

## CHAPTER 3: HUMANITARIAN CEASEFIRES AND THE NON-TRADITIONAL APPROACH TO CONFLICT RESOLUTION

### 3.1 The Mechanics of Humanitarian Ceasefires: The Cases

Negotiating a ceasefire for the purpose of delivering or administering humanitarian aid is an arduous, complex and delicate task. The delicacy involved usually means that the negotiators choose not to document the process, for fear of upsetting the combatants who do not want to appear to be negotiating with the enemy. This lack of documentation is exacerbated by the fact that the primary purpose of the organizations responsible for initiating humanitarian ceasefire negotiations is action, "there is no time to record what is being done."<sup>29</sup> Accordingly, the number of documented cases from which to draw for illustrative purposes is decidedly meagre. Among those for which, in relative terms, there is adequate material are El Salvador (1985), Lebanon (1987) and the Sudan (1989).

#### El Salvador (1985)

On 3 February 1985, at eight-o'clock in the morning, El Salvador embarked upon the first of three scheduled "days of tranquillity." The term, "days of tranquillity," is used to represent the informal one-day ceasefires between rebel forces and government troops arranged by UNICEF and the Roman Catholic church in El Salvador. The purpose of the ceasefires was to allow UNICEF and the International Committee of the Red Cross to enter the war-torn region and immunize a target number of 400,000 children against five childhood diseases; diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, polio and measles.

The idea was formulated in New York in July 1984 during a conversation between James Grant, the Executive Director of UNICEF, and Jose Napoleon Duarte, the President of El Salvador.<sup>30</sup> At that meeting, Grant pointed out that 20,000 children a year were dying from disease in El Salvador, far exceeding the number of deaths caused by the war. He further pointed out that most of those childhood deaths could have been prevented with

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<sup>29</sup> Interview by the author with Louis Rivera, Chief Communications, UNICEF, New York, 20 July 1989.

<sup>30</sup> Interview by Madeline Eisner with Agop Kayayan, UNICEF Area Representative, Guatemala, 2 August 1989.