

Appeal launched on the occasion of the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions of 1949

People on War – Solemn Appeal

The universally recognized Geneva Conventions were adopted in this city 50 years ago today. The States Parties thereby declared their refusal to see the unprecedented horrors of the Second World War repeated.

Since then, these treaties have helped to alleviate much suffering but have not been able to prevent millions of innocent people from falling victim to the conflicts that have ravaged our planet.

Although they are often breached, the Geneva Conventions and the principles on which they are founded remain as valid and relevant as ever.

That is the opinion of thousands of individuals across the world who bear the physical and mental scars of war. Men, women and children have all talked about their experiences, their fears and their expectations. They are the voices of war, and we are convinced that these expectations can be met.

We have come together in Geneva to make a solemn appeal to all peoples, nations and governments. We call on the world:

- to reject the idea that war is inevitable and to work tirelessly to eradicate its underlying causes;
- to demand of all those involved in armed conflicts and all who are in a position to influence the course of such conflicts that they respect the essential humanitarian principles and the rules of international humanitarian law;
- to spare civilians the agony of war;

- to foster relations between individuals, peoples and nations on the basis of the principles that inspired the Geneva Conventions, namely,
 - respect for human dignity in all circumstances;
 - compassion for those who suffer;
 - solidarity.

We are convinced that disregard for these principles sets the stage for war and that respecting them during wartime facilitates the restoration of peace.

On the eve of a new millennium, let us all undertake to defend these principles and thus give hope to future generations.

Geneva, 12 August 1999