

MISCELLANEOUS

a Red Cross tradition that it should concern itself with the plight of the victims of armed conflicts, it has been impelled to give its attention also to certain weapons, for it is impossible to ensure effective protection for the victims of armed conflicts without considering the growing threat, to civilians as well as combatants, of the development of modern weapons. In this context, pursuant to a proposal which the experts of nineteen governments put forward at the second session of the Conference on the Reaffirmation and Development of International Humanitarian Law Applicable in Armed Conflicts, the ICRC has decided to call a special meeting, in 1973, to consult with legal, military and medical experts on the problem of such conventional weapons as may cause unnecessary suffering or be indiscriminate in their effect.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING

Amnesty International held its fifth Council Meeting at Woudschoten (Zeist, near Utrecht) from 8 to 10 September 1972. The meeting was attended by 130 participants: members of the International Executive Committee and of the International Secretariat, and delegates of National Sections. Those invited to attend included observers from international governmental and non-governmental organizations: United Nations, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Council of Europe, Organization of African Unity, International Committee of the Red Cross and League of Red Cross Societies. The ICRC and the League were represented by Mme Danièle Bujard, ICRC Legal Adviser. This year, delegates of the National Sections of Australia, Bangladesh, India, Japan, New Zealand and Nigeria attended the Council Meeting for the first time.

The Council, which was presided over by Mr. Sean MacBride, Chairman of the International Executive Committee, studied questions relating to the Organization's statutes, administration, organization and fund-raising, and relations between the Inter-

national Secretariat and the National Sections. It concentrated, above all, on the question of torture and on the international actions which Amnesty International should continue or initiate for the complete abolition of capital punishment and the promotion of the United Nations "Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners".

The Council considered what practical steps could be taken to fight successfully against the practice of torture, which was becoming increasingly widespread in the world. Two international actions were contemplated:

First, the convening of an international conference of non-governmental organizations for the abolition of torture. The purpose of the conference would be to urge governments to ratify the existing International Conventions which prohibited torture, to promote the proposed draft for a UN resolution on a Convention on Torture and the Treatment of Prisoners, adopted by a great number of non-governmental organizations, and to draw the attention of public opinion to the gravity of the problem of torture. Such a conference might be held in the autumn of 1973.

Secondly, the constitution of a competent International Tribunal to try any person accused of having committed acts of torture.

A proposal was made that the International Secretariat appoint a staff member responsible for conducting research and compiling information on torture, and who would also be in charge of publications and the production of a film for television.

The International Committee of the Red Cross attended the Amnesty International Council Meeting with great interest. The Organization's efforts directed at the abolition of torture and of the death penalty follow the same course as the ICRC's work for the development of international humanitarian law.
