

humanitarian organizations. Relief supplies shall consist, in particular, of foodstuffs, medical supplies and clothing. Article 23 commits each High Contracting Party to allow "the free passage of all consignments of medical and hospital stores and objects necessary for religious worship intended only for civilians of another High Contracting Party, even if the latter is its adversary." Under Article 56, each occupying power is bound to adopt and apply prophylactic and preventive measures necessary to combat the spread of contagious diseases and epidemics.

It is obvious from the foregoing discussion that these Articles apply only to conflicts of an international character. However, Article 3, common to the four Conventions, deals with those conflicts, such as civil or intra-state wars, that are not international in character. Though it makes no explicit references to humanitarian relief, it does stipulate that "parties to the conflict should further endeavour to bring into force, by means of special agreements all or part of the other provisions of the present Convention." This Article also stipulates that "an impartial humanitarian body, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, may offer its services to the parties to the conflict."

The lack of attention paid by the Geneva Conventions to non-international armed conflict was rectified somewhat by Protocol II, formally known as the Protocol Additional to the Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts. Article 18(2) of Protocol II provides that if the civilian population is suffering undue hardship caused by the lack of supplies essential for its survival, such as foodstuffs and medical supplies, relief actions on their behalf that are of an exclusively humanitarian and impartial nature shall be undertaken, subject to the consent of the High Contracting Parties.

Certainly the provisions in the Geneva Conventions and the Additional Protocols are more substantial regarding civilians caught in international conflict than those regarding civilians involved in non-international armed conflict. As Macalister-Smith explains, states