

ABSTRACT

The research examines enforcement of international humanitarian law as codified in the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their two Additional Protocols of 1977. The study looks at early attempts to enforce international humanitarian law dating back to the Nuremberg and Tokyo Trials of 1945 and the implications they have had on trials that have come thereafter. In particular the study focuses on the jurisprudence of the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia established by the United Nations Security Council on 25th May 1993 and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda established on 8th November 1994. The main objective of the study is to analyze the contributions of the two ad hoc tribunals to the development and enforcement of international humanitarian law and to inquire as to status of this branch of the law within the wider frame of international law. The study established that the two tribunals have contributed immensely to the enforcement of international humanitarian law and have brought to life provisions of the Genocide Convention of 1948 and the Geneva Conventions of 12th August 1949 plus their two Additional Protocols of 1977 that are the main sources of the law of armed conflicts. The study further established that the jurisprudence of the two tribunals has provided useful interpretation of international humanitarian law and the judicial precedents arising from the trials would offer useful guidelines to the interpretation of the law by the newly established International Criminal Court and national courts. The establishment of the two tribunals sent a signal that violations of international humanitarian law would no longer be tolerated by the international community whether they occur, whether during internal or international armed conflicts