

## PROTECTION OF REFUGEES

*In its October and November 1972 issues, International Review published a study on human rights in respect of the protection of refugees, written by Mr. Paul Weis, former Chief of the Legal Division of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. He referred, in particular, to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, the main international instrument regarding the protection of refugees, which was signed at Geneva on 28 July 1951. Twenty-five years have elapsed since it was adopted and to mark the occasion the bi-monthly journal UNHCR (July 1976) contains an article contributed by Mr. Paul Weis, in which he assesses the situation today concerning the Convention.*

... Mr. Weis says: "What strikes me most is that the principles which were so hotly debated in 1951 are now widely accepted as a minimum standard of treatment. They are no longer disputed. In fact, among the 66 countries which are now parties to the Convention, many go far beyond what is prescribed in its various provisions. For example, while the Convention provides for exemption from restrictions on foreign labour only after three years' residence in the country, authorities often grant refugees the right to salaried employment immediately. As far as education goes, many countries accord refugees the same treatment as nationals, not only at elementary level as called for, but also at secondary level and beyond.

There are unfortunately violations. The fact that a few countries may have acceded to the Convention with the so-called geographical reservation does not of course entitle them to engage in *refoulement* (forcible return of a refugee to his country of origin)."

The 1951 Convention does not regulate asylum, dealing as it does with persons who have already crossed into a country seeking refuge. "However," Mr. Weis notes, "the definition contained in the Convention is taken in many countries parties to the Convention as the criterion for granting asylum."

## MISCELLANEOUS

*The Convention's main object is to normalize the juridical status of refugees much more fully than had been done by earlier instruments, and it defines their rights in various fields of a vital nature ranging from employment to education and social security. In recent years, there has been a drop in the number of countries who have acceded to the Convention and its Protocol, despite repeated appeals by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. In a further appeal by the High Commissioner on the occasion of this twenty-fifth anniversary, he said: "The 1951 Convention has become the accepted basis for the treatment of refugees in many parts of the world, but there is every reason that it should receive even wider support throughout the international community."*

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## A NEW STATE ACCEDES TO GENEVA PROTOCOL

In a letter dated 22 June 1976, received on 16 July 1976 by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Government of Barbados stated that it considered itself to be bound by the Geneva Protocol of 17 June 1925 for the prohibition of the use in war of asphyxiating, poisonous or other gases and of bacteriological methods of warfare, and that on its own behalf it withdraws the reservation made by the British Empire on 9 April 1930.

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