

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The point of departure for this study is that conflicts are fought for different reasons -- interests or needs -- therefore their resolution may be best achieved using different but compatible approaches.

One such approach is the "humanitarian ceasefire". A humanitarian ceasefire is defined as a finite halt in the conduct of an armed conflict so that a particular need of the population in the war zone may be addressed. Ministering to that need, whether to raise the immunization level of children in the war zone or to prevent mass starvation of the civilian populace, is calculated to be in the interest of the parties in combat.

The conduct of a humanitarian ceasefire can be thought of as a peacebuilding enterprise. It requires of the belligerents cooperation to fulfil a common goal. In this sense, it can facilitate communication and contribute to building trust between combatants.

Three such humanitarian ceasefires are examined in this paper: El Salvador (1985), Lebanon (1987), and the Sudan (1989). The argument is then made that such peacebuilding enterprises are worthwhile as gestures of peace, providing the antagonists with a concrete example of how they might collaborate to attend to a problem. Furthermore, the humanitarian ceasefire can sometimes provide the opportunity or excuse for combatants to engage in negotiations leading to a more permanent peace settlement.

Next, an attempt is made to associate the humanitarian ceasefire process with established theories on conflict resolution evident in the literature. The problem-solving approach to conflict resolution practised by John Burton and others is one method. Problem-solving workshops are an attempt to open communication between opposing parties thereby realigning the perceptions each has of the other and perhaps building trust that can eventually lead to conflict deescalation. The humanitarian ceasefire hopes to achieve similar ends. Also, the trust engendered between aid-giver and the parties in conflict during a prolonged humanitarian effort sometimes results in the aid-giver being