

WORLD RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT DAY 1991

**JOINT MESSAGE OF THE LEAGUE OF RED CROSS
AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES
AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS**

“Light the Darkness!”

That is the slogan of this year’s World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day, which is being celebrated throughout the world today, 8 May, the anniversary of the birth of our Movement’s founder, Henry Dunant. Today also marks the culminating point of the World Campaign for the Protection of Victims of War.

War and violence continue to devastate vast areas of the world. At this very moment more than 30 conflicts are raging. Millions of people have been killed, wounded, imprisoned or forced to flee their homes or their countries.

Most of them are civilians. Their suffering and distress are beyond imagination.

Bringing a ray of hope into the darkness of war and violence. Protecting human life and dignity. Caring for the wounded. Visiting prisoners. Bringing help to refugees. Tracing the missing. Reuniting families. Protecting civilians who are defenceless and without shelter. Such is the mission of the volunteers, delegates and staff of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement who are engaged daily in the humanitarian battle.

But their work is still only a drop in the ocean, and too often their efforts are frustrated by lack of understanding and outright cynicism on the part of military men and politicians, not to speak of the indifference of world public opinion.

Millions of people today are deprived of the assistance and protection to which they are entitled under international humanitarian law.

The Geneva Conventions, ratified by 164 States, are constantly flouted and violated.

The most basic human rights, which must be respected at all times and in all circumstances, are disregarded.

Civilians are subjected to indiscriminate attack, summary execution, rape and torture.

Obstacles are often put in the way of humanitarian aid, and famine, epidemics and mass population movements are the result.

This situation cannot be tolerated. The victims have rights. We must respect those rights and ensure that they are respected by others.

That is why the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is calling on governments, combatants and all peoples of the world:

- to seek peaceful settlements for disputes;
- to remedy situations of injustice and oppression which lead to wars;
- to meet their humanitarian commitments;
- to release the resources needed to protect and assist the victims of armed conflicts.

In response to this appeal, let everyone show solidarity with the victims of war by making this night of 8 May 1991 glow with millions of lights!

By being part of this “chain of light”, everyone can help break the chains of violence, enforce respect for humanitarian law and ensure that all war victims receive protection and assistance, everywhere, at all times.*

* This message has been recorded by:
Mr. Cornelio Sommaruga, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (speaking in *French, German and Italian*);

Dr. Mario Villarroel Lander, President of the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (speaking in *Spanish*);

Mr. Pär Stenbäck, Secretary General of the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (speaking in *English*);

Dr. Ahmad Abu-Goura, Chairman of the Standing Commission of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (speaking in *Arabic*);

The recording (on 7 1/2 reel tape or cassette) can be obtained from the Press Division of the International Committee of the Red Cross.