PRESS RELEASE

PRESS RELEASE N°1761
Geneva, 13 January 1994

ICRC CALLS FOR EXAMINATION OF THE MILITARY USE OF ANTI-PERSONNEL LANDMINES
Military experts from 16 countries attend a symposium in Geneva.

Geneva (ICRC) - In the execution of its humanitarian mandate, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is confronted with the harrowing consequences of the use of landmines which kill or mutilate thousands of men, women and children each year.

This situation prompted the ICRC to organise, in April 1993, a symposium on anti-personnel mines which gathered information on the technical, legal, economic, social, military and medical aspects of the present use of such mines. Pursuant to the recommendations of the symposium, and in view of the fact that a review conference of the 1980 United Nations Conventional Weapons Convention is to be convened, the ICRC decided to hold the present symposium on the military use of anti-personnel mines.

The main purpose of this symposium was to bring together military experts in order to examine the military use of anti-personnel mines and possible alternatives, and to contribute to the preparatory work of the review conference by putting together the military point of view and coming up with recommendations, if possible, as to realistic ways of alleviating the suffering caused by anti-personnel mines.

The symposium conducted an in-depth examination of three issues, namely, the military utility of anti-personnel mines; alternative systems; control measures. The participants, who numbered approximately 30, were military experts from various countries with special knowledge of the technical, military and practical aspects of anti-personnel mines.

Some of the major conclusions reached by the symposium indicate that anti-personnel mines do constitute an effective military weapon, as they are used for defensive purposes in conjunction with other weapons systems. However, it was recognised that this strict military use could not always be guaranteed, and that proper precautionary measures could not always be taken, especially in internal armed conflicts which constitute the majority of present day conflicts. It is in this context that anti-personnel mines are of f direct against the civilian population; they also continue to maim and kill long after the conflict has ended. This fact was recognized by all participants, who saw thereinone of the major reasons for the humanitarian problems caused by anti-personnel mines.

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The symposium did not set out to make any policy recommendations or to consider aspects other than military ones. It is now up to government representatives to take into account all relevant factors in order to find the most effective solutions. The ICRC hopes that the report of this meeting will make a constructive contribution to the work of the intergovernmental group of experts that has been designated to undertake the preparatory work for the forthcoming review conference of the 1980 United Nations Conventional Weapons Convention.

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International Committee of the Red Cross
Departement of Communications and External Resources
Press Division
022/ 730 2388
ICELANDIC PRIME MINISTER VISITS ICRC

Geneva (ICRC) - Mr David Oddsson, Prime Minister of the Republic of Iceland, today visited the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Mr Oddsson was received on his arrival by ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga. During the ensuing talks Mr Sommaruga expressed his appreciation of the support that the Icelandic Red Cross provides for the ICRC’s humanitarian activities, particularly in terms of funding and personnel.

The Icelandic Prime Minister and President Sommaruga also discussed the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the tragic plight of victims of the ongoing conflict.

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Press release No. 1763
26 January 1994

FEDERAL COUNCILLOR RUTH DREIFUSS VISITS ICRC

Geneva (ICRC) - Ms Ruth Dreifuss, Head of the Swiss Federal Department of the Interior, today visited the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), where she was received by ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga.

Mr Sommaruga, who was accompanied by several members of the Committee, took the opportunity to thank the Federal Council once again for its traditional support to the ICRC. They went on to review the institution’s current operations. One of the matters subsequently discussed was public health in conflict situations.

The Federal Councillor was accompanied by Mr Thomas Zeltner, Director of the Federal Office of Public Health, and Ms Maud Krafft, her personal assistant.

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AFGHANISTAN: ICRC CALLS FOR RESPECT FOR THE CIVILIAN POPULATION

Geneva (ICRC) - Deeply concerned by the plight of Afghanistan’s civilian population following the renewed clashes which broke out in Kabul on 1 January 1994, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) reminds the parties to the conflict of their obligation to take all possible measures to spare the civilian population and civilian facilities during military operations. It also reminds them that medical establishments and personnel, as well as the sick and wounded, are entitled to special protection and must be respected in all circumstances.

The violent struggle for power which has been going on between the various factions since April 1992 has affected several other Afghan towns, but in the capital fighting has been raging unabated for five weeks, taking a heavy toll among civilians. Street battles, shelling and air strikes have already left almost 900 dead and more than 10,000 wounded. Indiscriminate shelling has not spared Kabul’s hospitals and dispensaries, some of which have been hit more than once.

Over 100,000 people have sought refuge in mosques and schools in safer neighbourhoods or outside the capital (some 50,000 of them have fled to Nangarhar province).
Fifteen years of war have destroyed Afghanistan's social and economic structures and public services. The situation of its people, who are among the world's poorest, is made even more desperate by the cold, and by lack of electricity and basic supplies. They are also suffering from a sense of isolation, heightened by the departure of nearly all international aid and development agencies because of the violence.

