

Humanitarian Law in Armed Conflicts

(a) Up-Dating of 1949 Geneva Conventions

The Legal Bureau has been working closely with the Judge Advocate General's Office of the Department of National Defence (DND) and the Canadian Red Cross Society in the different stages of diplomatic activity, under the auspices of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which it is hoped will lead to adoption in 1974 of two Protocols adapting the four Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949 for the Protection of War Victims to the realities of contemporary armed conflict situations.

To its credit the ICRC was among the first to recognize the inadequacies of the Geneva Conventions. At the 21st International Conference of the Red Cross in Istanbul in September, 1969, the ICRC tabled a report entitled "Reaffirmation and Development of the Laws and Customs Applicable in Armed Conflicts." At the Conference Canada and Sweden co-sponsored a resolution requesting the ICRC to propose as soon as possible concrete rules to supplement existing humanitarian law, submit these proposals to governments for comment, and, if desirable, recommend the convening of diplomatic conferences of States Parties to the Geneva Conventions and other interested states to elaborate international legal instruments incorporating these proposals. Canada also co-sponsored a resolution recalling the unfortunate fact that since 1949 non-international armed conflicts had been increasing, and requesting the ICRC, with the co-operation of government experts, to devote special attention to this subject.

Encouraged by the United Nations Secretary-General, the ICRC