

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

MEMORANDUM ¹

Implementation and Dissemination of the Geneva Conventions of 1949

GENEVA, November 21, 1966

To Governments parties to the Geneva Conventions

The XXth International Conference of the Red Cross, meeting in Vienna in October 1965, in its Resolution XXI, 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 this sphere.

This 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 August 12, 1949, Article 48 of the Second Convention, Article 127 of the Third Convention and Article 144 of the Fourth Convention, the

¹ The official text is the French version.

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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,

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 International Committee of the Red Cross to ensure the application of the Geneva Conventions and requests it to continue with this task.

The previous Conference, held in New Delhi in 1957, also stressed the importance of school programmes, requesting that place should be set aside for the history and aims of the Red Cross as well as for the basic principles of the Geneva Conventions.

In accordance with this wish, the International Committee of the Red Cross proposes to draw up periodic reports on the basis of information which Governments may be so good as to supply it on measures taken in various countries to ensure dissemination of the Conventions. It has the intention, accordingly, of submitting such reports at the next International Conference of the Red Cross in 1969. These documents will enable the appropriate authorities in each country to see what is being done elsewhere and to profit thereby.

By virtue of articles 47 of the First Convention, 48 of the Second Convention, 127 of the Third Convention and 144 of the Fourth Convention, the High Contracting Parties have undertaken, in

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time of peace as in time of war, to disseminate the text of the Conventions in their respective countries as widely as possible and, in particular, to include its study in programmes of military and, if possible, civil instruction, so that the principles thereof may become known to their armed forces as a whole, the population, medical personnel and chaplains.

The above-mentioned articles add that civil, military, police or other authorities, who in time of war assume responsibilities in respect of protected persons, must possess the text of the Conventions and be specially instructed as to their provisions.

Created for the victims of war, aimed at avoiding unnecessary sacrifice during a conflict and protecting the human being when he is being threatened without valid reason, called upon to be the safeguard in the midst of strife of values upon which peace will one day be reconstructed, the Geneva Conventions will play their essential rôle only if they are known to those, who, at all levels, have the obligation to respect them.

The International Committee of the Red Cross, in reminding the Governments of States parties to the Geneva Conventions, as well as National Red Cross Societies, of the above principles and also of the aforesaid resolution of the XXth Conference and the articles of the Conventions devoted to their dissemination, wishes to submit the following proposals to them :

1. That a summary, containing the essential principles of the Conventions, possibly based on the attached model, be distributed in the same way as personal equipment to each enlisted man.¹ The International Committee of the Red Cross would appreciate it if the authorities concerned would inform it as soon as this or a similar measure has been able to be put into effect.
2. That a programme of instruction for all armed forces be drawn up and put into application without delay in all schools and training centres of these armed forces and their auxiliary services. The International Committee of the Red Cross here-

¹ See *International Review*, April 1965.

with attaches to this memorandum a specimen minimum programme for the instruction of officers and troops.

3. That the competent authorities in the different States communicate to it all measures they have taken with a view to disseminating the Geneva Conventions amongst the armed forces and the civilian population, notably in the sense of the above-mentioned proposals. The International Committee, for its part, holds at the disposal of States parties to the Geneva Conventions the publications it has produced for the purpose of promoting these Conventions. It is also prepared to give any help which may be required in drawing up programmes of instruction.

In proposing these different measures, the International Committee is conscious of being true to the above-mentioned Resolution of the XXth International Conference of the Red Cross and to the line drawn by the provisions of the Geneva Conventions concerning dissemination. It is also conscious of serving the cause of peace by encouraging the spreading of the humanitarian ideal which is the basis of the entire Red Cross movement.

A copy of the present memorandum has been addressed to the National Red Cross Society in each country.

FOR THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE
OF THE RED CROSS

Samuel A. GONARD
President

**MINIMUM PLAN OF INSTRUCTION
IN THE GENEVA CONVENTIONS**

I. Theoretical course (one day)

1. General

Humanitarian law and the rules of war—Definitions—Sources—General principles.

2. Historical background

Development of thinking and practice—The drawing up of the Geneva Conventions and their application.

3. General provisions of the Conventions

Cases of application—Internal conflicts—Control (Protecting Powers and the International Committee of the Red Cross)—Sanctions—Non-renunciation of rights—Prohibition of reprisals—Beginning and termination of application.

4. Conventions I and II of 1949

(wounded, sick, shipwrecked)

5. Convention III of 1949

(prisoners of war)

6. Convention IV of 1949

(civilians)

II. Practical work (one day)

1. Showing of films and slides

2. Conventions I and II

3. Convention III

4. Convention IV

For each cycle (2, 3 and 4), two problems to be solved, submitted by a small group—Study of the text of the Convention—Criticisms and discussion.

5. General discussion and conclusions