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Professional Certificate in International Disaster Law

## International Humanitarian Law and Disasters

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**\*\*Asymmetric Warfare\*\***: Asymmetric warfare refers to warfare between two parties whose relative military power differs significantly, or whose strategies or tactics also differ significantly. International humanitarian law seeks to protect civilians and limit the effects of armed conflict, even in asymmetric warfare.

**\*\*Belligerent Occupation\*\***: Belligerent occupation is a temporary situation in which a hostile army takes control of a territory and becomes the occupying power. International humanitarian law applies to belligerent occupation and requires the occupying power to respect the laws in force in the occupied territory, unless absolutely prevented.

**\*\*Combatants\*\***: Combatants are individuals who are authorized to participate in hostilities during an armed conflict. They are subject to the laws of war and are entitled to prisoner-of-war status if captured. Combatants may be members of the armed forces or organized militias, volunteer corps, or resistance movements.

**\*\*Crimes Against Humanity\*\***: Crimes against humanity are serious violations of international law committed against any civilian population, with knowledge of the attack. These crimes include murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation, and other inhumane acts. International humanitarian law provides for the prosecution of individuals who commit crimes against humanity.

**\*\*Detainees\*\***: Detainees are individuals who are deprived of their liberty in connection with an armed conflict. International humanitarian law requires that detainees be treated humanely and that they be allowed to communicate with their families and the outside world.

**\*\*Disaster\*\***: A disaster is a serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society involving widespread human, material, economic, or environmental losses and impacts, which exceeds the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources. Disasters can be natural or man-made.

**\*\*Disaster Law\*\***: Disaster law is the body of law that governs the legal response to disasters, including the powers and duties of government agencies, the rights and obligations of individuals and organizations, and the role of international law. Disaster law is an interdisciplinary field that draws on principles from international humanitarian law, human rights law, environmental law, and other areas.

**\*\*Geneva Conventions\*\***: The Geneva Conventions are a series of international treaties that establish the rules of international humanitarian law during armed conflicts. The conventions provide protection for victims of war, including wounded and sick soldiers, prisoners of war, and civilians.

**\*\*Humanitarian Assistance\*\***: Humanitarian assistance is the provision of aid and relief to people who are affected by conflict, disaster, or other emergencies. International humanitarian law recognizes the right of civilians in need to receive humanitarian assistance and requires parties to an armed conflict to allow and

facilitate the rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief.

**\*\*International Humanitarian Law (IHL)\*\*:** International humanitarian law is the body of law that governs the conduct of armed conflict and seeks to minimize the suffering of civilians and other non-combatants. IHL is also known as the law of war or the law of armed conflict.

**\*\*Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)\*\*:** IDPs are individuals who have been forced to flee their homes due to conflict, violence, or other emergencies, but who remain within their country's borders. IDPs are protected by international human rights law and may also be entitled to assistance under international humanitarian law.

**\*\*Prisoners of War (POWs)\*\*:** POWs are individuals who are captured or detained by a party to an armed conflict. POWs are entitled to certain protections under international humanitarian law, including humane treatment, adequate food and medical care, and the right to communicate with their families.

**\*\*Refugees\*\*:** Refugees are individuals who have been forced to flee their country due to persecution, conflict, or other emergencies, and who are unable or unwilling to return. Refugees are protected by international human rights law and may also be entitled to assistance and protection under international refugee law.

**\*\*Responsibility to Protect (R2P)\*\*:** R2P is a principle of international law that holds states responsible for protecting their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity. If a state is unable or unwilling to protect its population, the international community has a responsibility to take collective action, including the use of force.

**\*\*Terrorism\*\*:** Terrorism is the use of violence or the threat of violence against civilians or non-combatants for political or ideological purposes. Terrorism is a violation of international humanitarian law and may also constitute a crime under national and international law.

**\*\*United Nations (UN)\*\*:** The UN is an intergovernmental organization that was established in 1945 to promote peace, security, and cooperation among nations. The UN plays a key role in promoting and enforcing international humanitarian law, including through its peacekeeping operations, humanitarian agencies, and international tribunals.

**\*\*War Crimes\*\*:** War crimes are serious violations of international humanitarian law committed during an armed conflict. War crimes include deliberate attacks on civilians or civilian objects, torture, hostage-taking, and the use of weapons that cause unnecessary suffering. International humanitarian law provides for the prosecution of individuals who commit war crimes.

**\*\*Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs)\*\*:** WMDs are weapons that are capable of causing large-scale destruction and loss of life, including nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons. The use of WMDs is a violation of international humanitarian law and may also constitute a crime under national and international law.

**\*\*Wounded and Sick\*\*:** International humanitarian law requires parties to an armed conflict to take all

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feasible measures to ensure the care and protection of the wounded and sick, regardless of their nationality or affiliation. Parties must also allow the free passage of medical personnel and equipment to provide care for the wounded and sick.