**GENEVA CONVENTIONS ACT**

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GENEVA CONVENTIONS ACT

**An Act to enable effect to be given in the Federal Republic of Nigeria to certain international conventions done at Geneva on the twelfth day of August, nineteen hundred and forty-nine and for purposes connected therewith.**

[1960 No. 54.]

*[30th September, 1960]*

[Commencement.]

1. **Short title and application**

This Act may be cited as the Geneva Conventions Act, and shall have effect as pro-vided in section 12 of this Act.

1. **Interpretation**

(1) In this Act, the expression **"the Conventions"** means-

*(a)* the First Geneva Convention, 1949;

*(b)* the Second Geneva Convention 1949;

*(c)* the Third Geneva Convention 1949; and

       (d)       the Fourth Geneva Convention, 1949,

and such Conventions respectively mean the Convention done in each case at Geneva on the 12th day of August, 1949-

                       (i)    for the amelioration of the condition of the wounded and sick in armed forces in the field;

                       (ii)     for the amelioration of the condition of wounded, sick and shipwrecked members of the armed forces at sea;

 (iii)     relative to the treatment of prisoners of war; and

(iv)     relative to the protection of civilians in time of war.

(2) In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires-

**"protected internee**" means a person protected by the Fourth Geneva Convention,  
1949, and interned in Nigeria;

**"protected prisoner of war"** means a person protected by the Third Geneva Con-  
vention, 1949;

**"protecting power"** in relation to a protected prisoner of war or a protected internee, means the power or organisation which is carrying out, in the interests of the power of which he is a national, the duties assigned to protecting powers under the Third or, as the case may be, Fourth Geneva Convention, 1949;

**"solicitor"** includes any legal practitioner having the right of audience before the Su-  
preme Court.

*Punishment of offenders against Conventions*

1. **Grave breaches of Conventions**

(1) If, whether in or outside the Federal Republic of Nigeria, any person, whatever  
his nationality, commits, or aids, abets or procures any other person to commit any such  
grave breach of any of the Conventions as is referred to in the articles of the Conventions set out in the First Schedule of this Act, that is to say-

*(a)* article 50 of the First Geneva Convention, 1949;

*(b)* article 51 of the Second Geneva Convention, 1949;

*(c)* article 130 of the Third Geneva Convention, 1949;

*(d)* article 147 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, 1949,

[First Schedule.]

he shall on conviction thereof-

                                                (i)     in the case of such a grave breach as aforesaid involving the wilful  
killing of a person protected by the Convention in question, be sentenced to death; and

                                              (ii)     in the case of any other such grave breach, be liable to imprisonment  
for a term not exceeding fourteen years.

(2) A person may be proceeded against, tried and sentenced in the Federal Capital  
Territory, Abuja for an offence under this section committed outside Nigeria as if the  
offence had been committed in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja and the offence shall, for all purposes incidental to or consequential on the trial or punishment thereof, be deemed to have been committed in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

(3) If, in proceedings under this section for a grave breach of any of the Conventions  
any question arises under article 2 of the relevant Convention (which relates in the case  
of each Convention to the circumstances in which the Convention applies and is set out in  
the Second Schedule to this Act), that question shall be determined by the Minister  
charged with responsibility for matters relating to defence and a certificate purporting to  
set out any such determination and to be signed by or on behalf of such Minister shall be  
received in evidence and deemed to be so signed without further proof, unless the con-  
trary is shown.

[Second Schedule.]

1. **Power to provide for punishment of other breaches of Conventions**  
   (1) The President may, by order provide that if any person-

*(a)* in Nigeria commits, or aids, abets or procures any other person to commit, whether in or outside Nigeria; or

*(b)* being a citizen of Nigeria, or a member of, or attached or seconded to the  
armed forces of Nigeria, or a person to whom section 292 of the Armed Forces Act, applies, or a member of or serving with any voluntary aid society formed in Nigeria and recognised as such by the Federal Government, commits, whether in or outside Nigeria, or aids, abets or procures any other person to  
commit, whether in or outside Nigeria,

[Cap. A20.]

any breach of any of the Conventions which may be specified in the order other than one punishable under section 3 of this Act, he shall be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding seven years.

