

# INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

---

## Memorandum

### Implementation and Dissemination of the Geneva Conventions of 1949

GENEVA, 15 August 1972

*To the Governments of the States Parties to the Geneva Conventions*

The XXth International Conference of the Red Cross, meeting in Vienna in October 1965, in its XXIst Resolution, entitled "Implementation and Dissemination of the Geneva Conventions", expressed the wish that Governments and National Societies submit periodic reports to the International Committee of the Red Cross on the steps taken by them in that sphere.

The resolution reads as follows:

*The XXth International Conference of the Red Cross, considering that by virtue of Article 47 of the First Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949, Article 48 of the Second Convention, Article 127 of the Third Convention and Article 144 of the Fourth Convention, the Contracting Parties have undertaken to give the widest possible dissemination, both in time of peace and war, to the texts of the Conventions in their respective countries and in particular to introduce the study thereof into the military and, if possible, civilian instruction syllabuses so that the principles may be known by the whole population, considering that the application of these Articles is of the greatest importance in ensuring the observance of these Conventions,*

## INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE

*considering further that it is essential that members of the armed forces have adequate knowledge of the Geneva Conventions,*

*appeals to all States Parties to the Geneva Conventions to make increased efforts to disseminate and apply these Conventions, in particular by including the essential principles of the Conventions in the instruction given to officers and troops ;*

*further appeals to National Societies to strengthen their activities and to co-operate with their Governments in this field ;*

*expresses the wish that Governments and National Societies submit periodic reports to the International Committee of the Red Cross on the steps taken by them in this sphere ;*

*notes with satisfaction and gratitude the efforts made by the ICRC to ensure the application of the Geneva Conventions and requests it to continue with this task.*

Pursuant to this resolution, the ICRC, which on 21 November 1966 sent to all States Parties to the Geneva Conventions a memorandum suggesting practical steps for the teaching of the Conventions, submitted a report, based on the replies received from some States, to the XXIst International Conference of the Red Cross, meeting in Istanbul in September 1969.

The ICRC is aware that other States have since that time taken further steps designed to ensure the dissemination of the Conventions, and it has endeavoured to support the efforts made in this direction by providing Governments and National Red Cross Societies with information material suited to the different circles in which the Conventions should be disseminated (schools, the army and the police, medical and nursing circles, and universities). For your guidance, we attach a list of ICRC publications which are at all times available to those interested.

In view of the efforts now being made to reaffirm and develop international humanitarian law applicable in armed conflicts, the need for a clear and widespread understanding of the basic principles of the Geneva Conventions is greater than ever.

The International Committee therefore wishes to remind the Governments concerned of the aforementioned resolution and requests the appropriate authorities to state what steps have been taken since 1969 to disseminate the Geneva Conventions among

the armed forces and the civilian population, within the meaning of Article 47 of the First Convention, Article 48 of the Second Convention, Article 127 of the Third Convention and Article 144 of the Fourth Convention.

The replies that it receives will enable the ICRC to prepare a report which will be submitted to the XXIIInd International Conference of the Red Cross, to be held in Teheran in November 1973. Such replies should reach the ICRC not later than February 1973 and the ICRC would therefore be grateful to the appropriate authorities if they would give this request their prompt attention.

The International Committee believes that in making these various suggestions it is complying with the said resolution of the XXth International Conference of the Red Cross and the procedure laid down in the Geneva Conventions regarding dissemination. It believes, too, that by encouraging the propagation of the humanitarian ideal underlying the entire Red Cross movement it is serving the cause of peace.

A copy of this memorandum is being sent to the National Red Cross, Red Crescent and Red Lion and Sun Societies of the countries concerned.

FOR THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE  
OF THE RED CROSS

**Marcel A. Naville**  
*President*

\*

**LIST OF ICRC PUBLICATIONS DESIGNED TO ENSURE  
THE DISSEMINATION OF THE CONVENTIONS**

**1. Schools**

School textbook "The Red Cross and My Country"

English, French, Arabic, Spanish, Sinhalese, Indonesian, Laotian, Chinese, Korean, Burmese, Nepalese, Malay and Thai.

"Teacher's Manual" (in the same languages)

## INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE

### 2. Army—Police

	Engl.	Fr.	Span.	German	Arabic	Port.
Summary of the Conventions	x	x	x	x	x	
Soldier's Manual	x	x	x		x	x

### 3. Medical and nursing circles

The Doctor in the Geneva Conventions	x	x	x	x		
Rights and Duties of Nurses	x	x	x	x		

### 4. Universities

Course of Five Lessons on the Geneva Conventions	x	x	x	x		
Course on International Humanitarian Law	x	x	x			

### 5. Slides

Three series illustrating

Soldier's Manual	(27 slides)
School textbook	(30 slides)
Geneva Conventions	(20 slides)