COLLECTION

COMMUNIQUES DE PRESSE
DU COMITE INTERNATIONAL DE LA CROIX-ROUGE

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PRESS RELEASE

Press release No. 1658
17 January 1991

GULF WAR: ICRC REMINDS STATES OF THEIR OBLIGATIONS

Geneva (ICRC) - As fighting flares in the Gulf, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) solemnly reminds all the parties to the conflict of their commitments as signatories to the 1949 Geneva Conventions for the protection of the victims of war.

It is essential that the States involved honour those commitments in a situation where there is good reason to fear that the civilian population may suffer particular hardship. Indeed, the general context in which the hostilities are being conducted makes it extremely hazardous to provide effective protection for civilians exposed to the fighting.

In view of the circumstances, the ICRC, in a note verbale which will be handed over today to the States involved, insisted that all necessary precautions be taken by those conducting the hostilities to spare civilians. It also reminded them that wounded, sick or shipwrecked members of the armed forces must be cared for and that combatants placed hors de combat must be treated humanely. Medical personnel and establishments must be respected and protected at all times.

Moreover, the ICRC reminds the parties that the use of chemical and bacteriological weapons is prohibited under international humanitarian law and enjoins them not to have recourse to atomic weapons, the use of which is incompatible with the provisions of that law. Weapons of mass destruction having indiscriminate effects generally cause irreparable damage among the civilian population, which must be kept out of the fighting.
The ICRC confirms that it stands ready to fulfil the tasks entrusted to it by the Geneva Conventions and by the Statutes of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and reiterates that it is available to the parties as a neutral and independent intermediary. To this end it must be given access to victims of the conflict, such as prisoners of war and civilians, entitled to protection and assistance. It may also be called upon to fulfil any other task requiring the services of a neutral intermediary or which it might propose to undertake by virtue of its right of humanitarian initiative, recognized by the community of States.

Finally, the International Committee of the Red Cross appeals to all the parties involved to make sure that the conditions are created for the conflict to be resolved at the negotiating table rather than on the battlefield.
Press release No 1659
1 February 1991

MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT: ICRC APPEALS TO BELLIGERENTS

Geneva (ICRC) - The conflict now raging in the Middle East will inevitably bring widespread destruction, perhaps on a scale unprecedented in this part of the world. Millions of civilians have been caught up in the violence, without shelter or protection against occupation and bombing. Growing numbers of combatants are falling into enemy hands. Hundreds of thousands of ground troops - most of them young men - are preparing to meet in a deadly confrontation. The determination of the parties in conflict and the build-up of awesome means of destruction are a presage of irreversible devastation. When the veil of censorship is lifted, the full horror of the suffering inflicted on the peoples of the region and on combatants and their families will be revealed for all to see.

One of the most disquieting aspects of this conflict is the possibility that the law of war, which is the expression of the most basic and universal principles of humanity and of the dictates of the public conscience, might be swept aside by the political, military or propaganda demands of the moment.

The right to choose methods or means of warfare is not unlimited. Weapons having indiscriminate effects and those likely to cause disproportionate suffering and damage to the environment are prohibited.

The wounded, whether civilian or military, and prisoners must receive special consideration and protection in compliance with specific rules which the entire international community has undertaken to respect.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), together with the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the recognized National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, is one of the three components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. An independent humanitarian institution, the ICRC is the founding body of the Red Cross. As a neutral intermediary in case of armed conflicts or disturbances, it endeavours on its own initiative or on the basis of the Geneva Conventions to protect and assist the victims of international and civil wars and of internal troubles and tensions, thereby contributing to peace in the world.
The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) therefore solemnly appeals today to all belligerents, in the name of all civilian and military victims, to have due regard for humanitarian considerations. To show respect for the victims and treat them humanely, in the spirit of the Geneva Conventions, is to recognize a heritage common to all mankind and thus pave the way to reconciliation. It is also the last chance of averting a tragedy even greater than the use of force.

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FOUR ICRC DELEGATES HELD IN AFGHANISTAN

Geneva (ICRC) - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) confirms that four of its delegates have been held in Afghanistan since 12 January by a faction of the Afghan opposition. The four men, Feredum Aalame, Christian Brunner, Yves Giovannoni and Christian Martin, who had left Quetta to carry out a survey in the Kandahar region, have been detained by an opposition commander since that date.

The ICRC at once established contact with the relevant authorities and since then has made repeated requests for the immediate return of its staff members. According to recent reports all four are in good health.

The ICRC Delegate General for Asia is currently in Pakistan to pursue these contacts together with the delegation on the spot.

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Presented on behalf of the President of the Committee of the Red Cross

COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

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[Signature]

[Date]

[Organization]

[Address]
INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT
19, avenue de la Paix • CH-1202 GENEVA
Phone 734 60 01 • Telex 414226 • Telefax (022) 734 82 80

PRESS RELEASE

Press release No. 1661
24 February 1991

MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT: APPEAL BY THE ICRC

Geneva (ICRC) - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is today launching another appeal, on behalf of all civilian and military victims of the Middle East conflict, calling on all the belligerents to fully respect and implement the provisions of international humanitarian law. In the ground war which has now been raging in the Middle East for several hours, the number of military casualties and of combatants who have fallen into enemy hands is rapidly rising. In view of the increasing intensity of the fighting and its devastating effect on the civilian population, the ICRC feels compelled once again to remind the States party to the conflict of their responsibilities and obligations as regards the protection of civilian and military victims alike.

Wounded, sick or shipwrecked soldiers, no matter to which Party they belong, must be collected, respected and protected in all circumstances.

