

In his final remarks, Sassòli reminds the reader of the oft-proclaimed renaissance of customary international law, a renaissance which, paradoxically, can also be attributed to the diligent work of codification. His thesis shows that rules of customary law to protect the civilian population have emerged in even stronger form from the codification of international humanitarian law by the Diplomatic Conference. His conclusions — carefully thought out and supported with an unbelievable abundance of source material — are important because they can help in making clear what law is in force for States that have not ratified Protocol I. It is no mean feat to have placed specific, current problems of international humanitarian law in the broader context of general international law. The rigorous logic of Sassòli's mental processes and his clarity of expression in German make this voluminous work a stimulating read.

Hans-Peter Gasser

CASUALTIES OF CONFLICTS
*Report for the World Campaign for
the Protection of Victims of War*

Casualties of Conflict is an independent report prepared by the Department of Peace and Conflict Research of Uppsala University (Sweden) and designed as a contribution to the World Campaign for the Protection of Victims of War and as a reference document for the humanitarian endeavours of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.*

The authors of the report, Christer Ahlström and Kjell-Åke Nordquist, have tried to describe contemporary armed conflicts as objectively as possible, to depict in their many different aspects the sufferings that these conflicts cause to various categories of victims and to identify the different means, especially legal ones, that are available to the international community for limiting these sufferings.

* Christer Ahlström with contributions by Kjell-Åke Nordquist, *Casualties of Conflict — Report for the World Campaign for the Protection of Victims of War*, Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University, Sweden, 1991, 74 pp.

This report, financed by the Canadian, Finnish and Swedish Red Cross Societies, is an independent reference document which does not express the opinions of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. It also exists in French and Spanish and may be obtained from the International Promotion Bureau, P.O. Box 109, 1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland.

This has resulted in a short logically structured book of some 70 pages, combining theory with practice and accompanied by a number of statistical tables and basic texts. Its simple formulation and direct approach make it interesting and accessible to a wide variety of readers.

On the basis of the comprehensive data contained in studies compiled by the Department of Peace and Conflict Research and by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), the authors begin by devoting two chapters to contemporary armed conflicts, their definition, their nature, their development and their individual characteristics. We thus learn that of the 36 armed conflicts recorded in 1988-1989 only five involved combat between States and that in all the other cases fighting took place within one country. At least five million people, mostly civilians, have lost their lives in these conflicts since the outbreak of hostilities. The analysis naturally also had to cover the question of armaments, as well as the development of the new so-called "blind" weapons which place civilians at serious risk. The statistics are eloquent in this respect: over 30 million mines were sown in Afghanistan in the 1980s, and it is estimated that between 1.3 and 1.5 million people in that country and some 40,000 in Angola are now disabled, largely as the result of mine explosions.

The report goes on to deal at length with the various categories of victims of conflict, basing the analyses on statistics set out in several tables. Special attention is paid to the cases of child-soldiers (an estimated 200,000 children under the age of 15 are reportedly currently used as soldiers), refugees (over 16 million in the world in 1989) and people displaced in their own countries (over two million in Sudan). Giving a real-life dimension by eye-witness accounts and quotations from publications to what might otherwise be dry statistical data, the authors describe the efforts made by the United Nations, particularly the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to provide protection and assistance for these especially vulnerable categories of victims.

What are the means at the disposal of the international community for alleviating the sufferings of victims of conflict and imposing "constraints on inhumanity"? In a series of short paragraphs, the report traces the development of international humanitarian law since the 1864 Convention, laying stress on the provisions of the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols concerning the protection of the wounded and sick, prisoners of war and the civilian population, and also on the fundamental principle that a distinction must be made between military targets and civilian populations and between combatants and non-combatants, the prohibition on causing superfluous injury and unnecessary suffering, the rule against perfidy, etc. The authors dwell on various implementation mechanisms provided by law, the application of which often comes up against the principle of State sovereignty.

The "challenges of today" as seen by the authors of the report are to propagate information on the humanitarian law which is all too often violated and to promote the development of that law with regard to internal conflicts. The existing array of legal instruments is certainly not inconsiderable, but it must be extended further. International public opinion has a part to play through the pressure, or even sanctions, that it can impose on a defaulting State. To quote the authors, "*It is of utmost importance to victims that the ICRC maintains its mandate and role in assisting and protecting the victims of war. It is difficult, however, for the ICRC to contribute, through its humanitarian action, to the implementation of international humanitarian law and, at the same time, to denounce systematically and publicly the violations of international humanitarian law*".

Accordingly, the authors very optimistically suggest the establishment of an independent body "*whose main objective would be to generate public response, based on its findings, in support of the observance of international humanitarian law*".

They further add that it would be desirable to bring about closer coordination of supervision and vigilance in humanitarian matters — for example, through a Council of Experts — and to reiterate in a legal document the existing fundamental rules on respect for the human person in cases of internal disturbances and tension.

The authors conclude by calling upon all international organizations concerned with international humanitarian law to observe carefully all international and internal developments which may give its ideas new life. "*The ongoing reorganization of the international community affords, in particular, the opportunity to study how international humanitarian law can be more effectively applied to internal conflict*".

Jacques Meurant