

APPEAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

In view of the situation in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe, the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Mr. Alexandre Hay, sent the following appeal on 14 January 1977 to leaders of the various parties to the conflict. The same text was also sent by the ICRC President to the British authorities and to the Heads of State of the following countries: Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia.

In November 1976, on the occasion of the Geneva Conference on Rhodesia, I met with the leaders of all the delegations attending the Conference and reviewed with them the humanitarian problems arising from the armed conflict opposing the nationalist movements and the authorities of Salisbury.

In view of the increasing number of victims caused by the armed struggle and the possible escalation in the fighting should the Conference not end in a negotiated solution, we invited all the parties to the conflict to respect and to make their combatants apply in practice the existing humanitarian law and in particular the following basic humanitarian principles:

1. Persons "hors de combat" and those taking no direct part in hostilities are entitled to respect for their life, and for their physical and moral dignity. They shall in all circumstances be protected and treated humanely, without any adverse distinction.

2. The wounded and sick shall be collected and cared for by the party to the conflict which has them in its power. Protection also covers medical personnel, medical establishments, means of transport and equipment. The Red Cross is the emblem denoting that such protection must be given; it may not be displayed for any other purpose and shall always be respected.

3. It is forbidden to kill or wound an enemy who is "hors de combat" or who surrenders.

4. Prisoners of war and civilians in the power of the adverse party are entitled to respect for their life, their dignity, their family rights and their convictions. They shall be protected from any act of violence. They shall be entitled to exchange news with their families and to receive relief consignments.

5. Everyone shall enjoy basic judicial guarantees. No one shall be held responsible for an act he has not committed. No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel or degrading punishment or treatment.

6. Parties to a conflict and their armed forces do not have an unlimited choice of methods and means of warfare. It is forbidden to use weapons or any methods of warfare likely to cause unnecessary losses or suffering.

7. Parties to a conflict shall at all times distinguish between the civilian population and combatants, in order to spare the population and civilian objects. They shall direct their attacks only against military objectives.

We also requested that the International Committee be granted all facilities for visiting prisoners taken by any of the parties and for providing humanitarian assistance to civilian victims of the conflict. Moreover, we specifically reiterated to the Rhodesian authorities the ICRC's request to visit all nationalist fighters captured while bearing weapons and all other persons arrested in relation with the conflict (convicted prisoners and 30- and 60-day detainees)—this in addition to the administrative detainees who have been regularly visited by the ICRC delegates for a number of years.

Today, although negotiations for a peaceful solution are continuing, we fear that the hostilities will intensify and human suffering will increase. The ICRC therefore urgently appeals to all the parties to the conflict to engage themselves publicly to respect and apply the humanitarian law as it is summarized in the principles set forth above. It offers its services to the parties and asks for all necessary facilities to enable its delegates to assist the victims.