(2) A person may be proceeded against, tried and sentenced in the Federal Capital  
Territory, Abuja for an offence under an order made under this section committed outside  
Nigeria as if the offence had been committed in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja and  
the offence shall, for all purposes incidental to or consequential on the trial or punishment  
thereof, be deemed to have been committed in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

*Provisions as to certain legal proceedings*

1. **Notice of trial of protected persons to be served on protecting power**  
   (1) The court before which-

*(a)* a protected prisoner of war is brought up for trial for any offence; or

*(b)* a protected internee is brought up for an offence for which that court has power to sentence him to death or to imprisonment for a term of two years or more,

shall not proceed with the trial until it is proved to the satisfaction of the court that a notice containing the particulars mentioned in subsection (2) of this section, so far as they  
are known to the prosecutor, has been served not less than the three weeks previously on  
the protecting power and, if the accused is a protected prisoner of war, on the accused and  
the prisoner's representative.

(2) The particulars referred to in subsection (1) of this section are-

*(a)* the full name and description of the accused, including the date of his birth and his profession or trade, if any, and, if the accused is a protected prisoner of war, his rank and army, regimental, personal or serial number;

*(b)* his place of detention, internment or residence;

*(c)* the offence with which he is charged; and

*(d)* the court before which the trial is to take place and the time and place ap-  
pointed for the trial.

(3) For the purposes of this section, a document purporting-

*(a)* to be signed on behalf of the protecting power or by the prisoners' representative or by the person accused, as the case may be; and

*(b)* to be an acknowledgement of the receipt by that power, representative or person on a specified day of a notice described therein as a notice under this section,

shall, unless the contrary is shown, be sufficient evidence that the notice required by subsection (1) of this section was serviced on that power, representative or person on that day.

(4) In this section, "prisoner's representative" in relation to a particular protected  
prisoner of war at a particular time means the person by whom the functions of prisoner's  
representative within the meaning of article 79 of the Third Geneva Convention, 1949,  
(which is set out in the Second Schedule to this Act) was exercisable in relation to that  
prisoner at the camp or place where that prisoner was, at or last before that time, detained  
as a protected prisoner of war.

[Second Schedule.]

(5) Notwithstanding anything in any other enactment, any court which adjourns a  
trial to enable the requirements of this section to be complied with may remand the ac-  
cused for the period of the adjournment.

1. **Legal representation of certain persons**   
   ( I) The court before which-

*(a)* any person is brought up for trial for an offence under section 3 or 4 of this  
Act; or

*(b)* a protected prisoner of war is brought up for trial for any offence , shall not proceed with the trial unless-

                 (i)    the accused is represented by a solicitor; and

                                       (ii)   it is proved to the satisfaction of the court that a period of not less than fourteen days has elapsed since instructions for the representation of the accused at the trial were first given to the solicitor representing the accused, and if the court adjourns the trial for the purpose of enabling the requirements of this subsection to be complied with, then, notwithstanding anything in any other enactment, the court may remand the accused for the period of the adjournment.

(2) Where the accused is a protected prisoner of war, in the absence of a solicitor ac-  
cepted by the accused as representing him, a solicitor instructed for the purpose on behalf of the protecting power shall, without prejudice to the requirements of paragraph (ii) of subsection (1) of this section, be regarded for the purpose of that subsection as representing the accused.

(3) If the court adjourns the trial in pursuance of subsection (1) of this section by reason that the accused is not represented by a solicitor, the court shall direct that a solicitor be assigned to watch over the interests of the accused at any further proceedings in con- nection with the offence, and at any such further proceeding, in the absence of a solicitor  
either accepted by the accused as representing him or instructed as mentioned in subsec-  
tion (2) of this section; a solicitor assigned in pursuance of this subsection shall, without  
prejudice to the requirements of paragraph (ii) of subsection (1) of this section, be re-  
garded for the purposes of that subsection as representing the accused.

