

Editorial

The International Review of the Red Cross has reached the venerable age of 135. It bears witness to the continuity of the oldest organization with an international vocation, an institution which has brought assistance and protection to countless victims of armed conflicts. Formerly the official publication of the ICRC and a chronicle of its international activities, the Review now deals with law and policy matters which are of relevance for humanitarian action in times of armed conflict.

The aim of the Review is to promote reflection on humanitarian law, policy and action. Its ambition is to be an indispensable publication for law- and decision-makers interested in humanitarian work and to serve as a reference for academic circles specialized in international humanitarian law and policy. So as better to achieve these aims, the ICRC has decided to appoint a broadly based multidisciplinary Editorial Board that will help to strengthen the universal character of the journal, to enlarge its scope and to ensure its continuing high quality. The Editorial Board held its first meeting in Geneva in September 2004 and adopted the following editorial strategy.

- *All future issues will focus on a specific theme concerned with humanitarian law, policy and action of particular importance for present-day armed conflicts. A multidisciplinary approach will be encouraged and the journal will reflect the views of an extensive range of specialized fields transcending, but related to, issues of humanitarian law and policy in times of armed conflict (e.g. historical, psychological or sociological aspects of respect for international humanitarian law).*
- *Articles on international humanitarian law will remain the backbone of the journal. Its status as the specialized publication on international humanitarian law will be consolidated, in particular by the ongoing publication of selected articles on this branch of international law.*
- *English will be the official language of the International Review of the Red Cross. Nevertheless, articles written in Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian or Spanish are also welcome. Selected articles submitted in a language other than English will be translated for publication in the Review. In addition, a yearly selection of articles that appear in it will be published in other languages. By allowing authors to write contributions in their preferred language, readers will be given access to a more widely representative array of viewpoints on key issues of humanitarian law and action. This will in turn consolidate the universality of the Review.*
- *The Review will remain free online in order to reach a wide readership. It will be given a new form and layout both in the printed version and on the website.*

The first issue of the International Review of the Red Cross in its new format will come out in March 2005. It will be devoted to one of the core activities of the ICRC and will focus on the subject of "Detention". The question of detention in connection with the fight against international terrorism and the renewed querying of the prohibition of torture are highly topical. Above all, the issue will try to elucidate those aspects which have only insufficiently featured in current debate, such as the increasingly witnessed recourse to hostage-taking as a means of warfare.

Editorial

For subsequent issues the Editorial Board has identified other themes that are highly relevant for humanitarian law and action. In the period until June 2006 the Review will thus focus on “Religion” (June 2005 issue), “Arms” (September 2005), “Communication” (December 2005), “International Tribunals” (March 2006) and “Methods of Warfare” (June 2006). These future themes are outlined in the section “Reports and documents” in the present issue of the Review.

With this publication, the ICRC intends to promote knowledge and critical analysis of humanitarian law, policy and action. It is hoped that the new editorial strategy will enable expression to be given to ideas and profound convictions leading to better protection for the victims of armed conflicts.