

Red Cross Urges All Sides in Ukraine Civil War to Uphold Law

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All sides in Ukraine's civil war must protect civilians and take what measures they can to search for the victims of downed Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 airliner and ensure their bodies are returned, the International Committee of the Red Cross said.

In a statement on Wednesday, the ICRC also said that international law required warring parties to distinguish between military targets and civilian objects such as schools and to protect the wounded, former combatants and detainees.

"The parties to the conflict must ensure the highest possible standards are met as regards search, recovery, handling and identification of the remains, and must keep the bereaved informed throughout the process," ICRC director of operations Dominik Stillhart said.

Two military aircraft are due to touch down at Eindhoven in the southern Netherlands on Wednesday, bearing the remains of the first of the crash victims.

With 193 of the dead Dutch nationals, the Netherlands was observing a national day

of mourning in memory of the 298 people killed when flight MH17 crashed in an area of eastern Ukraine held by Russian-backed separatists on July 17.

The independent aid agency had contacted the Ukrainian government and representatives of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic to offer its help in managing the bodies.

"The ICRC is prepared to facilitate the movements and activities of the specialists until their work is complete and the remains of all victims have been recovered and identified," Stillhart said.

Reuters reported on Tuesday that the Red Cross has made a confidential legal assessment that Ukraine is officially in a war, opening the door to possible war crimes prosecutions, including over the downing of MH17.

See also:

[Ukraine: Separatists Downed 2 Fighter Jets Close to Crash Site](#)

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