

INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW (IHL) MOOT COURT NATIONAL ROUND 2026 IN JAPAN

RULES (2026)

GENERAL

1. The Moot Court Competition shall be conducted under the auspices of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which shall have the power to:
 - (i) co-opt members of the Organizing Committee;
appoint a SECRETARY and an ADMINISTRATOR;
 - (ii) appoint judges; and
 - (iii) amend the rules as it thinks fit

PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS AND REGISTRATION

Eligibility

2. A participating institution must be established in Japan. Each institution may enter only one team to participate in the Competition. The Organizing Committee, at its own discretion, may consider additional teams if it is deemed really necessary and not hindering equality between teams.
3. Each team shall have four students. It shall be comprised of two students for the Prosecutor's role and two students for the Defendant's role. The roles of Prosecutor and Defendant will be allocated to the students by the participating institution.
4. Regardless of Rules 2 and 3, however, if teams could not be composed with four students due to various reasons, teams shall request the Organizing Committee to get an approval to form a team with only less than four students, provided that the teams comprise students from the same institutions, who meet the requirements laid out below. The Organizing Committee shall respond to the request after a sole review and decision. Such teams must allocate students to the roles of the Prosecutor and the Defendant within the same team.
5. Participating students shall be registered either for a first degree in law, including Junior Doctor (JD), or any undergraduate and postgraduate qualification in social science and

related subjects below the level of a doctorate. A person is ineligible to participate in the Competition if he or she:

- i. is registered for a doctoral degree in law, excluding a JD, at a participating institution or at any other institution;
- ii. holds any doctoral degree in law (other than a JD), regardless of the institution that conferred such doctorate;
- iii. holds or has held a full time or part time teaching post in law at any tertiary institution; or
- iv. has been admitted or licensed to practice law in any jurisdiction.

6. Participating students need not be nationals of Japan.
7. In order to avoid any inequality between teams that may arise from the participation of extremely qualified or experienced participants, the Organizing Committee may, at its discretion, decide not to accept the participation of students with significant experience in the field of International Humanitarian Law or humanitarian action. Significant experience includes but is not limited to, three months or more working for an international organization, or participation in Red Cross International Humanitarian Law Moot (An Inter-University Competition for Asia-Pacific Region) twice in previous years, regardless of acting as a mooter or a researcher.

Registration: Registration procedure and fees

8. The registration for the competition will be closed **on 23 September 2026**. No fee shall be charged. Upon registration, the name, e-mail address and telephone number of a contact person of the participating institution shall be notified to the ICRC.
9. Each participating institution shall notify the ICRC by **12 October 2026** with the following information:
 - (i) The names of all students in the team;
 - (ii) Which students will respectively fill the roles of Prosecutor and Defendant.

Contact Person

10. Each contact person representing a participating institution will receive:
 - (i) The individual moot number assigned to each participating team;
 - (ii) Any other relevant materials.

The contact person for each participating institution is responsible for distributing the foregoing information and materials to his/her team.

SUBSTITUTION OF TEAM MEMBERS

11. A team will normally not be permitted to make any substitution of its students after they have been registered under **Rules 2 to 9**. In exceptional circumstances and with the express prior approval of the SECRETARY, a participating institution may for the oral hearings substitute a student. The eligibility of substitute members will be the same as other participating students pursuant to **Rules 2 to 7**.

THE MOOT PROBLEM

Selection of the Moot Problem

12. The SECRETARY shall have the sole power to determine the moot problem to be used in the Moot Court Competition.

Distribution of the Moot Problem

13. The moot problem will be distributed by the ICRC.

Facts and Clarifications of the Moot Problem

14. The facts that constitute the subject matter of the moot are provided in the moot problem. No additional facts may be introduced unless they are a logical and necessary extension of the given facts in the moot problem.
15. Any request(s) for clarification(s) of the moot problem must be brought to the attention of the SECRETARY by **23 September 2026**. All clarifications requests shall be replied to at the latest on **30 September 2026** by the ICRC. Requests and clarifications shall be distributed at all participating teams.