Soldiers who surrender must be spared. They are entitled to respect from the belligerents and must be treated humanely. They must also be evacuated from the frontlines, removed from combat zones and taken to a place where their security can be guaranteed.

All precautions must be taken to spare the civilian population. The Parties to the conflict must take all feasible measures to protect the civilian population from the effects of hostilities. The belligerents are urged to conclude agreements establishing neutralized zones. If the fighting is likely to affect the civilian population, the Parties to the conflict must allow the evacuation of non-combatants, especially the most vulnerable categories such as the wounded and sick, children and the elderly. The Parties to the conflict must also allow the free passage of supplies essential to the survival of the civilian population.

In accordance with its mandate and in its capacity as a neutral intermediary, the ICRC is renewing its offer of services to facilitate the implementation of the provisions designed to protect civilian and military victims.

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Press release no 1662
26 February 1991

PROTECTION OF PRISONERS OF WAR

Geneva (ICRC) - Since the beginning of the ground war, the number of prisoners captured by the coalition forces has increased considerably. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is therefore sending additional staff to its delegation in Saudi Arabia, where ICRC delegates have stepped up their efforts to provide protection for all prisoners of war. The ICRC's visits to prisoners are taking place in accordance with the provisions of the Third Geneva Convention relative to the treatment of prisoners of war.

However, the ICRC has still not received any information concerning the prisoners of war captured by Iraqi forces since 2 August 1990 and in the military operations under way since 17 January 1991. In spite of its numerous approaches, the ICRC has still not been notified by the Iraqi authorities of the identity of Kuwaiti prisoners and members of the coalition armed forces in their hands, nor has it been authorized to visit those prisoners in compliance with international humanitarian law. The ICRC hereby appeals to the authorities of the Republic of Iraq to take immediate action to remedy this serious situation, which constitutes a grave lack of respect of the Third Geneva Convention.

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PRESS RELEASE

Press release No. 1663
14 March 1991

AWARD OF THE PAUL REUTER PRIZE

Geneva (ICRC) - The jury of the Paul Reuter Prize unanimously decided that the prize would exceptionally be awarded to two candidates,

Mr. Edward Kwakwa, LL.D.

a lawyer from Ghana, for his thesis entitled "Trends in the international law of armed conflict: claims relating to personal and material fields of application"; and

Mr. Alejandro Valencia Villa

a lawyer from Colombia, for his work entitled "La Humanización de la Guerra: la aplicacion del derecho internacional humanitario al conflicto armado en Colombia".

The jury emphasized the remarkable quality of both works, which constitute a major contribution to international humanitarian law.

The jury of the Paul Reuter Prize, chaired by Mr. Paolo Bernasconi, member of the ICRC, is made up of Professors Luigi Condorelli and Giorgio Malinverni of Geneva University, as well as members of the ICRC administration.

In 1982, the late Mr. Paul Reuter, former Professor Emeritus at the Paris University of Law, Economics and Social Sciences, and former Chairman of the United Nations International Law Commission, made a donation enabling the ICRC to set up the Paul Reuter Fund, the income of which is used to promote better knowledge and understanding of international humanitarian law. The Fund also provides for the award, generally once every two years, of a Paul Reuter Prize of 2,000 Swiss francs, in recognition of a particularly outstanding work in the field of international humanitarian law.

This is the third award of the Prize since the Fund was created. The winners will receive their prizes this spring.

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Press release No. 1664
19 March 1991

ICRC WARNS OF MAJOR FOOD CRISIS IN IRAQ

Geneva (ICRC) - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) says it is stepping up its food distributions to vulnerable groups in Iraq, and warns that wider action is urgently needed to avert a major nutritional crisis in the stricken country.

Since January the ICRC has brought nearly 900 tonnes of food into Iraq from Jordan and Iran; priority distributions are being made to hospitals and orphanages in Baghdad, and it is planned to extend distributions to other areas. But reports from the organisation's 37-strong delegation in Iraq now say that the population as a whole faces serious food shortages. Some basic food items still available, such as flour, have become too expensive for the average Iraqi.

Alarmed by the situation, the ICRC is in close contact with the United Nations over the measures that need to be taken.

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PRESS RELEASE

Press release No. 1665
20 March 1991

ICRC APPOINTS TWO NEW MEMBERS

Geneva (ICRC) - At its latest meeting on 13 and 14 March 1991, the Assembly of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) appointed two new members, Dr. Rodolphe de Haller and Mr. Daniel Thurer. Their appointment brings membership of the Committee, which is composed exclusively of Swiss citizens, to 21.

Rodolphe de Haller, MD, was born in 1932 and is originally from Bern. He now lives in Jussy in the canton of Geneva. He studied in Neuchâtel, Lausanne and Vienna. His career as a pneumology specialist took him to St-Loup (canton of Vaud), Davos, Lausanne, Geneva and London. Dr. de Haller, who currently lectures at the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Geneva, is the author of numerous scientific publications on tuberculosis and other pulmonary diseases.

Daniel Thurer, LLD, is a professor at the University of Zurich. He was born in 1945 and is originally from Chur and Valzeina (canton of Graubunden). He studied in Zurich, St-Gallen and Cambridge and later lectured at the Universities of Zurich and Heidelberg and at Harvard Law School in Boston. In 1983, he was appointed assistant lecturer in public international law, constitutional law and administrative law at Zurich University. In 1985, he became professor extraordinary and in 1989 was appointed full professor at the University's Faculty of Law.

In December of last year, the Committee conferred honorary membership upon three of its former members, Mrs. Denise Bindschedler, Dr. Athos Gallino and Dr. Alain Rossier.

