

World Campaign for the Protection of War Victims

The idea of a world campaign for the protection of war victims was initially put forward at the Twenty-fifth International Conference of the Red Cross held in Geneva in October 1986.

The Conference, expressing alarm at the number and scale of unnecessarily cruel acts of war and by the use in certain conflicts of prohibited weapons, often directed against the civilian population, recommended in its Resolution VIII "a universal campaign to make known to all, not only to the armed forces, but to the civilians, the rights of the latter according to international law".

The official decision to launch a world campaign for the protection of war victims was taken unanimously by the Council of Delegates at its November 1987 session in Rio de Janeiro. In its Resolution 2, the Council adopted a project on the matter, submitted by a joint working group appointed by the Commission on the Red Cross, the Red Crescent and Peace and composed of representatives of the Swedish Red Cross, the ICRC, the League and the Henry Dunant Institute.

The resolution enjoined "all National Societies, the ICRC and the League not only to give the project their moral support, but also to work for its execution both at national and international levels".

The Commission on the Red Cross, the Red Crescent and Peace thereupon increased the membership of the Joint Working Group, which in April 1989 became the Campaign's Steering Committee. This Committee is chaired by the Vice-Chairman of the Swedish Red Cross, Mrs. Christina Magnuson, and is composed of representatives of the National Societies of Bulgaria, Cuba, Finland, Libya, Malaysia, Swaziland and Sweden, the ICRC, the League and the Henry Dunant Institute, and the Campaign Director. It submitted to the Council of Delegates of 27 October 1989 a progress report presenting the objectives of the Campaign, its preliminary plan for 1990-1991 and the financial aspects involved.

In its Resolution 1, the Council of Delegates approved the general goal of the Campaign and, subject to available resources, the plan as outlined in the Steering Committee's report.

The International Review of the Red Cross is pleased to present below the general goal and specific objectives of the Campaign (extracts from the above report) and the main features of the preliminary Campaign plan, updated to March 1990.

GENERAL GOAL

1. Basic statement

War and violence continue to prevail in vast areas of the world. This must not be forgotten or tolerated. The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, from the very midst of conflicts, is duty bound to make its voice heard, to testify to the unimaginable suffering and distress that inevitably accompany all wars. Men, women and, above all, children seriously injured not only physically but also in mind and spirit, orphaned, homeless, helpless, bereft of care, must spur the conscience of those in power, impressing upon them their duty to find peaceful solutions to their disputes.

But this ambitious aim must be combined with a more immediate objective: better protection and assistance for the victims of armed conflicts within the overall context of respect for international humanitarian law. This objective is all the more imperative today as conflicts become increasingly deadly, as methods of warfare progressively eliminate the essential distinction between civilians and military personnel.

Nowadays the great majority of victims are women, children and the elderly, who are not involved in hostilities. And yet it is primarily these people whom international humanitarian law aims to protect from hostilities.

Having the vocation and the mandate to act for the protection of the victims of all wars, being actively involved in almost all conflict areas in the world, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is convinced from its first-hand experience that much more must now be done. International humanitarian law must be fully respected; civilian populations and other potential victims of war must know and assert their rights.

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement has therefore decided to launch a World Campaign for the Protection of War Victims. This Campaign is intended to promote a universal awareness of the problem, a change in attitudes, and greater efficacy in helping the victims.

The Campaign must be truly worldwide, with the support of all the National Red Cross or Red Crescent Societies and, in the forefront, ICRC and League delegations in the field.

2. The message of the Campaign

The basic content of the message will be simple and self-evident:

Wars cause intolerable human suffering and jeopardize human dignity. Peaceful settlements to armed conflicts must be sought.

All victims of war are entitled to protection and to respect for their persons.

Combatants have the duty to protect all victims of war and must not destroy property necessary for the survival of civilians.

More can and must be done to improve the situation of victims. We, you can help. Political leaders can help us to help.

3. Objectives

The general objectives of the Campaign, therefore, will be:

To make public opinion and governments worldwide fully aware of the plight of the victims of armed conflicts, in order:

- to prevent new conflicts from claiming additional victims;
- to give practical assistance to present victims;
- to improve long-term assistance in favour of victims.

A WORLD-WIDE MOBILIZATION

1. A global strategy

The Campaign is part of the Movement's long-term information policy and communication plan, proposed to the Council of Delegates by the ICRC and the League.

The Campaign will therefore contribute to promoting a humanitarian mobilization on behalf of victims worldwide, thereby enhancing the image of the Movement. It will be the first attempt to implement this strategy on a universal basis. In particular, World Red Cross/Red Crescent Day 1991 will focus on the victims of war.

The Campaign does not replace in-depth, long-term dissemination efforts. It should rather help create a more favourable environment for the humanitarian work of the Movement and enhance respect for international humanitarian law.

