

Relations with International Organizations

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V. RELATIONS WITH INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Contacts have been maintained with the United Nations, specialized agencies and other bodies especially concerned with humanitarian tasks, such as the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, UNICEF and UNDRO. In New York the ICRC Delegate to International Organizations and members of his staff had frequent meetings with representatives of the UN Secretariat on operational programmes of the ICRC, especially in Lebanon.

On a visit to the United States in May, Mr. Roger Gallopin, President of the Executive Board, discussed the principal current activities of the ICRC with representatives of the United Nations Secretary-General. Later, during the extremely difficult days which preceded evacuation of the Tel al-Zaatar redoubt, in Lebanon, Mr. Waldheim had talks in Geneva about the situation with the President of the Executive Board and ICRC staff members responsible for carrying out this action.

As usual, the 31st session of the General Assembly was followed closely. The report on the Lugano Conference on the Use of certain Conventional Weapons (see page 37) was sub-

mitted to the First Committee for consideration in connection with its discussion of incendiary weapons and other conventional weapons which might be subject to banning or limitation for humanitarian reasons. Various talks took place on that occasion and also in the course of study by the Sixth Committee of the Secretary-General's Report on the third session of the Diplomatic Conference on Humanitarian Law.

The ICRC observers at the General Assembly were also concerned with the situations in the Middle East and Cyprus, human rights in Chile and in the territories occupied by Israel, problems in the Western Sahara and southern Africa, racial discrimination, torture, and protection of detainees and measures related to terrorism and the taking of hostages.

Other meetings followed by the ICRC included:

- the 32nd session of the Human Rights Commission,
- the 60th and 61st sessions of ECOSOC,
- the 29th session of the Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities,
- the 29th World Health Assembly.

ICRC representatives also took part in numerous meetings of non-governmental organizations in Geneva, New York and Strasbourg (Council of Europe). These meetings dealt in particular with problems of disarmament, human rights and the Diplomatic Conference on Humanitarian Law.

VI. INFORMATION AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

THE ICRC AND DISCRETION

The ICRC's endeavours are directed primarily to the welfare of victims. This must be borne in mind if its traditional policy of discretion is to be understood.

For example, where visits to places of detention are concerned, the ICRC is convinced that, in the vast majority of cases, it is only by persuasion without publicity that best results may be obtained. Furthermore, if the ICRC were to publish its delegates' findings, it would run the risk of being denied access to prisons, not only in the countries directly concerned but in others too. The ICRC, therefore, generally restricts itself to publishing the place and date of its visits, and possibly the number of detainees visited and the conditions under which the visit was made (interviews with or without witnesses). Its reports are sent only to the detaining authorities and, in the case of prisoners of war, to the prisoners' own government.

These measures constitute a guarantee of the effectiveness of ICRC visits, allowing it to interview and, especially, to obtain direct access to the persons in need of protection when, very often, no other organization is able to do so.