The Organizing Committee shall have absolute discretion to determine whether it is necessary to respond to any request for clarification and to resolve such request in a manner in which it thinks fit.

GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSION OF SUMMARY OF ARGUMENTS (MEMORIALS)

Form and Length of Memorials

16. Each team shall submit memorials for both the Prosecutor and the Defendant, as designated by their participating institution.

17. Each memorial shall be typed with 1½ line-spacing, using **TIMES NEW ROMAN**, font size 12. Each memorial submitted **shall not exceed 4,000 words in total, including titles and subtitles, citations, footnotes, endnotes, sources, etc (excluding a cover sheet).**

If a memorial **exceeds 4,000 words**, the SECRETARY shall deduct marks from that memorial score according to the following scale:

- i. 1-50 words in excess – deduction of 5 marks;
- ii. 51-100 words in excess – deduction of 10 marks;
- iii. 101-200 words in excess – deduction of 20 marks; and
- iv. Over 200 words in excess – deduction of 30 marks.

In the event that any team violates any of the format requirements (pursuant to **Rules 17-19**), 10 marks from the teams' memorial score out of 200 (calculated pursuant to **Rule 46**) shall be deducted.

18. All citations must either be in the body of the text or in footnotes and should use a proper legal citing standard.

19. **A cover sheet** of each memorial must indicate:

- (i) The team's **individual moot number** which will be given to the relevant contact person of the team's participating institution upon registration (see Rule 10 above).
- (ii) Whether the memorial is for the Prosecutor or the Defendant.
- (iii) The word count of the memorial.

In the event that any team discloses its institution name on the cover sheet, the Organizing Committee shall deduct 10 marks from each of the team's memorial score out of 200.

Submission of Memorials

20. Each team shall submit memorials for both the Prosecutor and Defendant either via **E-MAIL** to the **SECRETARY** by 11:59 pm, **12 October 2026**, at the following address: ihlmootcourtjapanround@gmail.com.
21. Each team shall submit the memorials in **two separate PDF files format**. Each file name must bear the team registration number and role (e.g. 10xProsecutor.pdf / 10xDefendant.pdf).
22. In the event that any team fails to submit its memorial on time (pursuant to **Rule 20**), 10 marks for each calendar day from the team's memorial score out of 200 (calculated pursuant to **Rule 46**) shall be deducted. Any team failing to submit their memorials to the SECRETARY by the given dates will be disqualified from the competition.

Revision of Memorials

23. A memorial **may not** be revised for any purpose whatsoever once it has been submitted.

Maximum number of teams to proceed to the oral hearing

24. If more than twelve teams are registering for the Moot Court Competition, the Organizing Committee may select highest ranking teams of total score of memorials to proceed to the oral hearings of the competition.

Pairing of teams and exchange of memorials

25. The SECRETARY will pair each Prosecutor from a participating institution with a Defendant from another participating institution.

The pairing will be conducted by the **SECRETARY in accordance with a seeding system based on the ranking of the teams' memorial scores.** In principle, teams will first be divided into two groups according to their memorial scores (higher-scoring teams in Group 1 and lower-scoring teams in Group 2), and then one team from Group 1 will be paired with one team from Group 2. No team shall compete against the same team twice in the General Rounds.

The SECRETARY shall distribute a copy of the memorials of paired Prosecutor/Defendant to the respective Prosecutor/Defendant on **13 November 2026** by email.

GUIDELINES ON ASSISTANCE AND PRACTICE SESSIONS

Memorials

26. All research, writing and editing relating to the memorial must be the work of the two students submitting that memorial, provided, however, that they may receive research assistance from the two other students from the same participating institution.

Assistance from Staff and Other Advisors

27. Staff of the participating institutions including coaches, assistants or advisors should restrict their advice to general matters, such as to a discussion of the issues in the moot problem, suggestions as to research sources, and a general commentary in relation to the organization, structure, the flow of arguments, format, presentation and style.