2. Mobilizing the whole Movement

No such mobilization is possible unless the entire International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement plays an active role. That means that in addition to discharging their regular activities, all 149 National Societies should participate, each according to its respective ambition, resources and circumstances.

While the Campaign will be organized by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the help of other governmental and non-governmental organizations will be solicited.

3. Target audience

The Campaign's main target in both conflict and non-conflict areas will be the general public. The ways and means of approaching this audience will vary considerably, depending on the prevailing circumstances in different areas of the world.

The Campaign must adapt to these circumstances; special attention must be directed to the setting up of an original and forceful programme capable of attracting the interest of the media and of increasing the impact of long-term dissemination programmes.

PRELIMINARY CAMPAIGN PLAN

The Campaign plan includes a number of events scheduled between January 1990 and October 1991, with a peak period in May 1991. The various stages are as follows:

1. Colloquium on the protection of war victims

The major theme of the Campaign, the protection of war victims, was launched "intellectually" by a Colloquium held in Geneva on 23 and 24 February 1990. An account of the discussions at the meeting and its conclusions, drawn up in the form of an appeal to protect civilians during armed conflicts, appear below (see p. 144)

2. International drawing competition

A worldwide drawing competition for children up to the age of fifteen will be held with the active participation of National Societies. In each country, the National Societies are invited to request a major newspaper to either sponsor or organize the contest. The children's drawings will be sent in to the newspapers, which will in turn set up national juries together with the National Societies to judge the entries. The newspapers will award prizes and

send the ten best drawings to the Campaign headquarters in Geneva. An international jury will then choose twenty or thirty of the most outstanding drawings from among the several hundred already selected and award international prizes in the form of visits, either to a country having suffered from war or to Geneva.

In January 1990, the National Societies were invited to start organizing and promoting the competition in their respective countries.

3. Promotional and support material

To help National Societies promote the Campaign and World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day, the ICRC and the League will prepare *written and audio-visual material* including “reportages”, eye-witness accounts, humanitarian projects, photos and posters.

Material assembled for World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day will also comprise a series of *humanitarian projects to help the victims of armed conflicts*. The plan is to raise the funds needed to implement those projects from National Societies and private sources, and an appeal for sponsorship will be launched during the event on 8 May 1991 (see below).

Moreover, a *report on war victims* will be prepared by the ICRC in co-operation with the Uppsala University Department for Peace and Conflict Research and distributed to the public. It will use actual events, analyses, eye-witness accounts and illustrations to describe the realities of war and the ordeal of civilian victims in times of conflict. This report should be used as a permanent back-up for the Movement’s humanitarian mobilization efforts and as an essential complement to the Campaign appeal.

4. The Monument to Peace

The plan is that a sculpture incorporating two missiles, one American, the other Soviet, should be erected in the Place des Nations in Geneva and unveiled on 8 May 1991. It would be the work of a group of sculptors from several countries, including the USA, the USSR and Switzerland.

5. Global event on 8 May 1991

World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day, 8 May 1991, will mark the culminating point of the Campaign. The key event will be a worldwide television programme broadcast with co-operation from several major television networks and financed by private sponsors.

The main purpose of this global event will be to promote public awareness of the plight of war victims and to raise the necessary funds for a wide range of humanitarian projects to protect the victims of conflict (see above).

The worldwide TV programme should consist of a series of documentaries and short films made in the field by directors of international repute. This basic material would be spread throughout the programme, interspersed with footage showing related events (e.g., parades, concerts, debates, messages of support, appeals for funds, etc.) organized in various countries in co-operation with the National Societies and local TV networks.

A project currently under consideration is to form a "human chain" all around the world linking heads of State, leading personalities and victims of war.

The promotion of the Campaign will be partly entrusted to "ambassadors", whose mission will be to inform the media about the various events organized during the Campaign and to ensure optimum impact of its message. The National Societies are invited to appoint their national ambassadors from among well-known figures in the cultural, scientific, artistic or sports world.

6. Financing of the Campaign

Pursuant to Resolution 1 of the Council of Delegates, the overall Campaign programme will have to be tailored to available resources. There will be three types of expenditure, i.e., costs involved in running the Campaign itself, expenses incurred in connection with international events and the financing of humanitarian projects during the peak period of the Campaign.

The funds required to cover administrative expenses will have to be found within the Movement. National Societies have been enjoined by the Chairman of the Commission on the Red Cross, the Red Crescent and Peace and the Chairperson of the Campaign's Steering Committee to work for the implementation of the campaign programme, in accordance with Resolution 2 of the Council of Delegates held in Rio de Janeiro in 1987.

Expenditure associated with the global events described in the preliminary Campaign plan will depend on funds raised from sponsors.

Financial resources needed to implement the humanitarian activities will have to be raised during the global event on 8 May 1991. A special appeal to finance specific projects will be made to the public that day, and the money collected will be entirely allocated to implementing those projects.