

THE PREVENTION OF CRIME AND THE FIGHT AGAINST CRIMINALITY

The Fifth United Nations Congress on the *Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders* was convoked pursuant to a resolution passed by the United Nations General Assembly on 1 December 1950, which provided for such meetings every five years. The Congress took place in Geneva from 1 to 12 September. A representative of the ICRC attended as an observer.

About one thousand persons took part, representing 94 States, various liberation movements and specialized organizations. The agenda included the following points:

- I. *Changes in forms and dimensions of criminality—transnational and national*—It was considered that more active international cooperation would facilitate the prevention of crime.
- II. *Criminal legislation, judicial procedures and other forms of social control in the prevention of crime*—The main questions discussed under this heading dealt with the crisis in the criminal justice system, the criminal justice system in crime prevention, changes in judicial procedures and other forms of social control in the prevention of crime.
- III. *The role of the police and other agencies responsible for law enforcement*—In November 1974, the United Nations General Assembly called attention to the need for an international code of police ethics. Such a code does not yet exist, and the Congress therefore called upon the General Assembly to appoint an expert committee to study the matter and prepare, during the next year, a document for the consideration of appropriate organizations.
- IV. *The treatment of offenders in custody or in the community, with reference to the minimum rules*—The prisons in most parts of the

world are overcrowded—which does not facilitate the prevention and control of crime. It is generally recognized that the prison system, at this time, constitutes the only means of protection against dangerous individuals. Increasing dissatisfaction with prison as the principal method of correction has led to consideration of other possible ways for reintegrating delinquents into society.

The Congress also considered the economic and social consequences of crime.

In November 1974, the U.N. General Assembly had asked the Fifth Congress to work out rules for the protection of all detainees against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. Consideration was given to arguments advanced by an *ad hoc* working party, and the Congress decided to submit to the next General Assembly a twelve-article declaration on torture which it had adopted unanimously.
