

TWO NEW PUBLICATIONS IN ARABIC

The *International Review* has in the past announced the publication by the ICRC of books in Arabic. In 1972, for example, the Review mentioned three booklets: one of thirteen pages containing a summary of the draft Protocols which have since been submitted to the Diplomatic Conference; another of 22 pages containing the articles of the 1949 Geneva Conventions relating to the display of the red cross and red crescent emblems; finally, a study of 14 pages in which the author demonstrated that some of the principles underlying the Geneva Conventions were recognized and affirmed in the Koran.

During the same period, we devoted an article to the distribution in the Arab world of the school textbook "The Red Crescent and My Country". This was adopted by several countries, and later an Arab edition of the "Soldier's Manual" was widely distributed. Several booklets on subjects related to the Arab world and humanitarian action have been published, as may be seen from the lists of publications compiled by the ICRC Documentation Service.

Now there are two new books to be added. The first, publication of which we announced last year, is the *Course of Five Lessons on the Geneva Conventions*, by Henri Coursier; the second, which has just come from the press, is a book by Mr. Jean Pictet, Vice-President of the ICRC and Associate Professor at the University of Geneva, entitled *The Principles of International Humanitarian Law*, the French, English, German and Spanish editions of which have appeared in succession in the last few years.

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“Course of Five Lessons on the Geneva Conventions”¹

A few years ago the ICRC published this standard course intended for all those concerned with the dissemination and teaching of the Geneva Conventions which ratification and accession by the great majority of States have made the law of humanity, and which the ICRC would like to see included as a subject for study in the official education system in every country. Distributed not only to National Societies throughout the world but also to numerous universities and to the appropriate bodies in States parties to the Conventions, the course has appeared in French, English, German and Spanish, and now Arabic, and the ICRC is grateful to the Saudi Arabian Red Crescent Society for having translated the five lessons: the law of Geneva; the principles of the Geneva Conventions; the wounded and sick; prisoner-of-war status; the protection of civilians.

To draw attention to the importance of this course in disseminating the Conventions, and to demonstrate to readers in the Arab world the efforts being made on this subject within the universities—efforts which have resulted in international humanitarian law now being taught in the higher educational establishments of several countries—we thought it would be useful to reproduce a few passages from the foreword.

Ever since its establishment, the ICRC has worked for the introduction and extension of the Geneva Conventions. Thus, it was chiefly responsible for their revision in 1949. They comprise 400 articles² at the present time and constitute the most up-to-date and complete set of rules to assure the protection considered indispensable for human beings in the event of armed conflict. They now apply not only to members of the armed forces but also to civilians; the supervision of their execution has been strengthened and the already well-known Article 3 included, under which certain essential humanitarian principles are made compulsory in armed conflicts of a non-international character. All this represents a genuine step forward in the protection of mankind.

The ICRC's first concern was to assure ratification of the Geneva Conventions (or accession thereto) by all States. They are now, to all intents and purposes, worldwide, since they are binding on 139 different Powers. A detailed commentary has also been published

¹ This publication, of over 100 pages, is obtainable from the ICRC Documentation Service, price 10 Swiss francs.

² *The Geneva Conventions of 12 August, 1949*. Second revised edition, Geneva, 1950, 245 pp.

in four exhaustive volumes by the ICRC, which is now doing its utmost to give wide publicity to the Conventions in all countries. But the existence of good Conventions is not enough in itself; their contents must be thoroughly familiar to those who have to execute them, as otherwise they would remain a dead letter. This would irreparably compromise the great efforts which have been made to improve conditions for human beings during conflicts and the very important results already obtained.

Under the terms of an Article common to all four Conventions, the Governments have pledged themselves to give these the widest possible publicity among the entire population, in time of peace as in time of war; but, apart from this obligation for the official authorities, each of us also has a moral obligation to help make them known.

The model course on the Geneva Conventions submitted hereafter is intended to facilitate teaching these texts, by stressing the provisions which have the significance of general principles. To apply these rules even in situations not foreseen therein is to observe the spirit of the Geneva Conventions and thus multiply humanitarian action. These essential provisions must be studied and thoroughly assimilated if it is sincerely wished to foster a spirit of peace and mutual assistance. By helping to spread knowledge of the Geneva Conventions, the Red Cross acts in accordance with its pacific mission. Although born on the battlefield and always ready to assist victims of conflicts, its aim is not to prepare men for war but to work at all times in harmony with its own principles. In other words, it educates them to preserve a humane attitude in all circumstances.

“ The Principles of International Humanitarian Law ”¹

This book had already been published in French, English and German, accompanied by a table of principles of international humanitarian law. The table is also included in the Arabic edition, which has just appeared. The chapter headings are as follows: 1) What is international humanitarian law? 2) Moral sources; 3) The principles.

Going to the heart of the matter and giving complete and concise definitions, on the one hand, of humanitarian law in the wider sense—the laws of war, of The Hague and of Geneva—and, on the other hand, of the principles which form both the basis and the structure of this humanitarian law, the text by Mr. Pictet is equally suitable as an instrument for the expert research worker and as food for thought for those

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belonging to the world of the Red Cross, the Red Crescent and the Red Lion and Sun.

Below we reproduce the page of introduction in which the author defines the meaning of international humanitarian law. He goes on to set out the content and define the notion of humanitarian law and the branches of which it is composed.

For some years it has been customary to call "humanitarian law" that considerable portion of international law which owes its inspiration to a feeling for humanity and which is centred on the protection of the individual. This expression of humanitarian law appears to combine two ideas of a different character, the one legal and the other moral. Now, the provisions which are the subject under study are, as will be seen later, precisely a transposition in international law of considerations of a moral order, and more especially humanitarian. This then would seem to be a satisfactory designation.

Between 1948 and 1950 remarkable extension and impetus were given to humanitarian law, three memorable years which will without doubt mark a decisive step in the struggle for the defence of the human person. In 1949 there was the concluding of the four Geneva Conventions for the protection of the victims of war, revised and completed. Similarly, in the sphere of Human Rights, 1948 saw the proclamation of the Universal Declaration and 1950 was the year of the European Convention on Human Rights. Humanitarian law has thus been fully accepted and is no longer a mere branch of international law but a province in its own right with a wide measure of autonomy.
