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Special Issue: The Law of Armed Conflict

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Special Issue: The Law of Armed Conflict

Few areas of international law are as consequential as the Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC). At its very core, it entails an endeavor to regulate death and destruction both for those who participate in a conflict and for those who are simply affected by the conflict.

LOAC is also of continued relevance. The number of armed conflicts around the world does not seem to be on the wane, and thus there is no shortage of situations in which LOAC remains applicable.

Just as the law retains its consequence and relevance, the study of LOAC retains its importance. Old questions warrant revisiting, as the nature of conflicts change, new treaties are adopted, and the law continues on its path of development and interpretation. New questions also arise—as contemporary armed conflicts provide complexities that have not always been present in past conflicts—from conflict classification to the individual weapon in the hands of the infantryman.

Answers to such questions are best sought out at the point where theory and practice meet. Due to the very real life and death consequences of LOAC, theory must be rooted in and informed by an understanding of its practical application in the complex circumstances of armed conflict. While the creation and development of the law remains in the hands of states alone, there is no dispute that the wider community makes an important contribution to the application, implementation, and comprehension of the law.

This issue reflects that understanding and relationship. The 2nd Israel Defense Forces International Conference on the Law of Armed Conflict, held in Tel Aviv on April 25–27, 2017, brought over 120 international lawyers from different countries, organizations, and institutions to discuss some of the most topical issues in LOAC today. The Conference featured panels on topics such as targeting and proportionality, a practical scenario-based workshop considering real-world problems, and a keynote address by the inimitable Professor Yoram Dinstein. Briefings by senior military commanders and a field

tour of Israel's northern borders where armed conflicts are ongoing rounded out the program.

The discussions exemplified the reciprocal and enduring relationship between academia and practice, and demonstrated the recognition that a proper balance between military necessity and humanitarian considerations can only be achieved when the theory of the law reconciles with its practical application.

In sponsoring this issue, the *Vanderbilt Journal of Transnational Law* brings the discussions from the Conference to a wider readership, in conjunction with the Israel Defense Forces. By devoting this issue of the Journal to articles written by a combination of academics and practitioners, the Journal seeks to set forth a unique combination of perspectives on these complex legal issues. We trust that you will enjoy its contents.

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