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RELEASE OF THREE ICRC DELEGATES HELD IN AFGHANISTAN

Geneva (ICRC) - On the evening of 27 March 1991, the three delegates of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) who were still held in Afghanistan by a commander of an opposition faction were released and allowed to return to Pakistan.

Fereydoun Aalam, Christian Brunner and Yves Giovannoni were seized on 12 January 1991 while on a mission in the province of Kandahar, in southern Afghanistan.

The three delegates arrived in Quetta in good health after 75 days of captivity. The fourth member of the team, Dr. Christian Martin, was released on 10 March 1991.

The delegates’ release, which was brought about through the efforts of the ICRC’s contacts, in Pakistan and Afghanistan was unconditional.

The ICRC is delighted at this positive outcome and wishes to thank all those who helped secure the team’s release. It also emphasizes that its humanitarian mission to assist the victims of conflict cannot be carried out without due respect for its delegates and the fundamental principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

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Press release No. 1667
29 March 1991

ISRAEL AND THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES: OFFICIAL VISIT
BY ICRC DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS

Geneva (ICRC) - The Director of Operations of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Mr. Jean de Courten, visited Israel and the Occupied Territories between 22 and 27 March to assess the situation and have talks with the authorities.

While visiting the Occupied Territories, Mr. de Courten also met officials of the local Red Crescent branches and representatives of the Palestinian community.

His discussions with members of the Israeli Government were linked to the rise in violence and repression that has taken place in Israel and the Occupied Territories over recent months. Mr. de Courten also met families of Israeli soldiers missing in action.

Regarding the Occupied Territories Mr. de Courten asked the Israeli government to implement measures that would allow the population to return to a normal life after almost two months of strict curfew, and to lift restrictions on people's movement within the Territories.

Among other issues discussed was the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention and its respect by the Occupying Power, in particular with regard to the Government's settlement policy, the demolition of houses and the expulsion of residents from the Occupied Territories.

The ICRC Operations Director stressed that these practices were contrary to the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention, and pointed out that their recurrence inevitably brought about serious humanitarian consequences and increased tension.

Mr. de Courten also insisted that measures be taken to improve the situation of detainees under interrogation and to allow family visits to all detainees, wherever they are held on Israeli territory. The ICRC sees this last point as a humanitarian priority, especially concerning detainees held at Qeziot Military Detention Centre, where no family visits are allowed.

The ICRC considers that the points it has raised should be dealt with urgently, if the prevailing tension is to be decreased.
IRAQ : ICRC GRAVELY CONCERNED OVER EFFECTS OF CONFLICT ON CIVILIAN POPULATION

Geneva (ICRC) - While political efforts to achieve a lasting cease-fire in the Middle East continue, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) notes with deep concern the worsening plight of civilians throughout Iraq.

In the South, where the ICRC has opened a sub-delegation at Basra, there are clear warning signs of a public health catastrophe of immense proportions due to the drastic shortage of safe drinking water. ICRC delegates report that the incidence of diarrhoea among children has dramatically increased, often resulting in death within a few hours.

The risk of epidemics increases daily as temperatures rise, and beyond the work already accomplished by the ICRC in purifying water in Baghdad and other cities far greater means must be mobilized urgently by the international community in order to prevent the situation developing into a long-term disaster.

In northern Iraq the internal conflict that has developed in the past few weeks has brought added hardship to the civilian population. The ICRC, on the basis of its mandate and of the Geneva Conventions, is sending a team of delegates to the north to assess the situation and to look into the fate of prisoners captured in the area. Meanwhile the ICRC is taking steps to provide impartial assistance as quickly as possible to those in need.

In view of the pressing need for action, the ICRC calls upon all the authorities concerned to permit the free flow of humanitarian aid and to adopt measures regarding the victims that are compatible with established norms of humanitarian behaviour.

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Press release No. 1669
12 April 1991

ICRC STEPS UP ITS ACTIVITIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Geneva (ICRC) - Prompted by the sharp deterioration in the living conditions of the population in Iraq and neighbouring countries, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has just launched an appeal for 104 million Swiss francs for its relief activities in the region, further to its previous appeal made on 17 January 1991.

The financial support which the ICRC hopes to obtain from the international community will enable the institution to continue and step up its humanitarian activities on the spot, now that an official cease-fire has put an end to the hostilities between Iraq and the countries of the coalition.

To meet the large-scale humanitarian needs created by the conflict, ICRC delegates have been focusing on the repatriation of prisoners of war and civilian internees, visits to places of detention, tracing missing persons and, in cooperation with the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, providing emergency relief designed to prevent epidemics.

The ICRC is also doing its utmost to provide assistance and protection for the victims of the internal conflict which broke out in Iraq in early March. It has reminded the civilian and military authorities on several occasions that they are duty bound to do everything possible to ensure respect for the basic humanitarian principles which must be preserved in such situations.

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JOINT PRESS RELEASE

SEVENTIETH DISTRIBUTION OF INCOME
FROM THE EMPRESS SHOKEN FUND

Eleven Red Cross or Red Crescent Societies in developing countries will receive grants totalling CHF 424,000 under the seventieth distribution of income from the Empress Shôken Fund. The money will finance activities in the fields of disaster preparedness, health, social welfare, first aid and youth programmes.

The National Societies were selected by the joint ICRC-League Commission entrusted with the distribution of the income of the Fund at a recent meeting in Geneva. The Commission's meeting was chaired by Mr. Maurice Aubert, Vice-President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The delegation of the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies was headed by League Secretary General Mr. Pär Stenbäck. The Ambassador of Japan in Geneva, H.E. Mr. Hidetoshi Ukawa, was present at the meeting.

