

René-Jean Wilhelm | Classes of 1946 & 1983

René-Jean Wilhelm was one of the four lawyers from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) who authored the four Geneva Conventions of 1949. He was one of the most important figures of his generation in international humanitarian law, due to his dedication to the protection of civilians in armed conflicts. Deeply committed to the cause, he was convinced that all civilians needed to be protected by the Geneva Conventions. He is notably known for his leading role in the establishment of Article III, the “mini Geneva Convention”, which represented the first set of rules of international law applicable to conflicts of a non-international character.



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René-Jean Wilhelm was one of the four lawyers, alongside Claude Pilloud, Frédéric Siordet and Jean de Preux, who wrote the four Geneva Conventions in 1949, under the direction of Jean Pictet.



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René-Jean Wilhelm played an important role in the negotiations leading to the additional protocols of 1977. Here, he is pictured at a plenary during the first session of the conference on the additional protocols in 1974.



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In December 1974, René-Jean Wilhelm was awarded a medal by Éric Martin, then President of the ICRC, in recognition of his 30 years of dedicated service to the organisation. The former Swiss Federal Councilor, Max Petitpierre was present, sitting on the far right.

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