Despite the fighting, ICRC delegates in Kabul are continuing to supply emergency medical supplies to all the city's hospitals and dispensaries, crossing the front lines to do so. They also provide the Afghan Red Crescent Society with technical and logistic assistance for its relief distributions (mainly food) to displaced people.

The ICRC currently has 16 delegates in Kabul, four in Jalalabad, four in Mazar-i-Sharif and one in Herat.

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Press release No. 1765
25 February 1994

ICRC APPEAL FOLLOWING VIOLENCE IN OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

Geneva (ICRC) - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is deeply distressed by the massacre of civilians in Hebron in the Israeli-occupied territories earlier today, when an Israeli civilian opened fire indiscriminately. According to first reports, 35 people were killed and over 200 wounded.

The ICRC delegation in Israel and the occupied territories immediately sent a team of delegates to the scene. The team is in constant contact with local branch of the Palestinian Red Crescent and the Israeli army in order to facilitate the evacuation of the victims to hospitals on the West Bank and in Israel.

ICRC delegates are monitoring the situation in hospitals to help them cope with the influx of casualties, and has provided several hospitals in Hebron with medical supplies.

Following the incident, clashes broke out between the Israeli armed forces and Palestinian civilians on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip. Gravely concerned by this deterioration in the situation, the ICRC launches an appeal for the civilian population to be respected in accordance with the principles of international humanitarian law.

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PERU: TWO ICRC STAFF KILLED IN AIR CRASH

Geneva (ICRC) - A delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Dr Angela Gago Gallego, 34, and a Peruvian ICRC employee, Mrs Julia Nelly Narrea Tenorio, 50, were killed when the plane they were travelling in crashed between Tingo María and Lima on 25 February.

The aircraft, which belonged to the Peruvian company Expreso Aéreo, was en route for Lima when it went down in a remote mountainous region. Confirmation that there were no survivors came only on 8 March, three days after national rescue teams reached the crash site.

Dr Gago Gallego, who had dual Swiss and Spanish nationality, was the medical coordinator at the ICRC delegation in Peru. She joined the ICRC in 1993 after working for several years with other humanitarian organizations, including Médecins sans frontières, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Mrs Narrea Tenorio, who began working for the ICRC in October 1992, was the secretary in charge of the institution’s office in the town of Tocache, north-west of Tingo María.

The ICRC is deeply saddened by the death of its two staff members and extends its profound sympathy to their families.

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Press release No. 1767
31 March 1994

MOGADISHU: SOMALI ICRC EMPLOYEE KILLED, EXPATRIATE ABDUCTED

Geneva (ICRC) - Today at 2 p.m. local time two vehicles belonging to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) were attacked by gunmen after leaving the Benadir hospital. A Somali employee was killed and ICRC sanitary engineer Alfred Petters was abducted.

The ICRC, deeply shocked by this tragic event, immediately approached all its contacts in order to elucidate the circumstances. It deplores the death of its employee and calls for the early release of Alfred Petters.

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Press release No. 1768
4 April 1994

SOMALIA: ICRC DELEGATE RELEASED

Geneva (ICRC) - Alfred Petters, a sanitary engineer working in Somalia for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), was released on 4 April 1994 at 7 a.m. local time in Mogadishu.

Mr. Petters, who was born in 1957, had been abducted on 31 March after an attack in which a Somali ICRC employee was killed.

The ICRC is glad to know that he has been released. It is, however, continuing its enquiries on the spot to clarify this serious incident.

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Press release No. 1769
11 April 1994

ICRC PRESIDENT IN BELGRADE

Geneva (ICRC) - The President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Cornelio Sommaruga, had talks in Belgrade today with the President of the Republic of Serbia, Slobodan Milosevic.

Deeply concerned about the deterioration in the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina over the past few hours, the ICRC President requested and obtained President Milosevic's firm support for all ICRC activities in behalf of the victims. These include the protection of minority groups in the regions controlled by the Bosnian Serb authorities and activities conducted in the Gorazde enclave, such as the distribution of medicines and food aid and the evacuation of the wounded.

The ICRC President called upon all the parties to the conflict to exercise restraint in the conduct of hostilities, to abstain from any acts of reprisal and to respect the civilian population, the wounded and prisoners. Mr Sommaruga also urged the forces involved to facilitate the ICRC's work by granting it all the security guarantees required to carry out its humanitarian action.

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PRESS RELEASE

Press release No. 1770
13 April 1994

ICRC CALLS FOR RESPECT FOR THE CIVILIAN POPULATION IN ISRAEL AND THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

Geneva (ICRC) - After the recent murderous attacks on Israeli and Palestinian civilians, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) again firmly condemns the recurring indiscriminate attacks on the civilian population.

Deeply concerned by such intolerable acts and by the spiralling violence in the area, the ICRC calls for compliance with the most elementary principles of humanity and stresses that indiscriminate attacks on the civilian population and reprisals against civilians are a serious violation of the basic principles of international humanitarian law.