The grants will finance the following projects:

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<th>Swiss francs</th>
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<tr>
<td>1) Costa Rica - 1 Radio station for the Red Cross Branch in Guadalupe, Province of San Jose</td>
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<td>2) Dominican Republic - 1 Electricity generator to cope with emergency situations at the National Blood Bank</td>
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<td>3) Fiji - Layout and printing of a Basic First Aid Handbook in the Fijian language</td>
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<td>4) Haiti - 1 30-Seater minibus for Disaster Preparedness, First Aid and Youth</td>
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<td>5) Mali - 1 Ambulance type TOYOTA Land Cruiser for First Aid activities and vaccination programmes</td>
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6) Morocco - Purchase of First Aid training equipment, such as mannequins (dolls), slides, mattresses, etc. 35,000

7) Saint Kitts & Nevis - 1 Minibus for 10 persons and wheelchair chairs, to expand Red Cross services to disabled 38,000

8) Seychelles - First Aid equipment such as 1 Rubber Dingy, 1 Station Wagon. Training Dummies and Life jackets to develop the RC Water Safety programme 46,000

9) South Africa - a) Construction of a Red Cross Community Centre in Botshabelo, Orange Free State Region; 34,000 b) Partial financing of Community Development in the Natal Region 20,000

10) Tunisia - 1 Mobile Blood Collection unit on a RENAULT Master body, fully equipped 65,000

11) Venezuela - To partly finance a two-year Health programme including the purchase of dental care equipment, educational material, etc. 60,000

In 1987, the Joint Commission issued a booklet, "75 Years of Service to Humanity", which is still available and which recalls that the Fund was set up in 1912 by a gift from Her Imperial Majesty of Japan, for the purpose encouraging the development of humanitarian activities among the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. The Empress Shōken died on 11 April 1914. The Fund has received repeated gifts from the Imperial Family of Japan, the Japanese Government and the Japanese Red Cross Society. Its interest-bearing investments exceed six million Swiss francs.

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PRESS RELEASE

NEW EXECUTIVE STRUCTURE FOR ICRC

Geneva (ICRC) - At the meeting of its Assembly, on 2 May 1991, the International Committee of the Red Cross decided to set up a single executive body. The decision was prompted by the need to keep pace with the growing complexity of the ICRC’s humanitarian work worldwide and to respond with optimum efficiency to the marked expansion in its activities.

Part of the former Directorate will now be incorporated into the Executive Board. The new Board will have direct responsibility for the three structures that oversee the ICRC’s activities, i.e. the General Directorate, and the Directorates of Operations and of Principles, Law and Relations with the Movement.

The seven members of the new Executive Board will, as previously, be elected by the Assembly for renewable terms of four years. On 2 May the Assembly elected:

Guy Deluz, Director General, whose task it will be to coordinate administrative activities; Jean de Courten, Director of Operations, and Yves Sandoz, Director for Principles, Law and Relations with the Movement.

The other members of the Executive Board will be:

Cornelio Sommaruga, ICRC President; Claudio Caratsch, permanent Vice-President; Rudolf Jäckli, member of the ICRC; and Anne Petitpierre, also member of the ICRC.

André Ghelfi and Pierre Keller have asked to be relieved of their duties as members of the Executive Board while remaining members of the Assembly.

This new system will take effect on 10 May 1991. It follows a previous reorganization and the creation of the post of Director General in January 1990 and is the result of specific proposals put forward by a working group of Committee members following extensive consultations throughout the institution.

The Assembly, whose main task is to provide overall supervision of the institution’s work and to determine the principles and policy that govern its activities, will remain essentially unchanged. It will continue to have 15 to 25 members, who are all Swiss citizens and most of whom serve on a voluntary basis, but has decided to increase the number of its meetings from eight to at least ten per year. In addition, it has set up a management control commission, consisting of five members not on the Executive Board. The commission will be chaired by Pierre Languetin and will assist the Assembly in supervising the institution’s executive structure and administration.

The ICRC, always open to opportunities for dialogue, intends to step up its consultations with international experts and to establish closer working relations with the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and their federation, the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.
PRESS RELEASE

Press release No. 91/ 1672
2 July 1991

YUGOSLAVIA: ICRC APPEALS FOR COMPLIANCE WITH HUMANITARIAN RULES AND VISITS FIRST PRISONERS

Geneva (ICRC) - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has launched an appeal to all parties to the conflict in Yugoslavia to respect, care for and protect civilians, combatants who have been disarmed and the wounded.

In Slovenia, ICRC delegates today visited a first group of 45 members of the Yugoslav armed forces captured by Slovene forces.

There are currently 13 delegates on the spot, working in Belgrade, Ljubljana and elsewhere in the country in close cooperation with the Red Cross of Yugoslavia and of various other republics.

The ICRC is planning to send more staff to strengthen its teams throughout the country.

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The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is deeply concerned about the gravity of the situation in Yugoslavia and its consequences in humanitarian terms.

The ICRC calls on all the parties to respect international humanitarian law and to ensure that it is respected by everyone involved in the fighting.

The civilian population and people must not be attacked and must be protected from any act of violence. Persons captured must be treated humanely and the wounded and sick must be cared for in all circumstances.

The ICRC urges all parties to respect the protective red cross emblem, so that those displaying it in the course of their humanitarian activities can do their work safely and without constraint of any kind. Misuse of the emblem is prohibited under international humanitarian law.

The ICRC also trusts that the parties concerned will continue to grant its representatives and those of the Red Cross of Yugoslavia and of the Republics the facilities required to enable the Red Cross to bring assistance to all victims of the clashes.

