

## E. BELLO: AFRICAN CUSTOMARY HUMANITARIAN LAW<sup>1</sup>

Humanitarian principles are common to the human beings of all nations; they are to be found everywhere, deeply embedded in the conscience of man, once the particularities arising from culture and external circumstances have been removed. E. Bello's study is a further demonstration of the truth of this statement.

His book, which unfortunately exists only in English, is divided into three main parts. The description of armed conflicts in pre-colonial Africa, with the modes of combat, the lawful measures permitted against civilians or civil objects, and the means of putting an end to conflicts, is followed by a comparative analysis of existing norms in African customary law and those prescribed by the international conventions of humanitarian law. The last part of the work, which constitutes the conclusion to the comparative study preceding it, is dedicated to a subject which is of particular interest to the author: the establishment of an African institute of international humanitarian law, to further the dissemination of knowledge of this law in Africa by the National Societies of the Red Cross. The index and a good bibliography complete this concise and fascinating work. The reader, upon closing it, would like to read much more on the same subject and would like to find similar studies on the humanitarian principles of other cultures.

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## THE ICRC IN INDOCHINA, 1946-54<sup>2</sup>

Engaged in Indochina in one of the first great decolonization conflicts, the ICRC had to cope with a situation which was in many ways new to it. The Indochina war, in which an expeditionary force was pitted against guerrillas in civilian clothing, dragged on over seven years (from 1946 to 1954), until it gradually reached such a state of "decay" that it was scarcely possible to apply humanitarian law any longer.

Faced with the attitude of the French who tried to limit it to a partial rôle and the Vietnamese who refused to comply with its requests and

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<sup>1</sup> Prof. E. Bello: *African Customary Humanitarian Law*, Oyez Publishing Limited and International Committee of the Red Cross, Geneva, 1980, 158 pages, 15 Swiss Francs. In English only.

<sup>2</sup> Jean-François Berger: *L'action du CICR en Indochine, 1946-1954*. Editions Corbaz, Montreux, 1982. 96 pp. 9.50 Swiss francs. In French only.