

# -Humanitarian Law RULES!

Center for the Study of Humanitarian Law  
Newsletter

May 2017

## U.S missile strikes against Syria airbase amount to international armed conflict

On 4 April 2017 chemical weapons were launched against civilians in town of Khan Sheikhoun in Syria, which killed approximately a hundred of people including children. Two days later the U.S. carried out airstrikes against Syrian airbase in response to the alleged chemical attack by the Syrian government, which internationalizes armed conflict in Syria, ICRC said.

It was however not the first time that chemical weapons have been used in Syria conflict. There were several times and the largest scale of use of chemical weapons was in August 2013, which killed approximately 1,400 people.

The use of chemical weapons is strictly prohibited by the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and customary international humanitarian law. Chemical weapons inflict great suffering and significant casualties which are utterly incapable of distinguishing between civilians and combatants. The violation of using such deadly weapons provoked justification for U.S intervention in Syria. The investigation on using chemical weapons is underway and Syrian government continues to deny responsibility to the allegation.

Although the ongoing conflict in Syria comprises of several fighting groups and involves other countries, it has remained as non-international armed conflict until U.S missile struck on the 6<sup>th</sup> of April against Syrian airbase. In principle when a state consents to the presence and conduct of military operation by another state in its territory, it would not be regarded as international armed conflict between those two states. In this case, the U.S.'s airstrike against the Syrian government airbase amounts to an international armed conflict as it conducted the military operation without getting consent from the Syrian government.

It is also interesting to note that the international community seems to concern only the escalation of the situation rather than the changing of nature of armed conflict, which requires more protection to the prisoners of war.

## LIBRARY HOURS

May 2017

Mon to Fri: 8.45am – 5.30pm

The Center will be closed on:

- 1 May (International Labour Day)
- 10 May (Visak Bochea Day)
- 13-14-15 May (King Norodom Sihamoni's Birthday)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- 8 May – Sweden Ambassador's speech on EU at RULE & a short visit to CSHL
- 8-12 May – Lecture Series on EU by CSHL Visiting Prof. David Ramiro Troitino from Tallinn University of Technology (Estonia)

## RESEARCH AT THE LIBRARY

Did you know that you can access online databases, Westlaw International and Westlaw UK, at the library? These databases give you access to 1000s of documents that will help you with your research. And if you need help using them, we're more than happy to assist!