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PRESS RELEASE

Press release No. 1674
3 July 1991

ICRC APPOINTS NEW MEMBER

Geneva (ICRC) - At its latest meeting on 26 and 27 June 1991, the Assembly of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) appointed a new member, Ms. Francesca Pometta. Her appointment brings the membership of the Committee, which is composed exclusively of Swiss citizens, to 22.

Ms. Pometta is originally from Broglio in the Canton of Ticino. After receiving an arts degree from the University of Lausanne, she entered the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs in Bern in 1957 and subsequently held diplomatic posts in Paris, Washington, New York, Bern and Rome. In 1975, she returned to Bern to take up the position of Deputy Director at the Directorate for International Organizations, and in 1977 was appointed Ambassador in charge of the Directorate's Political Division III (UN and international organizations, scientific and environmental matters, cultural affairs and UNESCO). From 1982 to 1987, she was Switzerland's Permanent Observer at the UN in New York and then Ambassador to Rome from 1987 to 30 June 1991, when she retired from government service.

Mrs Pometta was Switzerland's Head of Delegation at the International Conferences of the Red Cross in Bucharest in 1977 and in Manila in 1981. She was also a member of the Swiss delegation at the Diplomatic Conference on the Reaffirmation and Development of International Humanitarian Law applicable in Armed Conflicts, held in Geneva from 1974 to 1977.

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Press Release No. 1675
16 July 1991

ICRC CONCERNED ABOUT DETAINEES UNDER INTERROGATION IN ISRAEL
AND OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

Geneva (ICRC) - In view of the lack of response to previous
representations, the International Committee of the Red Cross
(ICRC) today submitted a further report to the highest
authorities of the State of Israel, on the situation of detainees
undergoing interrogation in Israel and the occupied territories.

ICRC delegates have regularly visited detainees in investigation
sections in Israel and the occupied territories, on the basis of
the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. They have sent numerous
reports and written representations to the Israeli authorities,
with the aim of improving the treatment of these detainees.

The ICRC appeals to the Israeli authorities to give special
attention to the treatment of detainees under interrogation, and
to implement the recommendations it has already made.

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PRESS RELEASE

Press release No. 1676
17 July 1991

YUGOSLAVIA: ICRC APPEALS FOR RESPECT FOR THE RED CROSS EMBLEM

Geneva (ICRC) - From the beginning of the recent events in Yugoslavia, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has heard repeated allegations of misuse of the red cross emblem.

On 16 July, therefore, the ICRC sent an appeal to all the parties involved calling on them to comply with the basic rules of international humanitarian law.

Among other things, the institution reminded them that use of the red cross emblem is strictly limited to medical and protection activities. Any misuse of the emblem is a serious violation of humanitarian law that jeopardizes the safety of Red Cross personnel and deprives the victims of the assistance to which they are entitled.

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MOZAMBIQUE: ICRC DENIES ALLEGATIONS

Geneva (ICRC) - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) strongly denies that it has been involved at any time in the storage or transport of military equipment or clothing destined for RENAMO opposition forces in Mozambique, as claimed in recent reports.

An ICRC delegate, Hans-Ulrich Spiess, was arrested yesterday in Beira under the pretext that military equipment and clothing had been found in the ICRC warehouse in the town. This charge follows the confiscation by Mozambican security forces on 16 July of some 60 kg of civilian, but military-style, clothes contained in a consignment of used clothing donated by the German Red Cross for ICRC relief operations in the area. These items had already been set aside by ICRC delegates as unsuitable for distribution and were due to be destroyed.

The ICRC in Maputo is in contact with the Mozambican authorities concerning these accusations and to ensure the release of its delegate.

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MOZAMBIQUE: ICRC DELEGATE RELEASED

Geneva (ICRC) - Hansueli Spiess, the delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) who was arrested on 21 July following the discovery of bales of military uniforms in an ICRC warehouse in Beira, has just been freed by the Mozambican authorities.

The ICRC is pleased to learn of its delegate's release and takes the opportunity to make the following points clear.

The ICRC's policy is to conduct its activities as openly as possible and it therefore requested the presence of government representatives when unpacking relief consignments and sorting them for distribution.

One such consignment, sent by the German Red Cross without the ICRC having been informed of the precise contents, comprised several tonnes of ex-GDR police, civil defence and army shirts and uniforms.

The ICRC stresses once again that it has never dispatched any military-type clothing or military equipment to Mozambique or elsewhere, nor has it ever distributed such items.

The ICRC is confident that this unfortunate misunderstanding will not cast doubt on its good faith and that the institution will be able to continue its humanitarian work in Mozambique.

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PRESS RELEASE

Press release No. 1679
2 September 1991

ACCIDENT DESTROYS ICRC HERCULES C-130 IN SOUTHERN SUDAN

Geneva (ICRC) - On Monday morning 2 September 1991 an accident occurred during the take-off of a Hercules C-130 chartered by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The plane, which was on a regular relief flight from Wau in southern Sudan, was destroyed and five crew members were injured. They were taken to the hospital in Wau for treatment and will be flown out to Khartoum by a special aircraft.

The ICRC has been carrying out an assistance operation in the area since mid-June to provide food, medical supplies and other items to conflict victims in Wau, Juba and Malakal, three towns under government control, and in the territory held by the SPLA (Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army).

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AFGHAN PREMIER VISITS ICRC

Geneva (ICRC) - The Prime Minister of the Republic of Afghanistan, Fazlulhaq Khaleqyar, today visited the headquarters of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). He was received by ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga, the Vice-President and other members of the institution.

