

## Relations with the Council of Europe

*The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted a resolution (881) on behalf of the ICRC in 1984. Since then, the ICRC has approached the member states of the Council on numerous occasions and, with the support of the parliamentarians in both the Council and the national parliaments, has succeeded in gaining increased support, particularly financial, from the member state Governments.*

*Encouraged by these results, the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Demography prepared a new resolution in support of the ICRC which was adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe last July in Lausanne.*

*Relations between the ICRC and the Council of Europe have developed over the past three years, and outstanding tribute was paid to the ICRC and its work throughout the world on the occasion of the adoption of Resolution 881.*

*The parliamentarians on the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Demography, led by the Belgian Socialist Deputy Mr. Claude Dejardin, were furthermore received at ICRC headquarters last 30 June.*

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PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY  
OF THE  
COUNCIL OF EUROPE

THIRTY-NINTH ORDINARY SESSION

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**RESOLUTION 881 (1987)<sup>1</sup>**  
**on the activities of the International Committee**  
**of the Red Cross (ICRC)**  
**(1984-86)**

The Assembly,

1. Appreciating the role which the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) plays in providing both protection and assistance on the basis of the four Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and the Additional Protocols thereto;
2. Recalling its Recommendation 945 (1982) on international humanitarian law, in which it recommended that the Committee of Ministers invite the governments of member states to expedite their ratification of the two Additional Protocols to the 1949 Geneva Conventions, which entered into force on 7 December 1978;
3. Recalling its Resolution 823 (1984) on the activities of the ICRC, in which it invited the governments of member states to make the international activities of the Red Cross better known among the public, increase their regular annual contributions to the ICRC substantially and help cover, through *ad hoc* contributions, the expenses incurred by the emergency humanitarian activities;
4. Regretting the ignorance of most citizens of Council of Europe member states with regard to the specific activities of the ICRC within the international Red Cross and Red Crescent movement;
5. Noting that many Europeans do not know the difference between the respective activities, competence and responsibilities of the ICRC, the

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<sup>1</sup> Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 1 July 1987.

See Doc. 5754, report of the *Committee on Migration, Refugees and Demography*.

National Red Cross and Red Crescent societies and the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent societies;

6. Noting that the ICRC is present in more than eighty countries, and represented by thirty-nine delegations in action in the field;

7. Emphasising that the ICRC's terms of reference consist in particular in protecting all victims of armed conflict without discrimination (helping the wounded, protecting prisoners of war and the civilian population, re-establishing family links);

8. Noting that, in parallel with its protection work, the ICRC provides assistance, particularly to meet the food, material, health and medical needs of the victims of armed conflicts and of families suffering the consequences of detention;

9. Recalling that, apart from its regular activities of protection and assistance, the ICRC tries to protect, on the basis of its right of initiative and for purely humanitarian reasons, people detained for security reasons;

10. Noting that the alarming increase in the number of armed conflicts has led to a considerable rise in the number of ICRC interventions in the field in recent years;

11. Noting that these conflicts, in which the ICRC has been called on to intervene, have not only grown more numerous, but have also become protracted, for which reason ICRC delegates have been working continuously for very many years in certain regions, including those of which the situation has been debated by the Assembly (Afghanistan, Iraq-Iran, Lebanon and the territories occupied by Israel);

12. Deeply concerned by the fact that certain methods used in these conflicts very often violate the most fundamental rules of international humanitarian law, since they include summary execution of prisoners, acts of terrorism, forcible movements of civilian populations by military forces, in particular occupying forces, torture of prisoners, the taking and execution of hostages, indiscriminate attacks on the civilian population and the use of prohibited weapons, particularly chemical weapons;

13. Condemning the enlistment of children in the armed forces, expressly prohibited by the Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions, as well as any kind of involvement of children in armed conflicts, and the consequences liable to ensue, such as imprisonment and torture;

14. Noting that violations of international humanitarian law and ever poorer observance of the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the Additional Protocols not only endanger the lives of the victims of conflicts, but also

constitute a serious obstacle to the humanitarian action of the ICRC in its efforts to protect and assist the military and civilian victims of armed conflicts;

15. Noting that Africa remains the main area of ICRC activities, that in Latin America its activities mainly involve the protection of civilian populations against military operations, that in the Middle East, territories occupied by Israel as well as the Lebanon have for several years been one of the main theatres of ICRC operations, while this latter conflict and the one between Iraq and Iran are leading to serious violations of international humanitarian law, and that in Asia and the Pacific ICRC activities focus on the wars in Afghanistan, Kampuchea and East Timor, and the disturbances in the Philippines;

16. Worried by the dramatic evolution in the armed conflict opposing one part of the Tamil community against the central government of Sri Lanka, appeals to the Government of Sri Lanka to accept the offer of humanitarian aid from the ICRC in the area of the conflict, and invites all sides in the conflict to respect the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the international humanitarian law applicable to armed conflicts;

17. Noting that the growth of ICRC activities resulting from the increase in the number and duration of armed conflicts is evidenced by the increase in the ICRC's budget from 3,5 million Swiss francs in 1960 to 142 million in 1980 and to nearly 500 million in 1986;

18. Welcoming the fact that, following the adoption of its Resolution 823 (1984), some governments of the Council of Europe member states increased their contributions to the ICRC budget;

19. Noting with satisfaction that the initiative of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe was followed by other regional and international organisations such as the Organisation of American States (OAS), the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), the Andean Parliament and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), which adopted similar resolutions on the activities of the ICRC;

20. Noting, however, that the increase in financial contributions has not been sufficient to cope with the rise in the ordinary and extraordinary expenditure of the ICRC, which makes it necessary for governments to maintain their financial efforts in order to enable the ICRC to continue both its ordinary and extraordinary activities and make good the deficits caused by certain activities, particularly emergency or extraordinary action;

21. Recalling that the member states of the Council of Europe, as parties to the Geneva Conventions, have a particular responsibility and must exert their influence to ensure respect for the rules of international humanitarian law at all times and in all circumstances;

22. Asserting that the ICRC plays an indispensable role because of its activities and the principles on which it is based—humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence and universality—none of which must ever be abandoned.

23. Invites the governments of Council of Europe member states:

i. to contribute, by co-operating with each national Red Cross and Red Crescent society, to the public in their countries being better informed about the international activities of the ICRC, including both those based on the 1949 Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols and those unconnected with the conventions;

ii. to ratify, if they have not already done so, the Additional Protocols of 8 June 1977, or to accede thereto;

iii. to help to ensure respect in all circumstances for the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the international humanitarian law applicable to armed conflicts;

iv. to increase substantially their regular annual contributions to the ordinary budget of the ICRC;

v. to make *ad hoc* contributions in order to help cover the costs of emergency humanitarian action financed by extraordinary budgets;

vi. to support the work of the international Red Cross and Red Crescent movement as contributing to peace, meaning not merely the absence of war, but a dynamic process of co-operation among all states and peoples, based on respect for freedom, independence, national sovereignty, equality and human rights, as well as on a just and equitable distribution of wealth and work.

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