Practice Sessions

28. Each participating institution may arrange its own practice sessions prior to the Moot Court Competition.

ADMINISTRATOR AND COMPLAINTS BOARD

29. As a neutral ADMINISTRATOR, a representative from the ICRC will be appointed to oversee the organization and judging of the Moot Court Competition.
30. A complaints board shall be made available to address any complaints. All decisions of the board are **FINAL**.

DATE AND VENUE OF THE MOOT COURT COMPETITION

31. The Moot Court Competition will be held **onsite at Japan Red Cross Society Hiroshima Branch on November 21 - 23**

COMPOSITION OF TEAMS AND ORDER OF THE ORAL HEARING

32. Each Prosecutor/Defendant will consist of **TWO** oralists comprising of a **First Counsel** and the **Second Counsel**.
33. In the event that a team fails to appear for a scheduled oral hearing, the round of the Competition in concern will proceed as an *ex parte* hearing in the following order:
 - (i) A court clerk will confirm the presence of both teams.
 - (ii) If one team is absent, the court clerk will inform the judges and notify the SECRETARY.
 - (iii) Once the SECRETARY has been notified, the SECRETARY will then call the contact person of the absent team.
 - (iv) If the team called by the SECRETARY fails to appear by the starting time, the court clerk will announce to the court that there is no appearance by the team called.
 - (v) The oral hearing will then proceed as an *ex parte* hearing.
 - (vi) The opposing team that presents in the court will receive scores pursuant to **Rule 47**.
34. The order of the oral hearing are as follows:
 - (a) Prosecutor's first counsel;
 - (b) Prosecutor's second counsel;
 - (c) Defendant's first counsel;
 - (d) Defendant's second counsel;

- (e) Rebuttal (if any by either the Prosecutor's first counsel or second counsel);
 - (f) Surrebuttal (if any by Defendant's first counsel or second counsel)
35. The Prosecutor and Defendant shall each speak for **no more than 40 minutes including rebuttal and surrebuttal**. Each counsel shall each speak individually for a minimum of 15 minutes.
36. The Prosecutor and the Defendant may reserve up to 10 minutes for rebuttal or surrebuttal. The scope of the Prosecutor's rebuttal is limited to responding to the Defendant's oral hearings, and the scope of the Defendant's surrebuttal is limited to responding to the Prosecutor's rebuttal. Either the First or Second Counsel may address the court for the rebuttal or surrebuttal. To avoid any doubts, the time reserved for rebuttal or surrebuttal is not included in the minimum time for each counsel to speak as specified in **Rule 35**.
37. The Prosecutor and the Defendant shall indicate at the beginning of the oral hearing, how long each counsel will speak and how much time it intends to reserve for rebuttal or surrebuttal.
38. The court may, at its discretion, extend the time allocated to each counsel, provided that the maximum extension for any counsel **shall not exceed FIVE** minutes.
39. Time shall be kept by a court clerk or timekeeper who will remind each counsel by appropriate means when they have:
- (i) 15 minutes left;
 - (ii) 10 minutes left;.
 - (iii) 5 minutes left;
 - (iv) 1 minute left;
 - (v) to conclude their address forthwith.
40. Communication between the two counsels of the same team shall be in writing to prevent disruption, and teams and observers shall avoid all unnecessary noise or other inappropriate behavior which distracts from the argument in progress.
41. Team members seated at the counsel table shall not be permitted to communicate with observers, or with any other external person except the judges. Without limiting the foregoing, with respect to teams that have researchers, mooters shall not be permitted to communicate with the researchers during the oral hearings.
42. The use of electronic devices during oral hearings are NOT permitted.
43. **The name of participating institution may not be indicated or visible to the judges directly or indirectly, including wearing uniform or using stationary with logos, emblems, or any other signifiers identifying the name of institutions.**

FORMAT OF THE MOOT COURT COMPETITION

44. The format of the Moot Court Competition shall consist of the submission of memorials and the oral rounds. (See **Rules 16-23** above on guidelines for memorials)

All participating teams must submit their memorials at a specific dateline prior to the oral rounds of the Moot Court Competition as stated in **Rule 20**.