Mr. Khaleqyar was accompanied by Mohaiuddin Shahbaz, Minister of Planning, Ambassador Mohammad Nabi Amani, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the United Nations in Geneva, and other diplomats.

This was the first visit by an Afghan Prime Minister to the ICRC in Geneva. Discussions centred on the current situation in Afghanistan and the ICRC's role in this country ravaged by 13 years of war. The ICRC President raised a number of issues still pending with regard to the ICRC's activities for prisoners, the safety of its delegates and respect for the red cross and red crescent emblem. He also expressed the hope that the latest efforts to reach a political settlement of the conflict would bring the stability needed to build a peaceful future for the people of Afghanistan.

Fazlulhaq Khaleqyar thanked the ICRC for its work in behalf of the wounded, prisoners and the civilian population and expressed the wish to see the ICRC maintain and expand its activities throughout Afghanistan.

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PRESS RELEASE

Press release No. 1681
28 September 1991

YUGOSLAVIA : ATTACK ON ICRC CONVOY

Geneva (ICRC) - A convoy of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was attacked yesterday near Lipik in Croatia as it travelled from Zagreb to Pakrac, south-east of the Croatian capital. None of the delegates or local personnel were injured.

The team was on its way to evacuate 270 patients from the psychiatric unit of the main hospital in Pakrac, situated in a conflict zone, after obtaining the agreement of the Croatian and federal authorities.

The ICRC deplores this incident and once again calls on all the fighting forces to respect the protective emblem of the Red Cross and to guarantee the security of the ICRC's mission in Yugoslavia.

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ICRC APPEAL IN BEHALF OF CIVILIANS IN YUGOSLAVIA

Geneva (ICRC) - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), noting the alarming escalation in the fighting in Yugoslavia during the past 48 hours, especially in Slavonia and on the Dalmatian coast, is deeply concerned about the plight of the civilian population which, according to reports received, is particularly vulnerable in the combat zones.

By virtue of its mandate, the ICRC has already made representations at the highest level and hereby urges the military and civilian authorities of the parties involved to take all necessary steps to ensure compliance with the obligations contained in the provisions of international humanitarian law. The ICRC enjoins them in particular:

- not to direct any attack against the civilian population;
- not to attack, destroy, remove or render useless objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population;
- to spare the lives of those who surrender and treat all captured combatants humanely;
- to respect and ensure respect for the Red Cross emblem so as to guarantee the safety of those engaged in humanitarian activities under its protection;
- to allow all Red Cross staff and medical personnel the freedom of movement they need to assist the civilian population and people hors de combat;
- to ensure that combat units are aware of the humanitarian rules governing the conduct of hostilities and to facilitate ICRC efforts in that respect.
The ICRC considers it essential that all political and military forces formally express their firm support for impartial humanitarian activities under the Red Cross emblem and in favour of all victims.

The ICRC again expresses its readiness to undertake, with the agreement of the authorities, any action required to protect the lives and physical safety of civilians and persons hors de combat.

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PRESS RELEASE

Press release No. 1683
7 October 1991

RECOGNITION OF A NEW NATIONAL SOCIETY

Geneva (ICRC) - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has recognized the Solomon Islands Red Cross Society.

This recognition, which took effect on 3 October 1991, brings to 148 the number of National Societies which are members of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

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FEDERAL COUNCILLOR ADOLF OGI VISITS ICRC

Geneva (ICRC) - Mr. Adolf Ogi, member of the Swiss Federal Council and Head of the Federal Department of Transport, Communications and Energy, today visited the headquarters of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

The Federal Councillor, accompanied by his wife and several members of his staff, was received by ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga, members of the Committee and leading officials of the institution.

Mr. Sommaruga gave a brief overview of international humanitarian law and ICRC activities, in particular its current operation in Yugoslavia. He stressed the importance of promoting the Protocols additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and of developing international humanitarian law. He also emphasized the ICRC’s excellent relations with the Federal Department of Transport, Communications and Energy, and with the Postal and Telecommunications Administration.

Mr. Ogi expressed admiration for the institution and the work of its delegates. He also assured the ICRC of Switzerland's continued support, while emphasizing the institution's independence.

During his visit, Federal Councillor Ogi also visited the ICRC's Telecommunications Centre and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum.

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PRESS RELEASE

Press release No. 1685
9 October 1991

NORTHERN IRAQ - APPEAL BY THE ICRC

Geneva (ICRC) - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is deeply concerned about the consequences in human terms of the heavy fighting taking place in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Alarmed by reports that residential areas have been shelled and that captured soldiers have been executed, the ICRC urgently calls on all the parties involved to care for the wounded, to respect the lives and the physical and mental integrity of captured persons and to spare and protect the civilian population.

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THE PRINCESS OF WALES VISITS THE ICRC

Geneva (ICRC) - The Princess of Wales, Patron of British Red Cross Youth, today visited the headquarters of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), where she was received by ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga, members of the Committee and senior staff.

Her Royal Highness was accompanied by Lady Limerick, President of the British Red Cross, and Mr. Michael Whitlam, Director General of the British Red Cross. Ambassador Morland, Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to the United Nations in Geneva, and Mr. Mario Villarroel Lander and Mr. Pär Stenbäck, respectively President and Secretary General of the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, were also present.

President Sommaruga praised the dynamic work of the British Red Cross Youth under the patronage of the Princess of Wales. He went on to outline the history and tasks of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and the development of international humanitarian law. He ended with the hope that the visit would convey the enthusiasm and concerns of the millions of men and women, volunteers and delegates, working under the Red Cross and Red Crescent banners around the world.

