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Cicero famously said, “Inter arma enim silent leges” – Latin for “in times of war, the law falls silent.” Yet the media is regularly full of charges of “war crimes” and other violations of the laws of war, highlighting that numerous laws apply during war. Claims are also heard that such laws inappropriately “tie the hands of soldiers,” thus rendering professional armies ineffective against modern threats; claims that torture, carpet bombing of populated areas, and other banned practices should be utilized despite existing laws.

So what is this body of law that regulates warfare, and how does it operate in today’s modern conflicts? How is the law implemented in conflicts that consist of fighters who do not belong to any state, and sometimes fail to operate in today’s modern conflicts? How is the law implemented in conflicts that exist in the cyber, air, space, and sea arenas? An experienced group of legal experts will tackle these questions, and also the strengths and abilities of the law of armed conflict. These experts—many former military legal advisors—will discuss how the law is operationalized both on the battlefield and off, note where the law needs to evolve, and highlight the challenges of applying it in modern arenas such as cyberspace. They will also explore how the law is portrayed in the media, and the impact of such portrayal on combat operations.

This conference has been organized in coordination with the International Committee of the Red Cross’s Delegation for the United States and Canada.

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