

A note from the Editor

This issue of the *Review* is devoted to two aspects of ICRC action in behalf of conflict victims: the implementation of international humanitarian law, notably as regards criminal prosecution at the international level, and recent developments within the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

In June of this year a United Nations diplomatic conference will be held in Rome to discuss and, hopefully, to decide on the establishment of an international criminal court — the first ever to be instituted on a permanent basis. The court would have jurisdiction to try serious violations of international humanitarian law and would thus make a valuable contribution towards ensuring greater respect for at least the minimum standards of humanity in times of war. Much will be at stake in Rome for all those who deplore the current lack of mechanisms capable of guaranteeing the implementation of humanitarian law and the punishment of serious violations thereof. The present issue includes an article by the head of the ICRC's Legal Division, who sets out the organization's position regarding the United Nations' proposal for the creation of such a court. A further article, based on historical research, draws attention to the remarkable suggestion made in this respect by Gustave Moynier as early as 1872. Other authors explore the difficult issue of impunity as a factor in the restoration of peace and attempt to clarify the scope of criminal responsibility in the law applicable to internal conflicts.

One of the fundamental objectives of any humanitarian activity is to ensure that all parties to an armed conflict respect their obligations under humanitarian law. An article entitled "Promoting norms to limit violence in crisis situations: challenges, strategies and alliances", explores different ways of achieving this goal.

Another article on the use of chemical weapons during the Italian invasion of Abyssinia in 1935-1936 and the ICRC's subsequent response opens a little-known chapter in the history of humanitarian law.

The second part of the issue contains the resolutions adopted by the Council of Delegates at its meeting from 25 to 27 November 1997 in Seville, Spain. It also includes the text of the *Agreement on the organization of the international activities of the components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement*. This “partnership agreement” sets the framework for future relief operations in aid of conflict victims. In an article entitled “The ICRC looks to the future”, the *Review* publishes the first results of the organization’s debate on the future of humanitarian work and thus on the future of the ICRC itself.

The Review