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GORAZDE: ICRC APPEALS FOR CEASE-FIRE ON HUMANITARIAN GROUND

Geneva (ICRC) - The plight of the civilian population in Gorazde is becoming more desperate hour by hour. Despite intensive negotiations at the political and diplomatic levels, military operations are still continuing in and around the town of Gorazde. Heavy shelling was reported throughout the day of 19 April, with some shells landing close to the ICRC office in the town. Gorazde hospital was also hit several times. Storage facilities at a chemical plant in Vitkovici were also fired on, causing a leak of ammonia.

On the left bank of the Drina river, two delegates of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), assisted by ten local employees, are doing their utmost to assist the civilian population and the wounded with the limited means still at their disposal. A large part of ICRC stocks have already been distributed.

For more than two weeks, the ICRC has been in constant contact with all the parties to the conflict, urging them to allow it to carry out its humanitarian work, in particular:

- to organize road convoys into Gorazde in order to furnish the medical and food aid so urgently needed by the victims;
- to evacuate casualties requiring treatment no longer available in the town;
- to relieve and reinforce humanitarian staff on the spot.

ICRC delegates have not yet been allowed to carry out their tasks.

The ICRC therefore strongly urges all the forces concerned to remove all the obstacles to its humanitarian work in the town of Gorazde and to agree an immediate cease-fire so that humanitarian staff can carry out their mandate in behalf of all the victims in Gorazde without any further delay.

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Press release No. 1772
21 April 1994

HUMAN TRAGEDY IN RWANDA

Geneva (ICRC) - Tens, maybe hundreds of thousands killed: the exact number of victims of the massacres that have swept Rwanda over the last two weeks will never be known. Terrified inhabitants have been fleeing the centre of the country and several hundred thousand displaced people are massed in the south and the north. The human tragedy in Rwanda is on a scale that the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has rarely witnessed.

In the hospitals in the capital, Kigali, surgeons have managed to save hundreds of lives. However, the wounded can no longer be taken to medical centres for fear that they will be killed before they arrive, and those that have been saved cannot leave hospital because to do so would mean certain death.

The need for humanitarian aid is also immense in outlying areas of the country, where hundreds of thousands of people, some of them wounded, have sought refuge. The displaced, who lack food and medical care, will be assisted by Rwandese medical staff as soon as security conditions allow. In addition, sanitation systems must be installed to minimize the risk of epidemics.

Since the start of the violence, about 30 ICRC delegates, the French team of Médecins sans Frontières and Rwandese Red Cross volunteers have been risking their lives to preserve a measure of humanity in the midst of the carnage. What they have done is vital, but is no more than a drop in the ocean.

ICRC delegates on the spot are in constant contact with all parties concerned and are broadcasting messages on local radio stations, calling for an end to the atrocities and demanding that civilians, the wounded and any people taken prisoner be spared.

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Press release No. 1773
Geneva, 9 May 1994

FIGHTING IN YEMEN

Geneva (ICRC) - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is gravely concerned about the fighting which has broken out in Yemen and about its possible consequences in humanitarian terms.

The ICRC calls upon all combatants to spare the civilian population. It draws attention to the fact that attacks against civilians and civilian property are prohibited, as are indiscriminate attacks.

Furthermore, people taking no direct part in the hostilities, including combatants who have laid down their arms, been wounded or detained, must be treated humanely in all circumstances.

The ICRC urges combatants to respect and facilitate the work of first-aiders from the Yemenite Red Crescent Society and ICRC delegates. They may be identified by the Red Crescent and Red Cross emblems respectively, displayed in particular on their vehicles. The purpose of their humanitarian activities is to bring aid to all the wounded without any discrimination whatsoever.

The three ICRC delegates currently in the country’s capital, Sana‘a, have managed to bring in two tonnes of emergency medical supplies. They have made contact with the National Society and the local authorities with a view to assessing humanitarian needs.

An ICRC team comprising four delegates, one of them a doctor, is leaving Djibouti today for Aden, taking with it several tonnes of medical supplies.

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Geneva (ICRC) - The Paul Reuter Prize has been awarded by unanimous decision to

Professor Eric David

of the Free University of Brussels, for his work entitled "Principles of the law of armed conflicts".

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

The jury of the Paul Reuter Prize, chaired by Mr. Paolo Bernasconi, member of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), also comprises Professors Luigi Condorelli and Giorgio Malinverni of Geneva University and ICRC staff.

In 1982, the late Professor 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, in principle 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 fourth award of the Prize since the Fund was created. Professor David will receive the prize this spring.

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PRESS RELEASE

Press release No. 1775
Geneva 12 May 1994

YEMEN: ICRC ACTIVE ON BOTH SIDES APPEALS TO BELLIGERENTS

Geneva (ICRC) - Following the recent outbreak of hostilities in various parts of Yemen, the ICRC has sent teams of delegates, including medical doctors, to Sana’a and Aden. The delegates are in contact with the authorities and the Yemeni Red Crescent Society in order to evaluate the humanitarian needs, and to provide assistance and protection in accordance with its mandate.

