



## Resolution 1011 (1993)<sup>1</sup>

# Situation of women and children in the former Yugoslavia

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Assembly refers in particular to Order No. 486 (1993) on the protection of human rights and the joint declaration of its Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee and Unicef (United Nations Children's Fund), adopted in Geneva on 24 June 1993.
2. The conflict in the former Yugoslavia is marked by ethnic cleansing and barbarous violence against civilians, in particular women and children. The elementary rules and principles of the laws of war and the protective provisions of humanitarian law have been systematically flouted and violated.
3. The international community has been powerless to provide an appropriate response, although the United Nations decision to set up an international court expresses its unwavering determination not to leave unpunished the war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during the conflict.
4. Humanitarian action has shown its limitations; however, in spite of the difficulties encountered, an attempt has been made to offset the international community's shortcomings. Just tribute should be paid to the remarkable work performed by the various humanitarian organisations such as the UNHCR (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), Unicef, ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross) and the NGOs (nongovernmental organisations), and also to their staff, those women and men who devote themselves to helping others, often at the risk of their own lives.
5. The current lack of subsidies means that this action may have to be discontinued, despite the increase in and diversification of the demand for humanitarian relief. Steps must be taken to continue to ensure the survival of civilian populations and also to treat the trauma caused by war, to reconstruct the vital infrastructure which has been destroyed and to give the population, especially the children, prospects of a future comprising something other than violence, hatred and revenge.
6. In the last ten years, 90% of victims of armed conflict have been civilians; over one and a half million children have been killed, four million suffer from disabilities resulting from war, and a reported five million live in refugee camps. Moreover, in the conflict of the former Yugoslavia it is once again the women and children who are the main losers in the war. They have suffered and witnessed barbaric acts and are liable to pass on a hatred which has devastated them. The rights of the child, a recent achievement of the international community, have been trodden underfoot.
7. The Assembly, therefore, urges the governments of the member and non-member states grouped together in the Council of Europe:
  - 7.1. to take the requisite action on the declarations made at the New York World Summit for Children in 1990, by subscribing to the principle of "First Call for Children", according to which meeting the essential needs of children must be a top political priority when resources are allocated and must be taken fully into account when various policies are devised, and to undertake, as appropriate, to ratify and apply the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child;

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1. Assembly debate on 28 September 1993 (47th Sitting) (see [Doc. 6903](#), report of the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee, Rapporteurs: Mrs Robert and Mr Daniel). Text adopted by the Assembly on 28 September 1993 (47th Sitting).



- 7.2. to express their support for this principle at the summit of heads of state and government (to be held on 8 and 9 October 1993 in Vienna) and to focus their discussions at the next Conference of European Ministers responsible for Family Affairs (Paris, 13-15 October 1993) on this central issue;
  - 7.3. to undertake to protect children from the scourge of war and to condemn the barbaric practice in recent armed conflicts of using women and children as targets and human shields, as well as the widespread use of antipersonnel mines, particularly those resembling toys, of which the main victims are children;
  - 7.4. if the conflict in the former Yugoslavia continues, to take, in consultation with specialised organisations and NGOs, the immediate measures needed to ensure that the children and women of Bosnia-Herzegovina are given the food, water, heating, medical care and treatment and psycho-social help which are vital for their survival, that is to say, to ensure in all cases freedom of access for humanitarian relief and to secure observance for "havens of peace and safety" for the children;
  - 7.5. to accompany the measures imposing embargoes and other sanctions on the warring parties with the humanitarian arrangements needed to protect the lives and health of the most vulnerable group of civilians, especially children;
  - 7.6. to introduce, at a European level, a co-ordinating structure to provide information on immediately available medical facilities (for example, the number of beds reserved for emergency treatment for children in each country) and to develop mutual assistance between hospitals in order to promote the rebuilding of hospitals, donations in kind and personnel support in the former Yugoslavia;
  - 7.7. to ensure that rape victims, both women and children, receive the necessary medical care, psychological support and legal aid, not least in host countries;
  - 7.8. to provide the appropriate emergency medical, psychological and educational aid for children who have witnessed or suffered cruelty, inhuman or degrading acts or the loss of their loved ones;
  - 7.9. in the facilities for accommodating displaced persons, and refugee camps in particular, to help the women to feel useful by providing them with opportunities to engage in occupations and receive education and vocational training and allowing them to retain their active role, notably in performing their everyday family duties and housework;
  - 7.10. to supply the children of the former Yugoslavia affected by the conflict with a minimum of education and the educational and play material (books, toys, etc.) which is vital for children's development;
  - 7.11. to develop, particularly for children, programmes of education in peace, tolerance and democracy;
  - 7.12. to assist in the initial and further vocational training of local personnel, especially those responsible for children, and to give them the moral support and psychological help needed for overcoming the burnout syndrome.
8. The Assembly launches an urgent appeal to the governments of the states grouped together in the Council of Europe and to the European Community to contribute financially to humanitarian relief, to relax the conditions placed on the grant of subsidies allocated to the various humanitarian organisations at work in the former Yugoslavia and to increase the size of the subsidies, so that needs can be effectively met.
  9. It invites the governments of Council of Europe member states to make optimum use of the instrument constituted by the Council of Europe's Social Development Fund by means of a special aid account, so that immediate practical steps can be taken to meet the manifold needs emerging from the conflict in the former Yugoslavia.
  10. The Assembly also invites governments not to overlook the risk that similar conflicts might break out in or around Europe, to continue discussion on humanitarian action in cases of armed conflict and to devise a concerted European strategy, so as to take timely steps to develop and reinforce, in every country, all the peace forces in society.
  11. The Assembly invites the international community to review and adapt the humanitarian law governing the protection, in cases of armed conflict, of civilians, notably women and children, in keeping with human rights and the rights of the child.
  12. Finally, the Assembly condemns the inhuman actions of all the warring factions, and calls upon Bosnians, Croats and Serbs to behave like civilised persons and not like animals, and furthermore demands that the principles of international humanitarian law be strictly observed by all concerned in every respect.