

News Release

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Exhibition ‘Digital Dilemmas—Civilians a+ Heart’ Opens in Seoul, Marking the 75th Anniversary of the Geneva Conventions

- Exhibition explores continued relevance of the Geneva Conventions today
- Immersive multimedia installation, ‘Digital Dilemmas’, examines digital technology’s impacts on civilians in crisis situations
- Exhibition also showcases Switzerland’s ongoing commitment of global peace and security

(Seoul, 3 September) In commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Embassy of Switzerland in the Republic of Korea co-organized the exhibition ‘Digital Dilemmas—Civilians a+ Heart’ at the War Memorial of Korea which runs from 30 August to 16 November.

The Geneva Conventions, which contain the most important rules limiting the barbarity of war, led to the birth of modern International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and remain relevant in today’s world where armed conflicts still occur. They resonate more than ever in today’s world, where digitalization has transformed the nature of war and its impact on civilians and future warfare.

Against this backdrop, the exhibition ‘Digital Dilemmas—Civilians a+ Heart’ focuses on the Geneva Conventions and the impact of technology in crisis situations from a humanitarian perspective. Initially presented in Geneva in 2019, the Swiss Confederation and the ICRC brought the Digital Dilemmas experience to the UN headquarters in New York by shedding light on the protection of civilians in May 2023, when Switzerland held the first presidency of the UN Security Council.

In this exhibition, visitors will explore how digital technology impacts civilians in crisis and the work of humanitarian organizations through an immersive multimedia installation. They will also encounter a central light tower structure, repurposed from a previous exhibition for environmental sustainability, made possible by the collaboration with the War Memorial of Korea. The tower features works by ICRC photographers and contemporary artists curated by the museum for photography in Lausanne, Photo Elysée. These images metaphorically represent global humanitarian crises brought on by physical and digital conflicts, capturing the feeling of helplessness that often accompanies such events. Additionally, visitors will learn about the ICRC’s efforts to collaborate with innovation and advanced technology institutions to improve civilian protection.

The exhibition also highlights Switzerland’s continued commitment to global peace and security. Switzerland’s foreign policy emphasizes the protection of civilians in armed conflicts and the strengthening of International Humanitarian Law (IHL). Switzerland holds a non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council from 2023 to 2024. In May 2024, the UN Security Council adopted a Swiss-led resolution to protect humanitarian and UN personnel in conflict zones, garnering broad support from member states, including the Republic of Korea, which co-sponsored the resolution 2730. The exhibition also shows Switzerland’s engagement for peace on the Korean peninsula with its first ever participation in an international peace support operation as a member of the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission.

“Since 1949, the Geneva Conventions have safeguarded human dignity in the darkest times. While wars have evolved over time, wars have limits. Wars in the digital sphere also have limits. In that sense the conventions are relevant today,” Jamila Hammami, the head of ICRC Mission in Seoul, said. “I hope the exhibition will open a dialogue around the massive impact of these technologies on civilians during conflicts, and encourage people to take action to improve the infrastructure necessary to protect civilians.”

Dagmar Schmidt Tartagli, Ambassador of Switzerland to the Republic of Korea, reminded “the Geneva Conventions continue to save millions of lives; that the world has no more effective tool for protecting the victims of armed conflicts; and that it is not the rules of International Humanitarian Law that are inadequate, but the will to respect them that is lacking.” Finally, she also reiterated that “the year 2024 marks a joint term for South Korea and Switzerland as non-permanent members of the UN Security Council closely working together, during which the theme of protection of civilians and humanitarian personnel in armed conflicts is one of Switzerland’s priorities for its mandate on the Security Council and beyond.”

Meanwhile, the exhibition’s partners – the Republic of Korea National Red Cross and KOICA – are also showcasing how they approach humanitarian action and innovation in their relief and development projects. These projects will inspire further ideas for collaboration at the intersection of humanitarian work, development, technology and more.

The exhibition is sponsored by the Korea War-Memorial Organization, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea, the Swiss Confederation and the Swiss Fund Korea. The exhibition coincides with the Summit on Responsible Artificial Intelligence in the Military Domain (REAIM), which will be held in Seoul on 9 and 10 September to enhance understanding of the responsible development, deployment and use of AI in the military domain and contribute to the establishment of related international norms.

About the ICRC

Established in 1863, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is the world’s oldest and largest international humanitarian organization still active. It is a neutral, impartial and independent organization with an exclusively humanitarian mandate under the Geneva Conventions. It helps people around the world affected by armed conflict and other violence, doing everything it can to protect their lives and dignity and to relieve their suffering. The ICRC is at the origin of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and it was awarded the Nobel Peace Prizes as a tribute to its humanitarian activities. With its headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, about 19,000 ICRC staff members are working in over 100 countries around the world.

About Digital Dilemmas

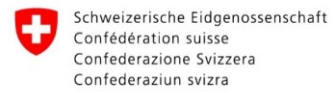
Since 2019, the Digital Dilemmas experience has been shown in some 40 locations around the world: Geneva, Dubai, Kigali, Luxembourg, Paris, Berlin, Nairobi, Davos, Pretoria, Zurich, San Francisco, Brussels, New York and Washington. The exhibition is planned to continue to tour the world and pass the same message: Digital risks have real life consequences. It also exists in the form of a website (<https://digital-dilemmas.icrc.org>) that more than half a million people have experienced. It is available in four languages, but four more are in the process to be uploaded.

About Switzerland’s Humanitarian Policy

As the depositary of the 1949 Geneva Conventions and their 1977 and 2005 Additional Protocols, Switzerland has many years of experience in humanitarian engagement and devotes consistent efforts to strengthening, promoting and improving compliance with International Humanitarian Law.

In particular, Switzerland is committed to the protection of civilians in armed conflicts. As a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council (2023-2024), Switzerland continues the promotion of global peace and security.

Switzerland as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council and four thematic priorities



Embassy of Switzerland in the Republic of Korea

As a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for the 2023-2024 term, Switzerland adopted four thematic priorities: building sustainable peace, protecting civilians in armed conflict, addressing the impacts of climate change on security and improving the Security Council's effectiveness.

In August 2024, Switzerland hosted the UN Security Council members in Geneva to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions. At the UN's Geneva headquarters, the Federal Councilor Ignazio Cassis called on States and all international actors to renew their commitment to International Humanitarian Law and to make the Geneva Conventions a political priority.