



ICRC

JOINT MEDIA ADVISORY

Bi- annual Joint AU / ICRC Seminar

Theme: “*The Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflicts and Other Situations of Violence in Africa*”

INVITATION TO REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MEDIA

When: 14th November 2011

Where: Plenary Hall of the African Union Headquarters, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Who: Jointly organised by the Department of Political Affairs of the African Union Commission (AUC) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Why: Since the African Union Commission is currently in the process of defining and developing its own specific protection approach and agenda, the joint biannual seminar of the African Union Commission and the International Committee of the Red Cross will be dedicated this year to the theme of the protection of civilians.

Objectives:

This seminar will be the occasion to;

- look at the challenges and threats faced by civilians both in the context of armed conflicts and in other situations of violence such as internal tensions or internal disturbances, and
- remind States on their legal obligations towards civilians under international law.
- offer the opportunity to clarify how different actors, from humanitarian to peace support mission, while acknowledging their different role and responsibilities, can all distinctly contribute to the protection of civilians in line with their respective mandate.

Participants: Participants will include:

- Representatives of AU Member States;
- Regional Economic Communities (RECs);
- UN Agencies;
- International Organizations;

- Various Experts in the field of Protection of Civilians (POC) and
- other invited guests.

Background:

The protection of civilians (PoC) in armed conflicts is at the heart of international humanitarian law (IHL), and has always been at the core of the identity of the International Committee of the Red Cross since its foundation almost 150 years ago. Under IHL, civilians must be spared and protected against attacks and acts of violence or abuse of all kinds. This protection is also complimented by the provisions of other bodies of international law, such as human rights and refugee law.

In recent years, more and more peace support operations, in Africa and elsewhere, have also been explicitly mandated to protect civilians and considerable effort has since been placed on the conceptualization and further operationalisation of PoC in peace support missions. Clarity has been gained on the specific and often unique contributions that peace support operations can bring to the protection of civilians. The African Union Commission has been active in this regard with the hosting of an international symposium in Addis Ababa in March 2010 and the development of Draft guidelines for the protection of civilians in AU Peace support operations, aimed at helping the strategic and operational levels in the planning, mandating, deployment and management of such operations. On the AU Assembly's request, the Commission has continued to work in recent months on ways to further develop and implement the draft guidelines.

Besides, civilian's protection challenges have been high on the agenda of the AU and its Peace and Security Council in 2011.

In light of those situations and because the AU Commission is currently in the process of defining and developing its own specific protection approach and agenda, the joint biannual seminar of the African Union Commission and the International Committee of the Red Cross will be dedicated this year to the theme of the protection of civilians.

Journalists are invited to cover the official opening and closing sessions of the AU – ICRC 11th Joint Seminar on 14th November 2011, at 9 am, in the Plenary Hall of the African Union Conference Center.

For Further Information consult the AU website: www.au.int