(4) A solicitor shall be assigned in pursuance of subsection (3) of this section, in such  
manner as may be provided by rules of court, which the Chief Judges of the respective  
States of the Federation and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja are hereby severally  
empowered to make, and shall be entitled to be paid out of moneys provided by the Na-  
tional Assembly such sums in respect of fees and disbursements as the President may by  
regulations prescribe.

1. **Appeals by protected persons**

(1) Where a protected prisoner of war or a protected internee has been sentenced to  
death or to imprisonment for a term of two years or more, the time within which he must give notice of appeal to any other court in the Federation shall, notwithstanding anything in any other Act or any Law, be deemed to commence on the day on which he receives a notice given, in the case of a prisoner of war of Commonwealth citizenship by an officer  
of his country's forces, and in the case of an internee by or on behalf of the superinten-  
cent in charge of the prison in which he is confined, that the relevant country has been  
notified of his conviction and sentence, or of the determination of his appeal, as the case  
may be.

(2) Nothing in subsection (1) of this section shall affect the power which any court  
may possess under any written law to enlarge the time within which an appeal may be  
brought.

(3) In any case to which subsection (1) of this section applies, the period of thirty  
days referred to in subsection (1) of section 22 of the Court of Appeal Act (which relates  
to the re-vesting and restitution of property on conviction), and any period prescribed for  
the like purpose in any other written law, shall be deemed to commence on the day on  
which the notice referred to in subsection (1) of this section is received.

[Cap. C36.]

(4) In this section-

*(a)* any reference to a notice of appeal includes a reference to a notice of applica-  
tion for leave to appeal;

*(b)* where an appeal lies from the court in which a case is tried to any other court,  
and from that other court to any further court or courts in Nigeria any reference  
to a notice of appeal, or to the determination of an appeal, includes a notice of  
appeal against any judgment or decision given by any court other than the  
Court of Appeal, whether at first instance or on appeal, or to the determination  
of an appeal by any court other than the Court of Appeal; and

*(c)*a reference to a person who has been sentenced to imprisonment for a term of two years or more includes reference to a person who, after the determination of any appeal, is ordered to be imprisoned for a term of two years or more.

1. **Deferment of execution of sentence of death on prisoner of war**

Where a prisoner of war has been sentenced to death by any court in Nigeria, the  
sentence shall not be carried out until at least six months after the date on which the protecting power receives a detailed communication containing-

*(a)* the precise wording of the finding and sentence; and

*(b)* a summarised report of any preliminary investigation and of the trial empha-  
sising in particular the elements of the prosecution and the defence.

1. **Reduction of sentence and custody of protected person**

(1) In any case in which a protected prisoner of war or a protected internee is con-  
victed of an offence and sentenced to a term of imprisonment, there shall be deducted  
from that term the period, if any, during which that person was in custody in connection

with that offence, either on remand or after committal for trial (including the period of the  
trial), before the sentence began to run, or is deemed to have begun to run.

(2) It shall be lawful for the President in a case where he is satisfied that a Common-  
wealth prisoner of war accused of an offence has been in custody in connection with that  
offence, either on remand or after committal for trial (including the period of the trial),  
for an aggregate period of not less than three months, to direct that the prisoner shall be  
transferred from that custody to the custody of an officer of the armed forces of Nigeria  
and that he shall thereafter remain in military custody at a camp or place in which pro-  
tected prisoners of war are detained, and be brought before the court at the time appointed  
by the remand or committal order.

