

Zeitschrift: Annual report / International Committee of the Red Cross
Herausgeber: International Committee of the Red Cross
Band: - (1964)

Rubrik: Implementation and development of humanitarian law

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 05.04.2026

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

II. GENERAL ACTIVITIES AND PERMANENT RESPONSIBILITIES

IMPLEMENTATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF HUMANITARIAN LAW

The Geneva Conventions

Ratifications and Accessions.—By the end of 1964, the 1949 Geneva Conventions were binding on 103 States, 89 by ratification or accession and 14 by formal declaration from newly independent States of continuity of ratification, previously given by powers which had formerly wielded authority in those countries. In addition, 10 powers not yet parties to these Conventions were still bound by those of 1929, 1906, or 1864.

In the course of the year, the following States became parties to the four 1949 Geneva Conventions: the Kingdom of Nepal (accession in February 1964), the Republic of Niger (declaration of continuity, April 1964), the Republic of Rwanda (declaration of continuity, May 1964), Uganda (accession, May 1964), Jamaica (declaration of continuity, July 1964).

Legislation Relative to the Conventions.—Pursuant to a Resolution of the Council of Delegates in Geneva in 1963, the International Committee of the Red Cross requested National Societies to obtain any legislative texts concerning repression of violations of the Geneva Conventions in their respective countries. Many National Societies did so.

On the basis of these documents, the ICRC will be able to submit a report to the XXth International Conference of the Red Cross.

Application of the Conventions by the United Nations.—It will be recalled that the United Nations, as an organization, has not seen its way to acceding formally to the Geneva Conventions. However, in response to the ICRC's requests, it has partly complied with Resolution V of the Council of Delegates of the Centenary Congress of the Red Cross, which took place in Geneva from September 2-10, 1963. The second recommendation of this Resolution is to the effect that "the governments of countries providing contingents to the United Nations should as a matter of prime importance give them before departure from their country of origin adequate instructions on the Geneva Conventions as well as orders to comply with them." This is followed by another recommendation "that the authorities responsible for these contingents should agree to take all necessary measures to prevent and repress any infringements of the said Conventions." In the agreement concluded by the United Nations and the Governments contributing to the International Security Forces of the UN in Cyprus, there was a special clause specifically providing that governments contributing contingents to the force undertake to ensure, on the one hand, that the national contingents they made available to the UN were aware of the obligations under the Geneva Conventions, and, on the other hand, that the necessary steps be taken for the effective implementation of the regulations in question. There is also a stipulation that the Force shall respect the principles and the spirit of the Geneva Conventions in so far as they affect the attitude of military personnel. The ICRC has been given the assurance that these arrangements will always be applied in the future.

Furthermore, several governments made a point of expressing their approbation of this Resolution V of the Centenary Congress relating to the application of the Geneva Conventions by the UN Forces.

Centenary of the First Convention.—August 22, 1964, was the Centenary of the first "Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of

the Condition of the Wounded in Armies in the Field," promoted by Henry Dunant and his colleagues on the founding committee of the Red Cross. This Centenary was officially commemorated at the Swiss National Exhibition in Lausanne. On that occasion, the original of the first Geneva Convention, which is preserved in the Federal Archives at Berne, was displayed together with the well-known painting by Armand-Dumaresq portraying the signing of the Convention and which usually hangs in the Geneva Town Hall in the very room where that memorable event took place on August 22, 1864.

The commemorative programme included a parade by members of the Red Cross in uniform, nurses of the Swiss Red Cross, a detachment of the army medical service and a group of French and German first-aiders. In the course of the ceremony an address was delivered by Mr. Gabriel Despland, President of the National Exhibition; by Mr. Léopold Boissier, then President of the ICRC; Mr. Jakob Burckhardt, a Federal Minister representing the authorities; Professor von Albertini, President of the Swiss Red Cross; and Mr. W. J. M. van Lanschot, President of the World Veterans Federation, who expressed the gratitude of the main beneficiaries of the Geneva Conventions.

Dissemination of the Conventions.—The Geneva University Faculty of Law has created a chair of humanitarian law for instruction on the Geneva Conventions. During the summer term of the 1964-1965 university year—i.e. in 1965—a weekly two-hour course will be given by Mr. Jean Pictet, Director of General Affairs of the ICRC.

It is worth mentioning that the number of students who choose the field of humanitarian law for the subject of their theses for a doctor's degree is becoming greater and greater.¹ At the present time there are five such theses being prepared with the help of documentary material provided by the ICRC.

The ICRC has continued to disseminate as widely as possible the various publications dealing with the Geneva Conventions.

¹ Since 1949, the ICRC has given guidance to some 80 students of all nationalities for the preparation of their theses. Many of them attend the ICRC for a period.

