Resolution 921 (1989)[1]

Activities of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) (1987-88)

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Considering that the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has been mandated by the international community, as defined in the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols of 1977, to provide protection and assistance to all civilian and military victims of armed conflicts ;

2. Emphasising that the ICRC's mandate consists in particular in assisting and protecting all victims of armed conflicts without discrimination (helping the wounded, sick, shipwrecked, protecting prisoners of war and the civilian population, re-establishing family links) ;

3. Asserting that the principles on which the ICRC is based - humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence and universality - do not prevent it from denouncing violations of international humanitarian law where and whenever they occur ;

4. Appreciating the manner in which the ICRC accomplishes its mandate with regard to both protection and assistance in favour of victims of armed conflicts ;

5. Recalling that, apart from its regular activities of protection and assistance, the ICRC pursues, on the basis of its right of initiative and for purely humanitarian reasons, its efforts of protection and assistance in favour of persons detained for security reasons ;

6. Pointing out that, in recent years, the number and the intensity of conflicts, in which the ICRC has been called on to intervene, have increased ;

7. Noting that the ICRC is present in 88 countries and represented by 44 delegations in action in the field, where nearly 600 delegates and 3 000 colleagues work, as against only 600 people at the institution's headquarters in Geneva ;

8. Preoccupied by the increase in breaches in the security of delegates of the ICRC, its installations and means of transport, and by the recent taking of ICRC delegates in Lebanon as hostages in the accomplishment of their mission ;

9. Noting that, in spite of the cease-fire between Iran and Iraq, the ICRC has only been able so far to repatriate a small number of prisoners of war out of the tens of thousands on either side of the conflict ;

10. Regretting that the offer of humanitarian services made by the ICRC in the context of the conflict opposing part of the Tamil community to the central Government of Sri Lanka has not as yet been accepted ;

11. Noting with regret that the offers of humanitarian services made by the ICRC in situations of internal disturbances and tensions have not always been accepted, even by some Council of Europe member states ;

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1. See Doc. 6059, report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Demography, Rapporteur : Mr Eisma. Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 6 July 1989.

12. Considering that the growth of ICRC activities, resulting from the increase in the number and duration of armed conflicts, is evidenced by the increase in the ICRC's budget from 142 million Swiss francs in 1980 to 470 million Swiss francs in 1988 ;

13. Welcoming the fact that, following the adoption of its Resolution 881 (1987), fifteen Council of Europe member states increased their contributions to the ICRC budget ;

14. Regretting that, since the adoption of this text, Austria, Belgium, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, Norway and San Marino have decreased their contributions to the ICRC budget, and that Greece has kept its contribution unchanged ;

15. Noting, however, that the increase in financial contributions has not been sufficient to cope with the rise in ICRC expenditure, which makes it necessary for governments to increase their financial support in order to enable the ICRC to continue its regular activities as well as those of an emergency or extraordinary nature ;

16. Regretting the lack of knowledge of most citizens of Council of Europe member states with regard to international humanitarian law as well as of the specific activities of the ICRC within the International Movement of the Red Cross and Red Crescent ;

17. Having regard to Resolutions No. 1, on respect for international humanitarian law in armed conflicts, and No. 8, on the protection of the civilian population in armed conflicts, which were adopted by the25th International Conference of the Red Cross, in Geneva in October 1986 ;

18. Stressing the importance, as laid down in the Geneva Conventions, of making known as widely as possible, within states involved in conflict and most notably in their armed forces, the basic provisions and fundamental principles of international humanitarian law ;

19. Recalling that, although the member states of the Council of Europe as Parties to the 1949 Geneva Conventions have committed themselves to respect and to ensure respect for these conventions, not all of them have so far acceded to or ratified the Additional Protocols of 1977,

20. Invites the governments of Council of Europe member states :

20.1. to respect and to help to ensure respect in all circumstances for the 1949 Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols of 1977, and the international humanitarian law applicable to armed conflicts ;

20.2. to accept the ICRC's offers of services, based on its right of humanitarian initiative, for the protection and assistance in favour of persons detained for security reasons ;

20.3. to increase substantially their regular annual contributions to the budget of the ICRC ;

20.4. to make ad hoc contributions in order to help cover the costs of emergency humanitarian action in the field ;

20.5. to contribute, by co-operating with the national Red Cross or Red Crescent Society in their country, to a better knowledge of the international activities of the ICRC, including those based on the 1949 Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols as well as those unconnected with the conventions ;

20.6. to support, both nationally and internationally, the work of the ICRC and of the International Movement of the Red Cross and Red Crescent ;

20.7. to call on Iran and Irak to allow the ICRC to repatriate without delay the tens of thousands of prisoners of war still detained by both parties ;

20.8. to call upon the Government of Sri Lanka to accept the offer of services made by the ICRC with a view to protecting and assisting civilians affected by the violence, as well as people arrested in connection with recent events ;

20.9. to call on the People's Republic of China to allow the ICRC to assist the victims of the events of the beginning of June 1989 ;

20.10. to accede to the United Nations Convention on prohibition or restrictions on the use of certain conventional weapons concluded in Geneva on10 October 1980 ;

21. Invites the Governments of Cyprus, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Greece, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, San Marino, Spain, Turkey and the United Kingdom to ratify, if they have not already done so, the Additional Protocols of 8 June 1977 or to accede thereto.