

ICRC appeals for respect for civilian population in Lebanon and northern Israel

(16 April 1996)

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is gravely concerned by the violence of the bombardments that have occurred in southern Lebanon and northern Israel during the last few days. The bombing in southern Lebanon has forced most of the Lebanese civilian inhabitants to flee their towns and villages. The civilian population of northern Israel is also affected by rocket attacks. The ICRC estimates that nearly 400,000 people have had to flee their homes in southern Lebanon and another 10,000 in northern Israel.

To help meet the most pressing needs of the population affected by the events, the ICRC has set up an emergency programme throughout the region, giving priority to people who have remained in their homes.

The ICRC hereby issues a solemn reminder to the warring parties of their duty to comply with the rules of international humanitarian law, which protect the victims of war. In particular, it stresses that the following acts are prohibited:

- attacks on civilians or civilian property;
- indiscriminate attacks likely to affect civilians and civilian property as well as military objectives;
- attacks on medical facilities, transports or units;
- acts or threats of violence whose primary purpose is to spread terror among the civilian population.

The ICRC also reminds the parties of the following:

- to ensure that civilians are spared, combatants must distinguish themselves from the population and refrain from using it for military purposes, in particular to protect themselves from hostilities;

- staff, vehicles and buildings used for medical and humanitarian purposes must be respected in all circumstances;
- work to protect and assist the civilian population, the wounded and sick, and prisoners must be authorized and facilitated; to this end, ICRC delegates must be guaranteed access to all victims, in accordance with the provisions of international humanitarian law.

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