There shall be two or three general oral rounds of the Competition depending on the number of teams participating in the competition. Each team shall argue once in each general round as the Prosecutor and as the Defendant respectively.

SCORING

45. Scoring shall consist of the scoring of **the memorials and oral rounds**.

46. The **scoring of the memorials** shall be assessed by a panel of **TWO** memorial judges. The memorial score for each team is determined by adding together the **TWO** Memorial judges raw scores respectively (200 points maximum). The memorial judges will be given copies of the memorials with the cover sheet indicating only the **participating teams' individual moot number**.

47. The **scoring of the oral rounds** shall be assessed based on the following:

- **General Rounds**

The oral hearing scores shall be assessed by a panel of **THREE** judges. The maximum score given by each judge for each oralist shall be **100 points**, and the maximum score for the Prosecutor and Defendant shall be **300 points**.

The oral hearing scores for the Prosecutor/Defendant will be determined by adding together the **THREE** judges raw scores respectively (600 points maximum) and the oral hearing scores for the team will be determined by adding together the scores for both the Prosecutor and the Defendant (1,200 points maximum).

The four highest-ranking teams of **overall score** from the combination of the oral hearing scores in the General Rounds and the memorial scores of both the Prosecutor and the Defendant will advance to the Semi-final Rounds.

In the event that, after the completion of the General Rounds, two or more of the teams have tied for eligibility for the Semi-final round, then the teams to proceed to the semi-final round shall be the team from those which have the higher average score of both the Prosecutor and the Defendant out of 1,200 for its oral hearings in the general rounds. In the further event that such teams are also tied in their average score out for oral hearings in the general rounds, the team which will proceed to the final round shall be the team whose first counsels of both the Prosecutor and the Defendant have the higher average score out of 600 for his or her oral hearings in the general rounds. Where more than two teams have tied, the Organizing Committee Chairman or his/her representative shall discuss with the respective judges and the decision after discussion shall be final.

• **Semi-final Round**

In Semi-final Rounds, the pairings shall be determined on the basis of power seeding as follows: the fourth-ranked team versus the first ranked team; and the second-ranked team versus the third-ranked team.

The higher-ranked team in each pairing shall have the right to choose its role (Prosecutor or Defendant). Once the roles are confirmed, the SECRETARY will announce the pairings and make available a copy of each team's memorial to its opposing team.

The oral hearing scores shall be assessed by a panel of **THREE** judges. The court will decide which is the winning team based on their oral presentation without scoring. The two winning teams of each pair of opposing teams in the Semi-final Rounds shall advance to the Final Round.

• **Final Round**

The SECRETARY will determine the role to be played by the two (2) teams (Prosecutor or Defendant) in the Final Round by means of a random draw after completion of Semi-Final Round. The SECRETARY will then announce the pairing results and make available a copy of each team's memorial to its opposing team.

The oral hearing shall be assessed by a panel of **THREE** judges. The court will decide which is the winning team based on their oral presentation without scoring.

48. The decision of the judges shall be **FINAL**.

AWARDS

49. The Prosecutor or the Defendant with the best total average oral scores in the **FINAL ROUND** will be declared as the winning team.

50. The oralist with the highest individual total oral scores in the oral hearings of the general round of the Moot Court Competition shall be adjudged the **Best Mooter** and shall be awarded with a certificate.
51. The Prosecutor memorial with the highest score out of 200 points should be adjudged the Best Memorial for Prosecutor; the Defendant memorial with the highest score out of 200 points shall be adjudged the Best Memorial for Defendant (pursuant to **Rule 46**). The teams submitted such memorials shall be respectively awarded a certificate.
52. The Organizing Committee may in its discretion decide to award alternative prizes in lieu of the prizes described above.

INTERPRETATION OF THE OFFICIAL RULES

53. The SECRETARY shall have absolute discretion to resolve any questions or issues regarding the interpretation of the official rules.

OTHER RULES

54. The Organizing Committee may from time to time make any other rules and procedures deemed advisable for the conduct of the Competition, in its sole discretion.