

The Eleventh Inter-American Red Cross Conference

The Eleventh Inter-American Red Cross Conference took place in Rio de Janeiro from 3 to 8 June 1979. It had been organized by the Brazilian Red Cross and the League. Twenty-nine National Societies of the American Continent took part, generally represented by their Presidents or members of their Central Committees.

The ICRC and the League also sent delegations led by Mr. A. Hay, President of the ICRC, Mr. J.A. Adefarasin, Chairman of the League and Mr. H. Beer, League Secretary-General.

The work of the conference was divided into various headings: General Affairs, Public Relations, Information and Fund-Raising, Health and Social Welfare, Youth, Relief.

Discussions were lively and participants keenly interested in the subjects. The ICRC presented several papers (on its activities, on dissemination, on the subject of "National Societies and Conflicts and Disturbances", on "The Occupation of Red Cross Offices"). Many were the favourable comments expressed by participants on ICRC action for political detainees and for the dissemination of knowledge of international humanitarian law.

In its Resolution No. 1 the Conference appealed to the parties to the conflict in Nicaragua to facilitate the humanitarian task of the Red Cross for the benefit of the victims and to respect persons taking no part in the fighting, especially children, women, old people, casualties and prisoners. Its Resolution No. 3 urged the League to strengthen its regional bureau in America and to maintain it permanently. A recommendation was also adopted on the occupation of Red Cross premises; this reads as follows:

RECOMMENDATION No. 1

Occupation of Red Cross Facilities

When facilities of a National Red Cross Society are occupied by persons not connected with the Red Cross and with intentions and purposes alien to those of the Red Cross, the Officers of the National Society will endeavour to act according to the following principles and procedures:

A) PRINCIPLES:

- 1) The Red Cross is a neutral organization which, in order to continue to enjoy the confidence of all, does not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.
- 2) The humanitarian services provided by the National Society shall prevail in any circumstances over the declared objectives of the occupants.
- 3) In the event of such occupation the fundamental objective of the Red Cross will be to bring it to an end as soon as possible and without violence.

B) PROCEDURE:

- 1) Upon occupation and in the impossibility to avoid it the National Society should immediately inform the ICRC and competent authorities on the situation.
- 2) The above-mentioned principles should be made known to the occupants, advising them that no guarantees or immunity could be granted to them.
- 3) Should the occupation persist, the National Society will endeavour to avoid the use of Red Cross premises for propaganda objectives not connected with the Red Cross.
- 4) Each National Society will apply the present guidelines in consultation with the ICRC and in accordance with local laws and the fundamental principles of the Red Cross.