

Seminar on “The Journalist and International Humanitarian Law”

The first seminar organized jointly by the Union of African Journalists (UAJ) and the ICRC on the subject “The Journalist and International Humanitarian Law” was held in Nairobi (Kenya) from 16 to 20 September 1985. This event, which was the result of the close co-operation established between the ICRC and the UAJ following a mission to Cairo on 20 October 1984 by Mr Alain Modoux, head of the ICRC Information Department, had several objectives:

- to introduce African journalists to international humanitarian law and to inform them of the activities of the ICRC;
- to examine, in the light of the humanitarian problems in Africa, the role of the media in sensitizing public opinion and promoting humanitarian rules;
- to take stock of the situation with regard to the protection of journalists in their work.

About forty journalists from twenty-eight French-speaking, English-speaking and Portuguese-speaking African countries participated in the seminar along with representatives of the Africa Press Service and the Panafrican News Agency, members of the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and experts from specialized organizations of the United Nations (UNHCR, UNDRO, UNESCO, UNICEF, FAO) and the Arab League (Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization—ALECSO). The ICRC delegation was led by the head of the Information Department.

Throughout the week a series of lectures illustrated by films and followed by lively discussions were given on various subjects: the African journalists were introduced to international humanitarian law and the Red Cross (its principles, organization and mandate); a general survey was given of the ICRC’s activities in Africa both under the Conventions and in situations not covered by their provisions, and the main problems it encountered were described; a round-table discussion was held on the coordination of humanitarian operations by inter-governmental organizations and by the Red Cross in Africa, and finally questions were debated of very direct concern for media representatives, namely the part that journalists can play in promoting respect for international humanitarian law and the spirit of peace, and the protection of journalists in their work.
