

## A note from the Editor

The December 2001 issue of the Review covers a wide range of subjects presented in the form of articles, texts, news and reviews which all have one thing in common: they deal with aspects of humanitarian action that are of current interest or concern. In addition, it reports on the decisions of the Council of Delegates held in Geneva in November 2001. The task of this statutory body, which brings together representatives of the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the International Federation and the ICRC, is to give an opinion and where necessary to decide on policy issues or other matters concerning the Movement as a whole.

Several articles bear the signature of ICRC staff members. The editor is pleased to note that the Review is serving more and more as a vector for the results of deliberations within the ICRC on subjects of importance not only for the ICRC's own activities but also for the future of humanitarian work. Other contributions come from authors with diverse qualifications, such as a legal expert on defence and a doctor engaged in a public health campaign in Colombia.

Topicality does not preclude a certain reserve with regard to current conflicts. Therefore no consideration is given in this issue to the armed conflict triggered by the events of 11 September 2001 and raging in Afghanistan at the time of writing this preface. It is still too soon to draw any conclusions for humanitarian policy, since aid for the victims is at present the absolute priority. For the time being we shall only cite two statements published by the ICRC. In its press release of 21 September it deplores the fact that the attacks of 11 September "negated the most basic principles of humanity" and emphasizes that

*“whatever the reasons for armed violence, [the ICRC’s] only criteria [are] humanitarian: what people need to preserve life and a measure of dignity”. In its second statement the ICRC reiterates its concern about the consequences, in humanitarian terms, of the armed conflict in Afghanistan and reminds all the warring parties of their obligation to respect and ensure respect for international humanitarian law in all circumstances. It does so whenever an armed conflict breaks out.*

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*This is the last issue of the Review compiled by the present editor, who took up office in 1996. In every issue over the past six years he has sought, in accordance with the Review’s mission statement, “to promote reflection on humanitarian policy and action and on international humanitarian law, while at the same time strengthening the dialogue between the ICRC and other organizations and individuals concerned with humanitarian issues”. An official source of news and information about and for the Red Cross since 1859, the Review has changed in those six years into an academic journal for an extensive readership interested in the various aspects of the humanitarian cause. The outgoing editor wishes the new editor every success in the quest for excellence.*

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