

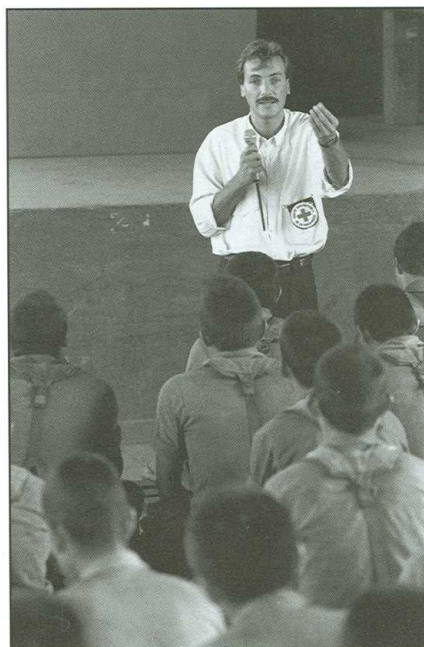
They say all's fair in love and war. Not so. In war, at least, there are universally recognized laws that set out certain rules of conduct, specifically with regard to the treatment of civilians, prisoners of war and the sick and wounded. These are the Geneva Conventions.

Such rules didn't always exist. When a Geneva businessman, Henry Dunant, witnessed by chance the Battle of Solferino in northern Italy in 1859 he was appalled to find soldiers left to die in agony on the battlefield where they had fallen. His initiative then was to mobilize the local population to care for the wounded and, on his return to Geneva, to found the International Committee for Relief to the Wounded (the forerunner of the ICRC). It led to the formulation of the first Geneva Convention in 1864 and gave rise to the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

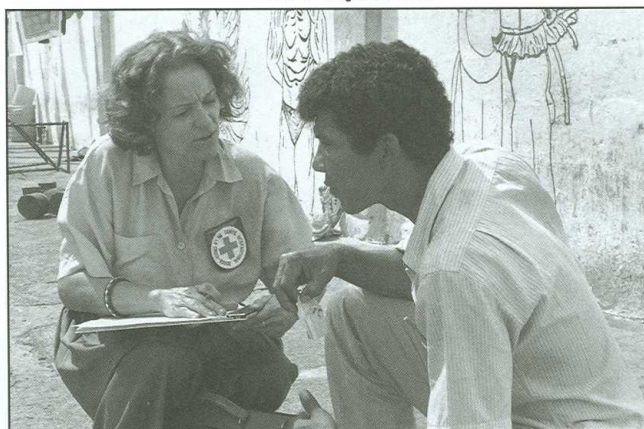
The Geneva Conventions reflect a common concern among the nations of the world that the innocent and the vulnerable should not suffer the consequences of armed conflicts. To date, 174 countries have pledged their humanitarian commitment by signing the four Geneva Conventions. Through them they have given the ICRC the specific mandate of assisting and protecting the victims of war and internal strife.

Over the years, international humanitarian law has evolved under the aegis of the ICRC to keep pace with developments in modern warfare. The hundreds of articles of the Geneva Conventions (1949) and their Additional Protocols (1977) cover all the humanitarian aspects of war and their impact on innocent victims. But at the heart of each lies the same fundamental principle: even in times of conflict every human being should be treated with respect and dignity.

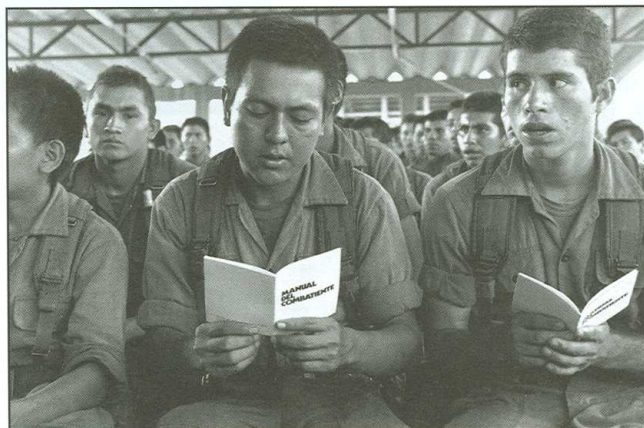
## WHY WE ACT



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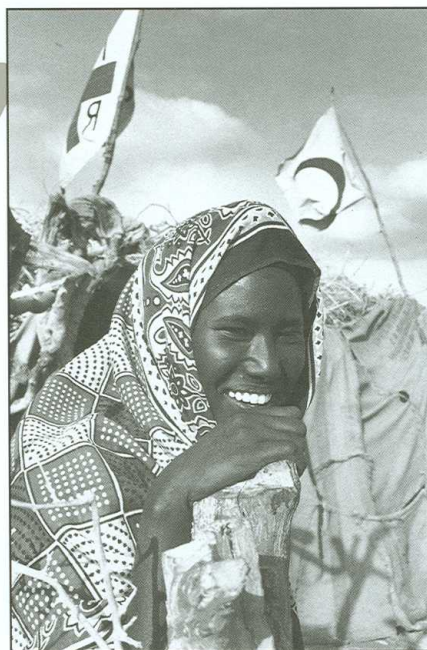




# INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS



Pierre Bousset/ICRC



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