*Prevention of abuse of Red Cross and other emblems*   
**10. Use of Red Cross and other emblems**

(1) Subject to the provisions of this section, it shall not be lawful for any person,  
without the authority of the Minister charged with responsibility for matters relating to  
defence, to use for any purpose whatsoever any of the following emblems or designa-  
tions, that is to say-

*(a)*the emblem of a red cross with vertical and horizontal arms of the same length  
on, and completely surrounded by, a white ground, or the designation "Red  
Cross" or "Geneva Cross";

*(b)*the emblem of a red crescent moon on, and completely surrounded by, a white ground, or the designation "Red Crescent";

*(c)*the following emblem in red on, and completely surrounded by, a white  
ground, that is to say, a lion passing from right to left of, and with its face  
turned towards the observer, holding erect in its raised right forepaw a scimi-  
tar, with, appearing above the lion's back, the upper half of the sun shooting  
forth rays, or the designation "Red Lion and Sun".

(2) Nothing in subsection (1) of this section shall prevent the use of the emblem and  
title of the Red Cross by the Nigerian Red Cross Society and its officers and members in  
accordance with the provisions of the Nigerian Red Cross Society Act, and any rules  
made thereunder.

[Cap. N130.]

(3) Subject to the provisions of this section, it shall not be lawful for any person,  
without the authority of the Minister charged with responsibility for matters relating to  
trade marks to use for any purpose whatsoever-

*(a)* any design consisting of a white or silver cross with vertical and horizontal  
arms of the same length on, and completely surrounded by, a red ground, being  
the heraldic emblems of the Swiss Confederation, or any other design so nearly  
resembling that design as to be capable of being mistaken for that heraldic em-  
blem;

*(b)* any design or wording so nearly resembling any of the emblems or designa-  
tions specified in subsection (1) of this section as to be capable of being mis-  
taken for, or, as the case may be, understood as referring to, one of those em-  
blems.

(4) If any person contravenes any of the provisions of subsections (1), (2) or (3) of  
this section he shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding one hundred naira and to forfeit any goods upon or in connection with which the emblem, designation, design or wording was used.

(5) Any goods which cannot be used without a contravention of subsection (3) of this  
section shall be prohibited imports for the purposes of the customs laws.

(6) The provisions of subsections (1), (2), (3), (4) and (5) of this section shall not ap-  
ply to a trade mark registered in Nigeria before the date on which this Act comes into  
operation by reason only of its consisting of or containing a design or wording which  
reproduces or resembles an emblem or designation specified in paragraph *(b)* or *(c)* of  
subsection (1) of this section and where a person is charged with using such design or  
wording for any purpose, and it is proved that he used it otherwise than as, or part of, a  
trade mark registered as aforesaid, it shall be a defence to prove-

*(a)* that he has lawfully used that design or wording in Nigeria for that purpose  
continuously since before the 1st day of September, 1959, on which date the Geneva Conventions Act, 1957, of the Parliament of the United Kingdom was made applicable to Nigeria; or

*(b)* in a case where he is charged with using the design or wording on goods, that  
the design or wording had been applied to the goods before he acquired them by some other person who had manufactured or dealt with the goods in the course of trade, and who has lawfully used the design or wording in Nigeria on similar goods continuously since before the 1st day of September, 1959.

(7) Where an offence under this section committed by a body corporate is proved to  
have been committed with the consent or connivance of any director, manager, secretary or other officer of the body corporate, or any person purporting to act in any such capac-  
ity, he as well as the body corporate, shall be deemed to be guilty of the offence and shall  
be liable to be proceeded against and punished accordingly, and in this subsection the  
expression "director", in relation to any body corporate established by or under any en-  
actment for the purpose of carrying on under public ownership any industry or undertak-  
ing or part of an industry or undertaking, being a body corporate whose affairs are man-  
aged by the members thereof, means a member of that body.

(8) It is hereby declared that this section extends to the use in or outside Nigeria of  
any such emblem, designation, design or wording as referred to in subsections (1) and (3)  
of this section on any British ship or aircraft registered in Nigeria.

*Miscellaneous*

**11. Institution of proceedings and jurisdiction**

(1) Proceedings for an offence under this Act or under an order made under this Act  
shall not be instituted except by or on behalf of the Attorney-General of the Federation.