We might mention, apart from the Conventions themselves and the commentaries thereon, the "Course of Five Lessons", the "Brief summary for members of armed forces and the general public" which is now available not only in the European languages but also in Arabic, Swahili, Lingala, Luba, and Kikongo, whilst the illustrated booklet on the Geneva Conventions is published in nine languages and has sold over 100,000 copies in Europe alone.

In addition, the ICRC has produced a new series of colour slides illustrating the main rules of the Geneva Conventions. This series is intended primarily for the public and the Junior Red Cross and it is complementary to the series that already existed on the same subject and which has been widely purchased in a number of countries.

Development of International Medical Law

On May 11 and 12, 1964, the 10th Conference on International Medical Law took place in Monaco. As usual it was attended by representatives of the ICRC, of the World Medical Association, the International Committee of Military Medicine and Pharmacy, as well as by an observer from the World Health Organization and delegates from the Commission médico-juridique of Monaco.

The Conference dealt with the development of international medical law and in particular the setting up of a body to co-ordinate medical detachments of the United Nations Forces and the application by those forces of the provisions of the Geneva Conventions. The Conference stressed the necessity of ensuring application of these Conventions completely and in all circumstances.

The ICRC was also represented, by observers, at the Second Congress on the Neutrality of Medicine, which was held in Paris from November 12-15. The questions examined included: a plan of campaign for the dissemination of the Geneva Conventions; training and status of personnel responsible for the application of these Conventions; qualifications of medical auxiliaries; and medical neutrality to enable assistance to be brought to the victims of conflicts and disturbances.

Protection of the Civilian Population

In conformity with a resolution of the Centenary Congress of the International Red Cross concerning special status for civil defence organizations,¹ the ICRC continued its consultations with governments having displayed interest in this aspect of its work. It also had discussions with a number of National Red Cross Societies which had expressed their concern for this problem.

As a result of these consultations, the ICRC considered it possible in April 1964 to convene a meeting of experts from countries of which the governments or National Societies were in favour, in principle, of the strengthening of legislation in this field.

A circular issued on June 10, 1964, informed all the National Red Cross, Red Crescent, and Red Lion and Sun Societies of the forthcoming meeting and of the possibility for all interested governments to delegate experts.

The meeting was of a preliminary and private character, and started in Geneva on October 27, 1964. It was attended by some 40 legal and civil defence experts as well as by observers from governments or Red Cross Societies of a dozen countries. Its task was to consider whether it was possible to give added strength in international humanitarian law to the guarantees of exemption from attack and of facilities to be granted to the personnel of civil defence services. It was required, in fact, to confer on these services such status as would permit them, in the event of armed conflict, to carry on their humanitarian tasks under all circumstances in the interest of populations sorely tried by hostilities.

The officers elected by the meeting were: President, Mr. F. Siordet, member of the ICRC; Vice-President, Mrs. J. Barry, Chairman of the Irish Red Cross; rapporteurs, Mr. M. Haug, Secretary-General of the Swiss Red Cross, and Mr. J. Müller, Assistant Director-General of Swedish Civil Defence.

On November 6, the meeting concluded its work, after having held fifteen sessions in which thorough discussions took place in an atmosphere of co-operation and mutual understanding. Subsequently the experts submitted opinions and recommendations which

¹ See Annual Report for 1963, p. 51.

the International Committee found extremely useful. The proceedings produced results which will be submitted to governments and National Red Cross Societies and which are essential for the drawing up at some future date of regulations to be included in international law.

INTER-RED CROSS RELATIONS

Recognition of new National Societies

In 1964 the ICRC officially recognized two new National Red Cross Societies, those of Jamaica and Nepal; both of them on October 1, 1964. The number of officially recognized National Societies thus increased to 104.

International Red Cross Meetings

The President of the International Committee, Mr. Léopold Boissier, the President of the League of Red Cross Societies, Mr. John MacAuley, and the Chairman of the Standing Commission, Mr. André François-Poncet, met in Paris on March 16, 1964. This meeting was preparatory to the session of the Standing Commission of the International Red Cross which took place in Geneva on September 22, under the chairmanship of Mr. François-Poncet.

On the same day the ICRC welcomed at its headquarters the representatives of some forty National Societies who had come to Geneva for a meeting of the Executive Committee of the League. It organized a briefing session on its main activities.

As Mr. Boissier was on the point of resigning from his office as President of the ICRC he took the opportunity of taking leave of the National Societies and their federation, the League, and of thanking them for the support they had given him in the common humanitarian cause. Mr. François-Poncet, President of the French Red Cross and Chairman of the Standing Commission, Mr. MacAuley, President of the League, and Professor Gueorgui Miterev, President of the Alliance of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the USSR, expressed their gratitude to Mr. Boissier for his fine work at the