

# M I S C E L L A N E O U S

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## HUMAN RIGHTS IN ARMED CONFLICTS

The Human Rights Commission, holding its regular meeting in New York from 24 February to 27 March 1970, was directed by the United Nations General Assembly to consider the Secretary-General's report on " Respect of Human Rights in Armed Conflicts ".

The report was studied on 5 and 6 March 1970. Many delegates conveyed their governments' opinions on this subject. Some gave notice of their intention to comment more thoroughly on the report at the General Assembly's 25th session (which will start in September), their governments not having completed their studies of the report.

Several speakers expressed their satisfaction at the U.N. Secretariat's close co-operation with the ICRC in that undertaking.

The International Committee was represented in New York by Mr. C. Pilloud, Director, who was available for consultation by the General Secretariat and delegations who so desired.

Among the more notable remarks during the proceedings were those of Mr. Jhal, the Indian representative, who talked on article 3 common to the four 1949 Conventions. He considered that that article should be on an equal footing with legislation on human rights.

The strict application of the Geneva Conventions by parties to a conflict and the search for better protection for humanity—particularly the civilian population—were two points on which delegates laid stress, asking that work be undertaken as a matter of urgency to improve existing regulations.

Other subjects of concern to representatives of several countries were the questions relating to irregular combatants (guerrillas), non-international armed conflicts and the use of certain weapons. However, on the whole, delegates were of the opinion that to apply

the existing Geneva Conventions in full, possibly by adapting them to modern warfare, was preferable to drawing up completely new regulations.

The strict observance of the Geneva Conventions, in the opinion of the Human Rights Commission, was the first step.

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### **THE REFUGEE PROBLEM**

Last November, 60 private American organizations concerned with the refugee problem met in Washington for the National Conference on World Refugee Problems. The meeting was convened by the United States Committee for Refugees in association with the American Council of Voluntary Agencies for Foreign Service and the American Immigration and Citizenship Conference. The ICRC was invited to attend and delegated Mr. C. Pilloud, director, to take part in a consultative capacity.

The purpose of the Conference was to rouse public interest in favour of refugees and to reach certain conclusions, the first being a definition of refugees. This being extremely topical, we believe our readers will be interested in the following quotation:

“ Service agencies are committed to the concept of assistance to refugees as a humanitarian act, viewing the refugee in the broadest sense as the victim of war, intolerance and social unrest, natural calamity, oppression, fear of persecution. They urge governments and intergovernmental and international voluntary agencies to move away from traditional rhetoric and standard approaches in their efforts to meet refugee problems. The refugee phenomenon has become too varied and complex in its manifestations, and too dangerous to peace and development throughout the world, to be responsive to old answers and historically conditioned reflexes. Such answers have little relevance to contemporary reality which witnesses refugees on every continent of the world, both within and outside of their native countries.