

a commitment by the government to seek ways to negotiate a long-term peace with the SPLA. Unfortunately, only in the rarest of circumstances is it possible or advisable to ask for such a commitment. To do so risks compromising the third party's claim to political impartiality and neutrality in the service of a purely humanitarian goal.

There are, however, other less obvious contributions that humanitarian ceasefires may make to the resolution of conflict. These will be examined in the remainder of this paper.

3.2 The Gesture of Peace

At its most basic level, the humanitarian ceasefire has demonstrative value. Sir Brian Urquhart, the former United Nations Under Secretary-General for Special Political Affairs, commented on the concept by saying that anything that proves the fighting could stop is a good idea.⁵⁵ Richard Reid, who was intimately involved in negotiating the ceasefire in Lebanon and the Sudan, maintains that if people stop shooting at each other for one day, they have broken the habit. Perhaps they might find that it feels pretty good.⁵⁶

Humanitarian ceasefires indicate that the parties to a conflict are capable of cooperating to realize a superordinate goal. Moreover, it demonstrates that they are able and willing to stop the fighting to achieve that goal. To paraphrase someone who was closely involved in the El Salvador negotiations, the same argument can then be made for other types of peaceful intervention. In this sense the humanitarian ceasefire can be used as an occasion to advocate understanding between the parties that through peace not through fighting they can solve their problems.⁵⁷

The gesture of peace inherent in any humanitarian ceasefire has potential repercussions far beyond the immediate zone of conflict. Commenting on the immunization

⁵⁵ Interview by the author with Sir Brian Urquhart, 20 July 1989.

⁵⁶ Marie Colvin, *supra* note 48, p. 2.

⁵⁷ Eisner interview, *supra* note 30.