Nearly 4 tons of emergency medical supplies have been distributed to hospitals in Sana’a, Dhamar, Ibb, Taez, Al Bayda and Aden on 11 May. Medical surveys continue on a daily basis to evaluate further needs in order to supply the hospitals with the necessary basic supplies to treat the war victims.

The ICRC has reached agreements to visit interned combatants on both sides of the conflict. A first ICRC visit to prisoners was carried out in Aden on 11 May.

In view of the developments observed by its delegates, and recent reports of serious casualties among the civilian population as a result of military activities, the ICRC stresses that the civilian population, wounded and internees must be protected according to International Humanitarian Law. In particular, the ICRC reminds the parties to the conflict that military means should not be used indiscriminately and that attacks on civilian targets are expressly prohibited by International Law.

The ICRC therefore reiterates its appeal to the combatants to take the necessary precautions to spare the civilian population during military operations and to treat persons captured or arrested in connection with the conflict according to the principles and relevant provisions of International Humanitarian Law.

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Press release No. 1776
20 May 1994

RWANDA: SAVING THE SURVIVORS

Geneva (ICRC) - The number of victims claimed by the wave of murderous violence that has swept Rwanda can no longer be estimated. Continued heavy fighting in Kigali and other regions has been accompanied by further massacres and prompted a mass exodus towards the centre of the country. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has located hundreds of thousands of displaced people gathered in various places, and in some cases has been able to bring them assistance. Some groups of displaced people, mainly Tutsis, came together as soon as the clashes broke out in the hope of escaping the bloodshed. They are still in mortal danger.

In resolution 918 of 16 May 1994, the United Nations Security Council decided to expand the mandate of UN troops to contribute to the security and protection of displaced persons, refugees and civilians at risk in Rwanda, in particular by setting up secure humanitarian areas. Only rapid action on this decision will ensure that people not participating in the hostilities receive effective protection.

On 19 May mortar bombs fell on the main hospital in Kigali, killing 30 wounded. This is yet another serious violation of international humanitarian law added to the countless atrocities committed in Rwanda. The ICRC calls on all the parties to the conflict to respect civilians, the wounded and staff of humanitarian organizations who are risking their lives to bring help to this stricken country.

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Le Comité international de la Croix-Rouge (CICR) et la Fédération internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge forment, avec les Sociétés nationales de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge, le Mouvement international de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge.

Institution humanitaire indépendante, le CICR est à l'origine du Mouvement. Intermédiaire neutre en cas de conflits armés et de troubles, il s'efforce d'assurer, de sa propre initiative ou en se fondant sur les Conventions de Genève, protection et assistance aux victimes des conflits armés internationaux et non internationaux et des troubles et des tensions internes.
Press release No. 1777
26 May 1994

RWANDA: TWO ICRC EMPLOYEES KILLED

Geneva (ICRC) - Two Rwandans working for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) were killed on 25 May when a shell landed in the compound of the ICRC delegation in Kigali.

Four other local employees and a child received serious injuries. They were taken to the ICRC hospital near the delegation, where one of them is in a critical condition.

The ICRC made immediate representations to the parties to the conflict. The institution is deeply saddened by the death of its two employees and conveys its sincere condolences to their families.

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PRESS RELEASE

Press release No. 1778
Geneva, 2 June 1994

REVIEW OF THE 1980 UN WEAPONS CONVENTION
ICRC urges States to consider proposals on landmines and other inhumane weapons

Geneva (ICRC) - The Group of Government Experts responsible for the review of the 1980 UN Weapons Convention has asked the ICRC to prepare the official background documentation on proposals for possible amendments not only to the provisions concerning anti-personnel landmines, but also to other aspects of the treaty. In order to fulfil this mandate, the ICRC convened a meeting of experts that took place in Geneva from 31 May to 1 June 1994.

The group of 30 specialists -- experts in defence technology, policy advisers, members of various research institutes, scientists, military officers, representatives of human rights organizations and legal experts -- was brought together in order to make a broad assessment of the problems represented by newly developed and possible future weapons. Representatives of Permanent Missions attended the meeting as observers.

Subjects covered were blinding laser weapons, small-calibre weapon systems, naval mines, microwave, infrasound and non-lethal chemical weapons, and, the possibility of misuse of genetic engineering developments. Technical aspects as well as the humanitarian and military implications of a possible ban on or restriction of these weapons were examined. The experts also compared existing implementation and verification procedures of other international treaties with a view to ascertaining whether the UN Weapons Convention could be backed up by effective control measures, especially with regard to the Protocol on landmines.

The participants concluded that although high-power microwave and infrasound technology weapons might be developed primarily for anti-materiel purposes, anti-personnel applications could not be ruled out. Special emphasis was placed on blinding laser weapons, which could already be used to deliberately destroy the eyesight of their victims. Particular concern was voiced about the imminent deployment of hand-held blinding rifles whose proliferation would be inevitable.
Anxiety was also expressed about developments in genetic engineering and their potential misuse, leading to the release of genetically manipulated organisms having horrific consequences for humanity. Furthermore, the use of non-lethal chemical agents could undermine the newly adopted Chemical Weapons Convention.

