

RESPECT FOR THE RULES OF HUMANITY IN VIET NAM

The International Committee of the Red Cross has intervened whenever possible in order to come to the aid of the victims of the war in Viet Nam. Information on this subject has been given in recent issues of the *International Review*.

In view, however, of the extension of hostilities, the ICRC has addressed to the governments of the Republic of Viet Nam, of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam and of the United States of America an appeal urging them to respect, in present conditions, the humanitarian provisions of the Geneva Conventions to which these States have acceded. We are now in fact in the midst of an armed conflict to which all these Conventions must apply.

We publish below the text of this appeal, which has also been sent to the "National Front of Liberation of South Viet Nam" and recently repeated as a matter of urgency to the States concerned as well as to the NFL:

The hostilities raging at the present time in Viet Nam—both North and South of the 17th parallel—have assumed such proportions recently that there can be no doubt they constitute an armed conflict to which the regulations of humanitarian law as a whole should be applied.

All Parties to the conflict, the Republic of Viet Nam, the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam and the United States of America, are bound by the four Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949, for the protection of the victims of war, having ratified them and having adhered thereto. The National Liberation Front too is bound by the undertakings signed by Viet Nam.

Pursuant to the common Article 1 of the four Geneva Conventions, "The High Contracting Parties undertake to respect and to ensure respect for the present Convention in all circumstances". It is likewise said in Article 2 that "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 Contracting Parties, even if the state of war is not recognized by one of them".

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE

In keeping with its humanitarian tradition, the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva reminds the governments of the aforesaid countries and the National Liberation Front of their obligations pursuant to the Geneva Conventions.

It is incumbent on them to implement the provisions thereof and to permit the ICRC to carry out its mission as a neutral intermediary, as laid down in these Conventions.

In particular the life of any combatant taken prisoner, wearing uniform or bearing an emblem clearly indicating his membership of the armed forces, shall be spared, he shall be treated humanely as a prisoner of war, lists of combatants taken prisoner shall be communicated without delay to the International Committee of the Red Cross (Central Tracing Agency), and the delegates of the ICRC shall be authorized to visit prison camps.

In addition, Parties to the conflict shall respect and protect civilians taking no part in hostilities, they shall abstain from attack against such persons and subject them to no form of violence.

The ICRC is prepared to co-operate with the authorities concerned as far as it is able in the loyal and strict application of the Geneva Conventions drawn up by the community of nations to alleviate the hardships engendered by war.

The ICRC conveys the present communication to the governments of the three aforesaid countries and will endeavour to deliver it also to the National Liberation Front. It would be pleased to know what measures are taken by the governments in conformity with the duties devolving upon them pursuant to the Geneva Conventions.
