

**PRESS RELEASE**

**Blue Shield For immediate release: 13 Feb 2020**

**Blue Shield signs agreement with International Committee of the Red Cross**



*Photo: Signing of the MoU, 13 February 2020, Geneva. © ICRC 2020*

*From left to right: Benjamin Charlier (ICRC), Peter Stone (Vice-President of Blue Shield / Newcastle University), Karl von Habsburg (President Blue Shield), Helen Durham (ICRC), Yves Daccord (Director General ICRC), Jennifer Price Jones (Blue Shield)*

This week, Blue Shield signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Geneva. The agreement will see the two organisations working together to:

- Encourage countries to ratify international law for the protection of cultural property in the event of armed conflict and provide technical advice on how to implement this
- Cooperate regarding awareness-raising of humanitarian organisations and national officials on the protection of cultural property
- Share information where possible and compatible with security, on cultural property at risk.

*“I am extremely pleased to be signing this MoU with the ICRC as it underlines the fact that the protection of cultural property and heritage is indivisibly interwoven with the protection of people,”* said Karl Habsburg, President of the Blue Shield. *“The ICRC and Blue Shield focus on, and have expertise in, different aspects of this integrated whole, and our work supports and strengthens each other’s activities. I look forward to a long and very productive relationship.*

*“I should like to thank Benjamin Charlier, of the ICRC, and Professor Peter Stone and his UNESCO Chair team in Cultural Property Protection & Peace at Newcastle University in the UK. “Without their work, and Newcastle University’s support, this MoU would not have been possible. Finally, I’d like to thank Jennifer Price Jones for her important contribution in helping develop Blue Shield’s work with the Humanitarian community.”*



The ICRC is an independent, neutral organisation which ensures humanitarian protection and assistance for victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence. It takes action in response to emergencies and promotes respect for international humanitarian law and its implementation in national law. Its work is based on the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their 1977 Additional Protocols.

Underlining the value of this partnership agreement, Yves Daccord, Director-General of the ICRC said: *“Protecting cultural property and cultural heritage against the devastating effects of war unfortunately remains a humanitarian imperative, today perhaps more than ever. Joining forces with a partner like the Blue Shield through the signing of this MoU is therefore extremely important for the ICRC. I am very pleased with this new partnership and look forward to maximizing the impact of our programs in the field of the protection of cultural heritage, through the coordination of activities with the Blue Shield.”*

The Blue Shield is an international non-governmental organisation (NGO) that has as its mission to protect the world’s cultural and natural heritage, tangible and intangible, in the event of armed conflict, natural- or human-made disaster, and which advises UNESCO regarding the protection of cultural property in the event of armed conflict. It was created in 1996 and comprises an international Board elected by 25 national committees.

*“This is a really important step forward in the wider protection of cultural property and it simply would not have happened without the support of Newcastle University,”* said Professor Stone, the UNESCO Chair for Cultural Property Protection and Peace. *“It’s a statement to the world that both organisations see the critical importance to communities of their tangible and intangible cultural heritage. This is a really important step forward in the wider protection of cultural property and it would not have happened without the support of Newcastle University.”*

*“A first step to much stronger collaboration and, we hope, much better protection.”*

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