Finally, the participants agreed that the acute danger of some of these types of technological weapon systems being acquired and used by insurgents, terrorists and criminal organizations would outweigh a perceived military advantage, especially in the case of blinding laser rifles.

The ICRC will draw up a report on these findings and will submit its proposals for the Review Conference at the next preparatory meeting of the Group of Governmental Experts scheduled for August 1994.

Although the primary goal of the Review Conference is to find a truly effective solution to the problem of anti-personnel landmines, the ICRC believes that other excessively injurious and indiscriminate weapons should be also be dealt with before it is too late.

The Review Conference of the 1980 UN Weapons Convention -- the first since the treaty came into force in 1983 -- offers a unique opportunity to take preventive action against the risks involved in developing certain types of weapons.
PRESS RELEASE

Press release No. 1779
Geneva, 29 June 1994

YEMEN: APPEAL FOR RESPECT FOR HUMANITARIAN LAW

Geneva (ICRC) - In view of the violent clashes currently taking place around the city of Aden, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) reminds the combatants engaged in the hostilities in Yemen of their responsibilities under international humanitarian law. It calls on them to respect in particular the wounded and sick, people placed hors de combat and prisoners; to refrain at all times from attacking the civilian population; and to take all necessary steps to spare civilians and civilian objects, especially installations essential for the survival of the population. The ICRC also urges them to facilitate in all circumstances the humanitarian activities of its delegates and all medical staff displaying the respective emblem of the red cross or red crescent.

Five ICRC delegates, including a sanitary engineer and a doctor, have been working in Aden since 10 May to relieve suffering, mainly among the civilian population. Medicines and surgical requisites are being distributed to all hospitals, which are overflowing with casualties.

The current shortage of water for Aden’s 500,000 inhabitants remains a major source of concern, as it could well have disastrous consequences. Besides creating tension among the local population, there is also a considerable danger of epidemics.

The ICRC has decided to charter a second ship to bring in emergency equipment to provide a sufficient supply of water for the most vulnerable groups.

It requests all parties to grant it the necessary facilities for the ship to dock in Aden.

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PRESS RELEASE

Press release No 1780
Geneva, 29 June 1994

YEMEN: ICRC APPEALS FOR CEASE-FIRE

Geneva (ICRC) - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has asked for a cease-fire to be observed in Aden from 10.00 a.m., local time, on Thursday, 30 June until 10.00 a.m. on Saturday, 2 July so that it can take in relief supplies to civilians affected by the fighting there.

The fighting, which has been raging around the city for several weeks, has had harsh consequences for the civilian population. In particular there is a severe shortage of drinking water. The ICRC team in Aden has been doing what it can to come to the aid of the victims, especially hospital patients.

At the urgent request of its delegates on the spot, therefore, the ICRC has taken the following steps:

- A ship chartered by the ICRC will leave the port of Djibouti this evening, 29 June, and is scheduled to arrive in Aden at midday on 30 June. It will be transporting equipment needed for the distribution of drinking water. An ICRC sanitary engineer is also on board and will install the equipment in Aden with the help of Yemeni engineers.

- A second ship will leave Djibouti on 30 June carrying vehicles, medicines and surgical requisites. These supplies are desperately needed by the hospitals, which can no longer cope with the influx of casualties.
The ICRC has also decided to cross the front lines between Sana’a and Aden in order to bring in extra supplies.

The ICRC calls on both parties to the conflict to provide it with all necessary facilities and security guarantees. It appeals for the red cross and red crescent emblems to be respected, as this operation otherwise cannot take place. It is further imperative that a cease-fire be in effect during the proposed period, in particular along the roads and in the port of Aden.

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Press release No. 1781
Geneva, 30 June 1994

YEMEN: TRUCE ENABLES ICRC TO BRING IN EMERGENCY AID

Geneva (ICRC) - The truce requested yesterday by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is being observed by both warring parties in Yemen. The ICRC was thus able to unload a ship carrying a consignment of supplies to improve the water distribution system in Aden.

ICRC delegates in both Aden and Sana’a are in regular contact with the authorities there and are keeping them informed of the work in progress, as any incident that might impede this vital humanitarian operation must be avoided at all costs.

A second ICRC-chartered ship carrying medicines is to leave Djibouti for Aden tonight.

Owing to isolated clashes the ICRC was unable to reach the Bir Nasser water pumping station today, but hopes to get there by tomorrow evening to carry out the repairs needed to put the station back into operation.

It is therefore crucial that both sides do their utmost to ensure that the truce is fully respected.