(2) Notwithstanding anything in any other written law, neither a magistrate's court  
nor a court-martial convened under any enactment applicable to the members of the  
armed forces of Nigeria shall have jurisdiction to try any person for an offence under  
section 3 of this Act or under an order made under section 4 of this Act.

**12. State application of certain sections**

This Act shall apply throughout Nigeria, so however that the provisions of sections 5,  
6 and 8 of this Act (which relate to notice of trial of certain persons) shall not have effect  
in a State unless and until the Governor of the State by notice in the State *Gazette* de-  
clares those provisions shall apply.

[L.N. 139 of 1965.]

**13. Repeal**

The enactments set out in the Third Schedule to this Act shall, to the extent to which  
this Act applies to the Federal Republic of Nigeria, cease to have effect in Nigeria.

[Third Schedule. L.N. 139 of 1965.]

SCHEDULES

FIRST SCHEDULE  
[Section 3 (1 ).]

*Articles of the Conventions defining grave breaches of the Conventions and providing*   
*for the trial of persons alleged to have committed such breaches*

**1.** Article 49 of the First Geneva Convention, 1949,  
Article 50 of the Second Geneva Convention, 1949,  
Article 129 of the Third Geneva Can vention, 1949,  
Article 146 of the Fourth Geneva Convention 1949.

(the texts of all four articles being identical save as stated below)-

"The High Contracting Parties undertake to enact any legislation necessary to provide ef-  
fective penal sanctions for persons committing, or ordering to be committed, any of the grave  
breaches of the present Convention defined in the following Article.

Each High Contracting Party shall be under the obligation to search for persons alleged  
to have committed, or to have ordered to be committed, such grave breaches, and shall bring  
such persons, regardless of their nationality, before its own courts. It may also, if it prefers,  
and in accordance with the provisions of its own legislation, hand such persons over for trial  
to another High Contracting Party concerned, provided such High Contracting Party has made  
out a *prima facie* case.

Each High Contracting Party shall take measures necessary for the suppression of all acts  
contrary to the provisions of the present Convention other than the grave breaches defined in  
the following Article.

In all circumstances, the accused persons shall benefit by safeguards of proper trial and  
defence, which shall not be less favourable than those provided by Article 105 and those fol-  
lowing of the Geneva Convention relative to the treatment of Prisoners of War of August 12,  
1949."

*(Note*: In the Third Geneva Convention, 1949, the words "the present Convention" are  
used in place of the words "the Geneva Convention relative to the treatment of Prisoners of  
War of August 12, 1949").

**2***. Article 50 of the First Geneva Convention,* 1 949.-Grave breaches to which the preceding  
Article relates shall be those involving any of the following acts, if committed against persons  
or property protected by the Convention: wilful killing, torture or inhuman treatment, includ-  
ing biological experiments, wilfully causing great suffering or serious injury to body or health,  
and extensive destruction and appropriation of property, not justified by military necessity and  
carried out unlawfully and wantonly.

**3*.*** *Article* 51 *of the Second Geneva Convention,* 1949.-Grave breaches to which the pre-  
ceding Article relates shall be those involving any of the following acts, if committed against  
persons or property protected by the Convention: wilful killing, torture or inhuman treatment,  
including biological experiments, wilfully causing great suffering or serious injury to body or  
health, and extensive destruction and appropriation of property not justified by military neces-  
sity and carried out unlawfully and wantonly.

4*. Article 130 of the Third Geneva Convention,* 1949.-Grave breaches to which the pre-  
ceding Article relates shall be those involving any of the following acts, if committed against  
persons or property protected by the Convention: wilful killing, torture or inhuman treatment,  
including biological experiments, wilfully causing great suffering or serious injury to body or  
health, compelling a prisoner of war to serve in the forces of the hostile power, or wilfully  
depriving a prisoner of war of the rights of fair and regular trial prescribed in this Convention.

