

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

ICRC APPEAL FOR DISARMAMENT

GENEVA, 25 May 1978

Circular No. 509

*To the Central Committees of the National Red Cross,
Red Crescent and Red Lion and Sun Societies*

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

We communicate to you below the appeal which the International Committee of the Red Cross sent on 23 May 1978 to the governments taking part in the special session of the United Nations General Assembly now being held on disarmament:

“On the occasion of the special session of the United Nations General Assembly on disarmament, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is anxious that its voice on this very important question should be heard.

Born from a concern to reduce the ills of war, even in the midst of battle, the Red Cross has at all times expressed its ardent wish to see the end of armed conflicts in which men destroy or wound each other. But fearful developments in the instruments and techniques of modern warfare and, in particular, the appearance of nuclear weapons, have ushered in a new era for the world: it is no longer just the lives of thousands, but mankind's very survival, which is at stake.

On 5 September 1945, less than a month after the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the ICRC publicly expressed its extreme concern at this development. It must be recognized unfortunately that, despite the valiant efforts of men of good will, the production of new weapons has continued at an ever-greater pace, both in quantity and in destructive efficiency. The first to be affected by this development of armaments are the ever-increasing numbers of civilians who either are the victims of weapons of indiscriminate effects or live in constant threat of mass destruction.

The ICRC, therefore, feels that it is now time to again proclaim its consternation at the stockpiling of weapons capable of destroying all life on earth and express its profound dismay at the senseless waste caused by the arms race and by the large-scale delivery of weapons all over the globe, in most parts of which the inhabitants even today live in dire poverty.

The ICRC has seen at first-hand, in countless wars, the atrocious suffering caused to millions of victims whom it has sought to protect and aid with the assistance of all the forces which the Red Cross could command. It therefore appeals to the United Nations General Assembly to make this special session the beginning of new hope for the international community. It solemnly calls on the governments taking part to do everything in their power to create an atmosphere of confidence and security which will favour the search for solutions to the deadlock facing mankind, so that they might rise above their own interests and reach agreement on disarmament. The Red Cross is aware that without genuine disarmament measures, the way will never be found to its ideal of universal brotherhood, an ideal shared by all peoples throughout the world, who look to the United Nations General Assembly with hope as much as with anxiety."

At its latest session in Geneva, the Executive Council of the League of Red Cross Societies took cognizance of this appeal. Although it would have preferred certain passages to be worded somewhat differently, it informed us that it wholeheartedly agreed with the spirit of the appeal.

Besides the League, seven international organizations, each of which was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, expressed their support for the appeal at a Round Table meeting which took place on 27 and 28 April

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1978 in Geneva, on the occasion of the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the birth of Henry Dunant.

We hope that your National Society will take steps to contribute to spreading the ICRC's appeal in your country, for example by printing it in a forthcoming issue of one of your own publications.

Please accept the assurance of our high consideration.

FOR THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE
OF THE RED CROSS
ALEXANDRE HAY
President

THE NEXT INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS CONFERENCE

The Standing Commission of the International Red Cross met on 5 May 1978 in Geneva with Sir Evelyn Shuckburgh in the chair, to decide, in accordance with the mandate given to it in October 1977 by the Twenty-third International Red Cross Conference, on the place where the next International Conference will be held.

The Standing Commission accepted the Philippine Red Cross invitation. The Conference will therefore be held in Manila, which has adequate facilities for such gatherings.

The fact that 1934 was the last time when an International Red Cross Conference was held in the Far East partly swayed the Standing Commission's decision.

The exact dates of the Conference, which must take place in 1981, will be fixed by the Standing Commission in agreement with the Philippine Red Cross.