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PRESS RELEASE

Press release No. 1782
2 July 1994

YEMEN: ICRC TRIES TO REACH ADEN WATER PUMPING STATION

Geneva (ICRC) - For the second time in 36 hours, sanitary engineers of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have attempted in vain to reach the Bir Nasser pumping station, which supplies the city of Aden with drinking water. The ICRC calls on the parties to the conflict to ensure that its sanitary engineers are imperatively able to gain access to the station so that they can carry out the necessary repairs.

Methods of combat aimed at depriving the civilian population of objects indispensable to its survival are strictly prohibited under international humanitarian law. The law also stipulates that relief operations in behalf of civilians must not be impeded in any way.

The Bir Nasser water pumping station has been completely out of order for the past four days. The 40 or so artesian wells still in operation in Aden are currently providing no more than three litres of water per inhabitant per day, well under the minimum requirement of seven litres per day. Intensive use of these wells may cause them to run dry or lead to the salinization of the water. Moreover, frequent power cuts are paralysing the pumps that drive the wells.

If the Bir Nasser pumping station is not repaired as a matter of urgency, Aden may well face a disaster of catastrophic proportions.

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AFGHANISTAN: ICRC URGES RESPECT FOR THE CIVILIAN POPULATION

Geneva (ICRC) - Violent clashes have again flared up in and around the Afghan capital Kabul. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) earnestly appeals to all the forces involved to spare civilians and respect medical establishments.

Aerial bombing raids and artillery exchanges have increased in frequency and intensity since Thursday 11 August. Public places, civilian property and a number of hospitals have come under indiscriminate fire. Buildings housing 5,000 displaced persons have also been hit. According to ICRC estimates, almost 100 people have been killed and 900 wounded during the last ten days. Meanwhile the general situation, marked by deteriorating public health and recurrent food shortages, is giving increasing cause for concern. Since 1 January this year 600,000 of the capital's inhabitants have had to flee their homes, some of them leaving Kabul to seek refuge in the Jalalabad area in the east of the country.

Since the beginning of the year the ICRC has considerably stepped up its support for medical facilities and has been running a food aid programme for displaced persons. The institution has also constantly drawn the attention of the international community to the tragic consequences of the Afghan conflict in humanitarian terms.

The ICRC has been working in Afghanistan since 1987. At present it has 42 expatriates and 400 local employees based in Kabul, Herat, Jalalabad and Mazar-i-Sharif.

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Press release No. 1784
29 August 1994

New ICRC Vice-President

Geneva (ICRC) – The Assembly of the International Committee of the Red Cross, at its meeting of 25 August 1994, has elected Ambassador Eric Roethlisberger as new permanent ICRC Vice-President. He will take up his duties in the course of this autumn.

Mr Roethlisberger succeeds Mr Claudio Caratsch, who has held the office of Vice-President for four and a half years and did not seek re-election. The Assembly voiced its thanks to Mr Caratsch for his valuable services to the institution.

Mr Roethlisberger was born in 1934 and is a citizen of Geneva and Langnau i.E., Switzerland. He has a doctorate in political science from the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva. Since 1964, Mr Roethlisberger has been in the service of the Swiss Confederation, with diplomatic postings in Geneva, New York and Berne. From 1981 to 1988 he was Delegate of the Swiss Government for Trade Agreements, in which capacity he chaired UNIDO’s Industrial Development Board in Vienna in 1985. Since 1988 he has been Switzerland’s Permanent Representative to the OECD in Paris.

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Press release N° 1785
7 September 1994

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA: CIVILIANS HOSTAGE TO POLITICAL INTERESTS

Geneva (ICRC) - The conflict in the Balkans has been going on for three years now - three long years of terror and suffering for the civilian population, but also three years of tireless endeavour on the part of the humanitarian agencies. Three years during which the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has been working alongside other organizations to try and alleviate the suffering endured by the countless victims of the conflict. Sadly, the many efforts made by the ICRC have failed to meet with the response it had hoped for.

This state of affairs is unacceptable to the ICRC.

For three years now, civilians have been the bargaining chips in what is known as the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. The population is being terrorized, threatened and subjected to constant harassment. People are being forcibly displaced, transferred and exchanged. For three years now, the arbitrary detention of civilians, hostage-taking, summary executions, forced labour of civilians on the front lines are taking place with total disregard for the most elementary principles of humanity.

Despite the ceaseless efforts made by the ICRC, which remains at the disposal of the parties to find humanitarian solutions to these problems, horror is still a daily fact of life in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

More than 2,000 people have been forced to leave the town of Bijeljina in recent weeks. They have been driven from their homes in terror, stripped of everything they owned, subjected to brutal treatment and compelled to cross the front line.
In the Banja Luka area, minorities are being subjected to harassment and discrimination every day. Having lost all hope for the future, they have no choice but to leave.

In Central Bosnia, too, minorities left without any prospect of an acceptable life are leaving the Zenica region.
In the Bihac area, tens of thousands of displaced civilians are hostage to the belligerents' political interests.

In other places like Gorazde and Srebrenica, entire populations are encircled, confined to a few square kilometres of land and forced to survive in appalling psychological and material conditions.