**5***. Article* 147 *of the Fourth Geneva Convention,* 1949.-Grave breaches to which the pre-  
ceding Article relates shall be those involving any of the following acts, if committed against  
persons or property protected by the present Convention: wilful killing, torture or inhuman  
treatment, including biological experiments, wilfully causing great suffering or serious injury  
to body or health, unlawful deportation or transfer or unlawful confinement of a protected  
person compelling a protected person to serve in the forces of a hostile power, or wilfully de-  
priving a protected person of the rights of fair and regular trial prescribed in the present Con-  
vention, taking of hostages and extensive destruction and appropriation of property, not justi-  
fied by military necessity and carried out unlawfully and wantonly.

SECOND SCHEDULE  
[Sections 3 (3) and 5 (4).]

*Certain other Articles of the Conventions referred to in this Act*

**1*.*** *Application of the Conventions.-In* each of the Conventions Article 2 lays down the ap-  
plication of the Convention, and reads as follows-

"In addition to the provisions which shall be implemented in peace time, the present  
Convention shall apply to all cases of declared war or of any other armed conflict which may  
arise between two or more of the High Contracting Parties, even if the state of War is not rec-  
orgnised by one of them.

The Convention shall also apply to all cases of partial or total occupation of the territory  
of a High Contracting Party, even if the said occupation meets with no armed resistance.

Although one of the Powers in conflict may not be a party to the present Convention, the  
Powers who are parties thereto shall remain bound by it in their mutual relations. They shall  
furthermore be bound by the Convention in relation to the said Power, if the latter accepts and  
applies the provisions thereof."

*Election*

**2**. *Prisoners' Representatives Article* 79 *of the Third Geneva Convention,* 1949.-In all  
places where there are prisoners of war, except in those where there are officers, the prisoners  
shall freely elect by secret ballot, every six months and also in case of vacancies, prisoners'  
representatives entrusted with representing them before the military authorities, the Protecting  
Powers, the International Committee of the Red Cross and any other organisation which may  
assist them. These prisoners' representatives shall be eligible for re-election.

In camps for officers and persons of equivalent status or in mixed camps, the senior offi-  
cer among the prisoners of war shall be recognised as the camp prisoners' representative. In  
camps for officers, he shall be assisted by one or more advisers chosen by the officers; in  
mixed camps, his assistants shall be chosen from among the prisoners of war who are not offi-  
cers and shall be elected by them.

Officer prisoners of war of the same nationality shall be stationed in labour camps for  
prisoners of war, for the purpose of carrying out the camp administration duties for which the  
prisoners of war are responsible. These officers may be elected as prisoners' representatives  
under the first paragraph of this Article. In such a case the assistants to the prisoners' repre-  
sentatives shall be chosen from among those prisoners of war who are not officers.

Every representative elected must be approved by the Detaining Power before he has the  
right to commence his duties. Where the Detaining Power refuses to approve a prisoner of war  
elected by his fellow prisoners of war, it must inform the Protecting Power of the reason for  
such refusal.

In all cases the prisoners' representative must have the same nationality, language and  
customs as the prisoners of war whom he represents. Thus, prisoners of war distributed in  
different sections of a camp, according to their nationality, language or customs, shall have for  
each section their own prisoners' representative, in accordance with the foregoing paragraphs.

THIRD SCHEDULE  
[Section 13.]

*Enactments repealed*   
Geneva Convention Act, 1911. 1 and 2 Geo. 5, c. 20.

Geneva Convention Act, 1911 (Colonies) Order in Council, 1917.  
British Protectorates (Geneva Convention) Order in Council, 1917.  
Geneva Convention Act, 1937.1 Edw. 8 and Geo. 6, c. 15.

Geneva Convention Act, 1937 (Colonies) Order in Council, 1937.  
British Protectorates (Geneva Convention) Order in Council, 1937.

Geneva Conventions, 1906 and 1929 (Mandated Territories) Order in Council, 1937.  
Geneva Conventions Act, 1957 (5 and 6 Eliz. 2, c. 52).

        GENEVA CONVENTIONS ACT

**SUBSIDIARY LEGISLATION**

*No Subsidiary Legislation*