After signing the visitors' book, the Princess of Wales visited the ICRC's Central Tracing Agency, where tens of thousands of files on prisoners visited by the ICRC, tracing requests and Red Cross messages are handled each year. The visit ended with a presentation of ICRC operations worldwide, during which delegates also described their practical experiences in the field.

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ITALIAN PRESIDENT VISITS ICRC

Geneva (ICRC) - The President of the Italian Republic, Mr. Francesco Cossiga, today visited the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), where he was received by ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga. After introducing members of the Committee and senior officials of the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Mr. Sommaruga delivered an address in which he stressed Italy's interest in humanitarian matters.

In his reply, Mr. Cossiga paid tribute to the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement for its efforts to ensure greater respect for international humanitarian law in armed conflicts and for the progress achieved in this respect.

President Cossiga signed the visitors' book and was then escorted by Mr. Sommaruga to the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum.

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Press release No. 1688
6 November 1991

CONFERENCE ON YUGOSLAVIA: COMMITMENT TO RESPECT HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES

Geneva (ICRC) - During yesterday's plenary session at the Hague Conference on Yugoslavia, the Presidents of the six Republics signed a statement undertaking to respect the humanitarian principles and expressing "unreserved" support for the work of the Red Cross, and of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in particular.

In recent months the ICRC has launched several urgent appeals to all combatants to spare civilians and people hors de combat. It welcomes the Presidents' commitment, which should help alleviate the suffering of people affected by the conflict. The institution trusts that henceforth its delegates will be able to extend their activities in behalf of the victims.

The statement requires all fighting units to ensure that the sick and wounded are helped and protected in all circumstances. Prisoners must be treated humanely and civilians spared, and the protective red cross emblem and all those wearing it must be respected.

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Press release No. 1689
7 November 1991

RECOGNITION OF A NATIONAL SOCIETY

Geneva (ICRC) - At its Assembly on 7 November 1991 the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) confirmed the validity of its previous recognition, on 28 August 1923, of the Lithuanian Red Cross Society.

This decision, which enables the Lithuanian Red Cross Society to resume its place within the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, brings the number of duly recognized National Societies to 149.

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Press release No. 1690
12 November 1991

YUGOSLAVIA: NEW ICRC INITIATIVE

Geneva (ICRC) - Prompted by the constant and rapid deterioration of the situation in Yugoslavia, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) today urged the parties to the conflict to designate representatives at the highest level for a meeting under ICRC auspices in Geneva. The purpose of the meeting, which should take place without delay, would be to work out speedy, practical and viable solutions to the grave humanitarian problems affecting the country.

The situation of the civilian population has deteriorated sharply in the last few hours, particularly in Dubrovnik. Casualty figures are mounting as fighting and shelling continue unabated. ICRC delegates on the spot report that it is impossible for local first-aiders to evacuate the wounded and bring help to civilians, as required by the most basic rules of international humanitarian law. Despite the difficulties involved, the ICRC is preparing to send in a relief consignment by sea.

The ICRC once again appeals to all combatants to spare innocent lives and observe the elementary principles of humanity in all circumstances.

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Press release No. 1691
13 November 1991

GUNFIRE INCIDENT IN EAST TIMOR

Geneva (ICRC) - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is dismayed at the extreme violence employed by the Indonesian security forces during a memorial service in Dili, the capital of East Timor, on the morning of 12 November. The actions of the security forces resulted in a large number of deaths and injuries among the civilians gathered in the cemetery.

Following the incident, some thirty people sought refuge in the ICRC delegation, where the delegates took care of them. As the ICRC has the authorities' permission to move freely about Dili, the delegates were subsequently able to accompany most of them back to their homes.

The ICRC has requested immediate access to all persons detained in connection with the recent events.

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PRESS RELEASE

Press release No. 1692
15 November 1991

RED CROSS IN YUGOSLAVIA: UNITED IN ACTION

Geneva (ICRC) - Representatives of the Red Cross of Yugoslavia and of the Red Cross in the country's six Republics (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia), meeting in Geneva at the invitation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), today unanimously reaffirmed that, in accordance with the provisions of international humanitarian law, work to aid the victims of the conflict in Yugoslavia must be given absolute priority.

The Geneva meeting, taking place just two weeks before the 26th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent opens in Budapest on 29 November, was also attended by leading officials of the ICRC, the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the President of the Executive Committee of the Hungarian Red Cross. The participants emphasized the need to strengthen the role of the Red Cross in the field and to facilitate its access to the victims, thus ensuring that they receive the help to which they are entitled.

Fulfilling the wish expressed by ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga in his welcoming address, the participants also stressed the importance of the principles and ideals that unite all members of the Movement and enable them to preserve a measure of humanity in the midst of battle.

All present at the meeting also undertook to abide by the rules governing proceedings at the International Conference, during which any discussion on the humanitarian operations under way in Yugoslavia will take place in a spirit of total cooperation.

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PRESS RELEASE

Press release No. 1693
21 November 1991

RECOGNITION OF LATVIAN RED CROSS

Geneva (ICRC) - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) yesterday confirmed the validity of its recognition of the Latvian Red Cross Society announced on 10 January 1923.

This decision, which enables the Latvian Red Cross to resume its place in the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, brings the number of duly recognized National Societies to 150.

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PRESS RELEASE

Press Release No. 1694
26 November 1991

STATEMENT OF THE STANDING COMMISSION

Budapest, 26 November 1991 - The Standing Commission of the Red Cross and Red Crescent regrets to announce that it has been forced to postpone the XXVIth International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent due to the risk that political disagreement between governments on participation could jeopardize its outcome.