In most of these situations it is the Muslim civilian population that is the principal victim of such an abominable policy.

These facts are extremely serious. The very way in which this war is being waged constitutes a negation of the roots of humanitarian law. The fact that these odious practices are repeatedly being committed, coupled with the absence of any prospect of a solution, is gradually turning human suffering into a routine occurrence, thereby dulling people's conscience and threatening to undermine the very foundations of humanity.

We cannot accept a policy that advocates the forcible exclusion of minorities. What indeed will become of them, prevented as they are from seeking refuge abroad and abandoned to their fate among an often hostile majority, if nothing is done to ensure that their rights are respected in the places where they live or if nothing is done to enable them to leave in total safety, freedom and dignity?

In the face of this intolerable situation, the ICRC once again calls upon the parties to the conflict, and in particular their respective leaders and populations, to assume their moral and political responsibilities. Above all it appeals, through you, to the community of States to see that there is an immediate end to these crimes, whose gravity and magnitude amount to a negation of humanitarian law and of the most fundamental human rights. It is of the utmost urgency that the international community find solutions taking due account of the inalienable rights of the individual.

The International Committee of the Red Cross reminds all the States party to the Geneva Conventions of their collective obligation to ensure that the provisions of humanitarian law are respected in all circumstances. We cannot continue to watch the erosion of the very foundations of the law without taking practical action. The ICRC is counting on a prompt and determined reaction on the part of the international community.

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AFGHANISTAN: STOP TO WANTON VIOLENCE!

Geneva (ICRC) – Over the past three weeks 17,000 people – most of them civilians – have been wounded in the fighting in Kabul alone. One of the city’s main hospitals, Karte Seh, was hit by a rocket on 22 September. Two children were killed and 10 people wounded, including six children. The Ali Abad orthopaedic centre was taken over by combatants on 26 September and came under attack by the adverse party. Humanitarian convoys have been unable to get through since June, and stocks of medicines and food have now run out.

Five weeks after the latest appeal by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) urging respect for Kabul’s civilian population, the belligerents are still showing total indifference to the fate of the city’s most vulnerable inhabitants. The ICRC is deeply concerned about the plight of the population, which has been without running water, electricity or heating since January. As winter approaches, the ICRC fears that a large-scale human disaster may be impossible to avert.

The ICRC delegation in Kabul is stepping up its efforts to persuade the belligerents to observe at least temporary cease-fires, to enable the wounded to reach the hospitals and civilians to leave the combat zones.

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LIBERIA: APPALLING PLIGHT OF CIVILIAN POPULATION

Geneva (ICRC) - The last of the humanitarian organizations left Liberia’s conflict zones on 17 September 1994, when the remaining delegates of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) were forced to withdraw to the capital, Monrovia.

The situation is desperate for the country’s civilian population, which is now left without protection or any form of assistance. Since widespread fighting flared up again between the various factions, civilians have been subjected to the most appalling abuse and atrocities. Murder and destruction are accompanied by systematic looting.

After more than five years of sustained efforts to alleviate the suffering of conflict victims and of constant adjustment to developments in the country, the ICRC recognizes that humanitarian activity has become impossible in most of Liberia. The ICRC’s warehouses and offices have been ransacked and its stocks of medicines stolen, as have practically all its vehicles. The same goes for all the other humanitarian agencies that had been working in the interior. Panic-stricken civilians are abandoning fields ready for harvesting, and tens of thousands of refugees are streaming into neighbouring countries. Thousands of people have been killed in the fighting.

The consequence, but also the cause, of this suffering and these crimes is the total breakdown of all moral standards and complete disregard for the principles and values which are the very cornerstone of human society. Once those barriers have fallen, little remains but cruelty and horror.

ICRC delegates have witnessed this slide into chaos. They have watched helplessly as ever-greater atrocities are committed against the life and dignity of the living and the peace of the dead.

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The international community cannot abandon the Liberian people to this spiral of horror. The ICRC urges States to do everything possible to restore the conditions necessary for the institution and other humanitarian organizations to meet the most pressing needs of the civilian population.

In the name of all the victims, the ICRC launches an earnest appeal for a comprehensive political solution to be sought and for every effort to be made to put an end to the strife and atrocities that are tearing Liberia apart.

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INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

ISRAEL AND THE OCCUPIED AND AUTONOMOUS TERRITORIES:
ICRC URGES RESPECT FOR INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

Geneva (ICRC) - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) took note on 11 October of the conditions placed on the release of captured Israeli army corporal Nahshon Wachsman. Deeply concerned by the death threats issued against him, the ICRC appeals for his life to be spared.

The ICRC draws attention to the fact that the taking of hostages and the execution of prisoners are formally prohibited by international humanitarian law, and that all those entitled to protection under that law are also bound to comply with its rules.

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Press release No. 1789
19 October 1994

ICRC CONDEMNS INDISCRIMINATE ATTACKS AGAINST CIVILIANS IN ISRAEL

Geneva (ICRC) - Following the latest deadly attacks on civilians in West Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) strongly condemns indiscriminate attacks against the civilian population.

