Have that group select one member to go through the simulation first. Explain that each group will go through the simulation one person at a time, and all groups will get the opportunity to go through the simulation.

9. Place the blindfold on the selected participant.

10. Explain that the blindfolded participant must make it through the simulation without making contact with the volunteers or landmines. Every time the participant touches the volunteers or landmines, s/he loses one of his/her prized possessions. When the participant has lost 3 of the prized possessions or makes it through the simulation (whichever comes first), s/he is done. Then the next group member can go through the simulation.

11. The other group members who are not going through the simulation can speak two times each to help guide the blindfolded person through the simulation (give instructions to turn left or right, etc.).

12. After the first group is finished, the other groups can begin. Once everyone has completed the simulation, the groups can go back to the circle of chairs.



After Simulation

1. Facilitate a discussion about what happened during the game. Have each person share what items were lost during the simulation and how s/he would feel if those items were actually lost in a situation of armed conflict.

2. After participants have finished sharing their lost items, discuss the struggles faced by refugees/internally displaced persons and the protections they receive through IHL.



Discussion Questions

Participants' Experience

1. What happened during this simulation?
2. Why did you choose the prized possessions that you did (favorite item/person/clothing/place in the home)
3. How did you feel when you lost your prized possessions?
4. Which people or items would you not leave behind if you had to flee an armed conflict?

Refugees' Experience and Protections

1. What items do refugees and IDPs lose when fleeing?
2. What struggles do they face when escaping an armed conflict?
3. How many refugees do you think there are today?
19.5 million refugees (as of 2014)
5. Can you name any countries that people are currently fleeing due to conflict?
Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Colombia, Pakistan, Ukraine, Sudan/South Sudan, Somalia, etc.
6. How would you feel if you found yourself living in a completely different culture without your friends or even family? For example, living in Japan while not knowing Japanese?
7. What are some daily tasks or activities that you find easy, but that refugees living in the United States might find difficult?
Using public transportation, opening a bank account, getting food, finding stores or other businesses, getting a job or apartment
8. What legal protections do you think would help to keep refugees safe?
9. What could you do to help refugees in your community?

See the next page for an overview of the legal protections for refugees.



What You Need to Know

Refugee Law

Refugees enjoy, first and foremost, protection under international refugee law and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which is the agency mandated to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees. The 1951 [UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees](#) provides the definition of the term refugee. A refugee is any person who:

... owing to **well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality** and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.

The [principle of non-refoulement](#) in refugee law prohibits states from returning a refugee to a territory where there is a risk that his or her life or freedom would be threatened on account of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion. This principle is key to ensuring that the legal protections refugees receive are effective.

International Humanitarian Law

Apart from the general protection given to civilians under IHL, [refugees receive special protection](#) under the Fourth Geneva Convention and Additional Protocol I during times of armed conflict. This additional protection addresses the vulnerability of refugees in the absence of direct protection by their country of nationality.

RESOURCES

[American Red Cross IHL Resources](#)

[ICRC IHL Resources](#)

[Geneva Academy Refugee Law Overview](#)

[IHL and Refugees/IDPs](#)

[UNHCR](#)



Activity Extension: IDPs

Additional Discussion Questions

1. How many internally displaced people (IDPs) do you think there are today?

As of the end of 2014, there are [38 million](#) IDPs in 52 countries around the world.

2. What countries have conflicts from which most IDPs are fleeing?

60 per cent of new IDPs are fleeing conflicts in just five countries:

[Iraq](#), [South Sudan](#), [Syria](#), [DRC](#), [Nigeria](#); and around three quarters of all IDPs are women and children.

3. Can you think of any additional challenges faced by IDPs? (see information below)

Legal Protections for IDPs

There is no convention for IDPs equivalent to the 1951 Refugee Convention. Nonetheless, international law protects IDPs under several bodies of law:

- IDPs are protected by international human rights law and domestic law;
- In situations of armed conflict they are protected by IHL as civilians, provided that they do not take a direct part in hostilities;
- The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, a non-binding document based on these two bodies of law, provides useful guidance on situations specifically affecting IDPs.

According to the UN Refugee Agency, IDPs are among the world's most vulnerable people. Even if they have fled for similar reasons as refugees, IDPs legally remain under the protection of their own government – even though that government might be the cause of their flight. This can make their journey to safety even more complicated.

More on IHL and IDPs

IHL plays an important part in preventing displacement before it occurs. Violations of rules that protect the civilian population are often a root cause of internal displacement. For example, intentional attacks by parties to an armed conflict on civilians and civilian objects are forbidden under IHL but, if conducted, can cause surviving populations to flee.

Other IHL rules that, if followed, can help prevent displacement include: the prohibition of indiscriminate methods of warfare as well as acts that threaten the civilian population's ability to survive – such as the destruction of crops, health facilities, water and power supplies.



What's Next?

Remember to follow up with participants after the discussion. Consider having them use social media to share their thoughts about the activity or complete a survey to gain feedback for next time.

Shake it Up!

- Create a publicity video using clips from the debriefing session to inspire others to learn about IHL.
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