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement stresses that it is bound by its fundamental principles to avoid becoming involved in political issues and deplores that the parties concerned have been unable to find a solution to the question of Palestinian participation.

The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement will continue its meetings during the coming days in Budapest without the participation of governments to discuss the urgent humanitarian issues with which the international community is confronted.

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HUMANITARIAN MEETING ON CONFLICT IN YUGOSLAVIA

Geneva (ICRC) - At the invitation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), plenipotentiary representatives of the Yugoslav Federal Executive Council, the Republic of Croatia, the Republic of Serbia and the Federal Army met in Geneva on 26 and 27 November 1991 to find solutions to the various matters of humanitarian concern arising from the conflict in Yugoslavia. The meeting gave substance to the declaration of respect for international humanitarian law made by the Presidents of the six Republics in The Hague on 5 November.

All those taking part said that they were willing to separate humanitarian matters from political issues. They declared that they would implement the provisions of the 1949 Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocol I that provide protection for the wounded and sick, civilians and prisoners and govern the conduct of hostilities.

The participants adopted the following recommendations:

- to set up a joint commission to trace missing persons;
- to establish a procedure for transmitting allegations of violations of international humanitarian law;
- to do more to spread knowledge of the rules of international humanitarian law among all combatants and to promote respect for the Red Cross emblem.

They acknowledged the importance of setting up protected zones under ICRC supervision and of allowing humanitarian aid consignments free passage.

It was agreed that the participants would attend a future meeting held under ICRC auspices in Geneva on 20 December 1991.

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COUNCIL OF DELEGATES OF THE RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT
CONCLUDES ITS BUDAPEST MEETINGS

Budapest - The Council of Delegates of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement ended its meeting in Budapest on 30 November 1991. Chaired by Mr. Rezso Sztuchlik, President of the Executive Committee of the Hungarian Red Cross, it brought together some 120 Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies from around the world, along with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. The agenda of the Council included some important humanitarian questions that were to have been debated with Governments at the XXVIth International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, postponed because of political differences among states on Palestinian participation.

Delegations at the Council meetings supported the postponement of the Conference as necessary to preserve the independent and non-political character of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

In view of the new challenges facing the International Movement of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent, the Movement decided to establish a Working Group to study its governing and operating structures and suggest appropriate courses of action which will enable it to carry out its humanitarian mandate with the utmost effectiveness and cohesion.

The Council of Delegates made an active contribution to a wide range of issues of fundamental concern to the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in its efforts to bring humanitarian assistance and protection to the victims of conflict and other disasters worldwide. It appealed for the establishment of conditions conducive to dialogue both in respect of the ongoing conflict in Yugoslavia and with regard to victims of war everywhere.

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The meeting drew attention to the plight of the increasing numbers of refugees around the world and called on the Movement and Governments to protect their rights, address the causes of refugee problems and search for durable solutions. It identified women as another group of special concern, particularly those living in situations of deprivation, including disasters.

The suffering of civilian victims of conflict was highlighted along with their right to receive protection and assistance in all circumstances. Attention was drawn to the frequent connection between conflict and the unacceptable suffering caused to civilians by the destruction of infrastructure and food supplies essential to their survival. Warring parties were urged not to take measures that deprive civilians of their sources of food or access to their crops. At the same time the right of victims to receive humanitarian assistance was emphasised, as was the right of humanitarian organisations to assist them. Free passage must be allowed for medical supplies and other essential commodities, in accordance with the Geneva Conventions of 1949. The meeting underlined the particular need to protect children in war and to avoid the recruitment of children into armed service. It was recalled that there are today some 200,000 children soldiers in the world, many of whom are under 10 years old.

A warm tribute was paid to the Hungarian Red Cross for hosting and organising the Budapest meeting.

The Council of Delegates, which is the supreme organ of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement meets once every two years. The next meeting will be held in London in 1993.
PRESS RELEASE

Press release No. 1697
12 December 1991

CORNELIO SOMMARUGA RE-ELECTED AS ICRC PRESIDENT

Geneva (ICRC) - The Assembly of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) today re-elected Mr. Cornelio Sommaruga as ICRC President, a post he has held since May 1987, for another four-year term in office.

The Assembly also elected Mr. Pierre Keller as non-permanent Vice-President to succeed Mr. Maurice Aubert, who continues to be a member of the Committee, and conferred honorary membership upon outgoing members Mr. Hans Haug and Mr. André Ghelfi.

In addition the Assembly took note with satisfaction of the election by the Council of Delegates, on 30 November 1991 in Budapest, of Mr. Maurice Aubert as Chairman of the Commission on the Red Cross, Red Crescent and Peace.

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SOMALIA: ICRC WORKER DIES

Geneva (ICRC) - Mr. Wim Van Boxelaere, who was seriously wounded by a gunman in front of the headquarters of the Somali Red Crescent Society in Mogadishu on 11 December, died yesterday while being repatriated to Belgium.

Mr. Van Boxelaere, a 30-year-old member of the Belgian Red Cross, suffered respiratory failure aboard the aircraft that was taking him from Nairobi to Antwerp. He was officially pronounced dead at the Maggiore Pizzardi Hospital in Bologna, Italy.

Mohamed Ali Barre, an employee of the Somali Red Crescent who threw himself in front of Mr. Van Boxelaere to protect him from the gunfire, died of his wounds the next day.

The ICRC, deeply shocked and saddened by this outrageous act and its consequences, extends its profound sympathy to the victims' families.

This tragedy underlines the imperative need to respect the protective Red Cross and Red Crescent emblem. Only on that condition can ICRC staff fulfil their entirely neutral and impartial mission.