

Humanitarian meetings on conflict in Yugoslavia

At the invitation of the International Committee of the Red Cross, plenipotentiary representatives of the Yugoslav Federal Executive Council, the Republic of Croatia, the Republic of Serbia and the Federal Army met in Geneva on 26 and 27 November 1991 to find solutions to the various matters of humanitarian concern arising from the conflict in Yugoslavia. The meeting gave substance to the declaration of respect for international humanitarian law made by the Presidents of the six Republics in The Hague on 5 November.

All those taking part said that they were willing to separate humanitarian matters from political issues. They declared that they would implement the provisions of the 1949 Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocol I that provide protection for the wounded and sick, civilians and prisoners and govern the conduct of hostilities.

The participants adopted the following recommendations:

- to set up a joint commission to trace missing persons;
- to establish a procedure for transmitting allegations of violations of international humanitarian law;
- to do more to spread knowledge of the rules of international humanitarian law among all combatants and to promote respect for the Red Cross emblem.

They acknowledged the importance of setting up protected zones under ICRC supervision and of allowing humanitarian aid consignments free passage.

It was agreed that the participants would attend a future meeting held under ICRC auspices in Geneva on 20 December 1991.

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Previously, representatives of the Red Cross of Yugoslavia and of the Red Cross in the country's six Republics (Bosnia-Herzegovina,

Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia), meeting in Geneva on 15 November 1991 at the invitation of the International Committee of the Red Cross, unanimously reaffirmed that, in accordance with the provisions of international humanitarian law, work to aid the victims of the conflict in Yugoslavia must be given absolute priority.

The meeting was also attended by leading officials of the ICRC, the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the President of the Executive Committee of the Hungarian Red Cross. The participants emphasized the need to strengthen the role of the Red Cross in the field and to facilitate its access to the victims, thus ensuring that they receive the help to which they are entitled.

Fulfilling the wish expressed by ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga in his welcoming address, the participants also stressed the importance of the principles and ideals that unite all members of the Movement and enable them to preserve a measure of humanity in the midst of battle.