The ICRC, deeply concerned by such intolerable acts and by the spiralling violence in the region, appeals for compliance with the most elementary principles of humanity and stresses that indiscriminate attacks on civilians are a serious violation of the basic principles of international humanitarian law.

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ICRC APPOINTS A NEW MEMBER

Geneva (ICRC) - At its meeting on 11 November 1994, the Assembly of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) appointed a new member, Professor Ernst A. Brugger.

Professor Brugger, of Gossau in the canton of Zurich and Möriken in the canton of Aargau, Switzerland, was born in 1947. He holds a degree in economic geography and a doctorate in natural sciences from the University of Zurich, where he now lectures.

His professional activities have been primarily concerned with sustainable development and development in relation to the environment. He has carried out various studies and programmes on regional and urban development in a number of countries in Africa, Europe, Asia and Latin America.

Since 1985 Professor Brugger is Managing Director of the FUNDES Foundation, a private Swiss-based initiative for the promotion of small entreprises in Latin America.

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PRESS RELEASE

Press release No. 1791
24 November 1994

ICRC PRESIDENT CALLS FOR CLEAR DISTINCTION BETWEEN MILITARY OPERATIONS AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

New York/Geneva (ICRC) - In a speech to the UN General Assembly in New York, ICRC President Cornélia Sommaruga noted some progress in the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance but said that much remained to be done. He laid particular emphasis on the need for flawless planning of the transition between the emergency phase and rehabilitation and development programmes. Mr Sommaruga mentioned that the ICRC maintained a receptive and open approach while preserving its own independence.

The ICRC President also raised the question of "forgotten" conflicts and stressed the importance of resolving the underlying political problems. Turning to the issue of the confusion between humanitarian work and military action, he called for a clear line to be drawn between their respective aims and operations.

Mr Sommaruga drew attention to the consequences in humanitarian terms of economic sanctions, suggesting that supplies needed to maintain basic facilities essential for the population, such as water pumping and treatment stations, be exempted from the embargo imposed on the States concerned.

Finally, the President declared his firm support for the establishment of an international war crimes tribunal. At the same time he pointed out that humanitarian workers and agencies could not act as judges or prosecutors, for this would jeopardize their access to victims.

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The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, together with the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, form the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

The ICRC, which gave rise to the Movement, is an independent humanitarian institution. As a neutral intermediary in the event of armed conflict or unrest it endeavours, on its own initiative or on the basis of the Geneva Conventions, to bring protection and assistance to the victims of international and non-international armed conflict and internal disturbances and tension.
BIHAC: URGENT ICRC APPEAL

Geneva (ICRC) - After the latest serious developments in and around Bihac, the ICRC has launched the following urgent appeal to all the parties concerned:

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is extremely worried about the gravity of the present situation in Bihac and the tragic consequences that could ensue.

In its duty to uphold the Geneva Conventions and the Additional Protocols thereto, the ICRC earnestly appeals to all parties involved to respect international humanitarian law and to ensure that it is respected in all circumstances.

In particular, the lives of all people who surrender must be spared and captured combatants must be treated humanely. It is also imperative that the civilian population be respected and kept clear from the dangers inherent in military operations.

Special protection must be given to Bihac hospital, where more than a thousand casualties are being cared for at present. This means that:

- no attacks must be directed against the hospital itself or the hospital compound;
- the hospital buildings and compound must serve exclusively to provide medical care and must not be used to prepare for or engage in military acts;
- no arms must be deployed either inside the hospital, the hospital compound or in the immediate surroundings.

The ICRC stands ready to assist in making Bihac hospital and the hospital compound a neutralized area, in accordance with the provisions of the Geneva Conventions.
Press release No. 1793
28 November 1994

CHECHNYA: ICRC URGES RESPECT FOR HUMANITARIAN RULES

Geneva (ICRC) - Deeply concerned about the recent escalation of hostilities in Chechnya and the suffering this is causing, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) appeals to all the parties involved to provide protection for both civilian and military victims of the fighting, in accordance with the basic rules of international humanitarian law.

The ICRC urges them in particular:

- to take every possible precaution to spare civilians and civilian property;
- to spare the lives of people who surrender and to ensure humane treatment of all captured combatants and civilians arrested in connection with the conflict;
- to refrain from taking hostages;
- to ensure that no sentence is passed and no penalty executed without a judgment pronounced by a court offering the essential guarantees of independence and impartiality;
- to ensure that the wounded and sick are cared for, regardless of the side to which they belong;
- to ensure that medical personnel, establishments and vehicles are respected and protected;
- to respect both the Red Cross and the Red Crescent emblems, so as to guarantee the safety of medical personnel and relief workers carrying out humanitarian tasks under their protection.

As a neutral and impartial institution, the ICRC urgently calls on all the parties to facilitate its delegates’ humanitarian work.

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