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HUMANITY FOR ALL

**The International Red Cross
and Red Crescent Movement**

With forewords by
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Mario Villarroel Lander

The forthcoming book sets out to give an accurate and suitably documented account of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. Unlike most of the works already published on the subject, which are mainly devoted to specific aspects of the Movement, the intention here is to present it in its entirety. The instruments of international humanitarian law, initiated and promoted by the ICRC, are also extensively discussed.

The author, *Hans Haug*, was a professor of public law, in particular public international law, at the St. Gallen University for Economics, Law and Social Sciences between 1967 and 1986, President of the Swiss Red Cross and Vice-President of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies between 1968 and 1982 and a member of the International Committee of the Red Cross between 1983 and 1991. He begins by examining the various components of the Movement (the International Committee of the Red Cross, the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies), the seven Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and international humanitarian law. Other subjects covered are the Red Cross and Red Crescent as a factor of peace, the cooperation of the components of the Movement with other national and international organizations, and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and human rights.

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INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE FOR THE PROTECTION OF WAR VICTIMS

FROM WORDS TO ACTION

Eight hundred and fifteen delegates from 160 States, 39 Ministers, 20 Deputy Ministers and 12 Secretaries of State, the United Nations Secretary-General, the High Commissioner for Refugees and the Under Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement represented by the Presidents of the ICRC and the Federation and the Chairman of the Standing Commission, and all the major governmental and non-governmental organizations active in the sphere of armed conflict — the Swiss government succeeded within the space of a few months in arranging for all these to come together in Geneva for a three-day meeting to discuss the protection of war victims and adopt a substantive declaration on the issue. The International Conference for the Protection of War Victims was undeniably a success.

Nothing but talk, sceptics might say: what we need is action.

Of course, the holding of the International Conference for the Protection of War Victims is not an end in itself, nor can one really speak of success unless victims are actually spared and suffering is alleviated.

So words, and in particular the Declaration adopted by the Conference, must now be translated into deeds. The international community is faced with an enormous task; the discussions are over, and the time has come for resolute commitment to action.

The true success of the Conference will also depend on the extent of this commitment on the part of everyone concerned.

First and foremost, this is the responsibility of governments, which must begin by making an objective and thorough examination of the situation within their own countries. Why have they not acceded to all the instruments of humanitarian law? Have they taken appropriate national measures to ensure that their commitments in this respect are honoured? Are the rules of humanitarian law included in the instruction given to the armed forces?

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement comes next. The National Societies constitute a unique humanitarian network; they must stir the conscience of the people and authorities of their respective countries, support their governments' efforts to implement the provisions of humanitarian law and play an active role in helping the most vulnerable social, cultural and ethnic groups. Their International Federation, for its part, must coordinate these development programmes and promote solidarity among peoples. As for the ICRC, it must not only see to it that humanitarian law is respected but also actively assist States and parties in conflict to meet their humanitarian obligations.

The humanitarian organizations working in the field are also involved: their dedication, discipline and strict impartiality must be exemplary in all respects.

Then the all-powerful media, which can propagate hatred as well as compassion, have their role to play.

Last but by no means least, there is the Swiss government, which has accepted the onerous task of extending the dialogue within a group of experts which the Conference asked it to set up, with a view to preparing a report for the next International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. How can preventive action be taken? How can we ensure that the universal nature of humanitarian law is recognized and clarify certain of its aspects? How can the coordination of humanitarian activities be improved? How should we deal with situations where international humanitarian law has been violated on a massive scale?

The group of experts will have to seek answers to all these questions.

However, the Conference must also be viewed as a signal. The report submitted by the ICRC called upon States to refuse to accept as inevitable the human tragedies unfolding today in the former Yugoslavia, in Somalia, Angola, Afghanistan and many other places. The States did so. It requested them to make every effort to prevent such situations from arising: they agreed to do so, just as they agreed to find ways of helping, despite everything, the victims of situations which have not been brought under control.

The signal that the International Conference for the Protection of War Victims has sent out to the international community must therefore indicate an emergence from the mire of racism, self-seeking isolationism, war and indiscriminate violence and a move towards mutual respect, solidarity, conciliation, and humanity in the midst of war.

These ideals may not be achieved in our time, but it is vital that we strive towards them.

Apart from the practical action outlined above, we must never forget the power of words, nor overlook the fact that on occasion action can take the form of words.

Words can kill as surely as weapons. They can be put to pernicious use in the media, fomenting hatred in the hearts of men and leading children to take up arms.

Yet it is also on words, on the commitment of States, that a brighter future will be built. It is words that must convey the humanitarian message in all languages to all peoples of the world. Through words, dialogue can prevail over force.

And surely our first message, in humanitarian terms, to combatants immured in their convictions, in prejudice and intolerance should be: "Talk to each other"!

Yves Sandoz
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Principles, Law and
Relations with the Movement*
