

In 1969, Canada ratified the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, the 1965 Protocol to the Convention and the 1957 Hague Agreement on Refugee Seamen.

The Red Cross Conference, Istanbul

The Government of Canada was represented at the 1969 International Conference of the Red Cross in Istanbul by a delegation headed by M.H. Wershof, Canadian Ambassador to Denmark, assisted by officers of the Department of National Health and Welfare, National Defence and External Affairs. The Canadian Red Cross Society was also represented by a delegation headed by its National President, Brigadier I.S. Johnston, who was supported by members of the Society from across Canada.

During the course of its deliberations, the conference adopted a total of 24 resolutions. The following points were of particular interest for Canada:

A draft resolution of principles was drawn up by the Canadian and Norwegian Governments with a view to documenting a number of particular principles to govern the provision of international relief to civilian populations suffering from disaster situations, regardless of cause. This initiative grew out of concern expressed by the Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs in his address to the United Nations General Assembly at its twenty-third session in 1968. The initiative at Istanbul followed consultations undertaken by Canadian and Norwegian representatives abroad with a large number of countries. During the course of the deliberations at Istanbul, a consensus developed in favor of the conference adopting a declaration of principles for international humanitarian relief and, on the joint sponsorship of the Canadian and Norwegian Governments, a declaration was adopted calling for acceptance and co-ordination of relief activities as measures of international humanitarian concern to be provided impartially and with the co-operation of all authorities.

The Canadian delegation also promoted the establishment of a working group to study the possibility of drafting a protocol to the Fourth Geneva Convention. Such a protocol would have the effect of extending provisions of that Convention to civilian populations in non-international conflicts, whereas the provisions currently extend only to sovereign states which are parties to the Convention. Considerable interest was expressed by a number of delegations and, following further consultations, it was agreed to present a resolution to the Conference which would have the effect of establishing working groups of international experts to examine the four Geneva Conventions with a view to their possible extension to internal and armed conflicts. This resolution was unanimously adopted by the Conference on the joint sponsorship of the Swiss Federal Government and the Canadian Government, and calls for the early establishment of working groups to draft new instruments.

In order to assist the International Committee of the Red Cross in its assigned task of providing assistance to victims of armed conflicts, the Canadian delegation also co-sponsored a resolution drawing attention to the desirability of making more specific and supplementing the provisions of Article 3, which is common to the four Geneva Conventions. In