



## Security Council

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AND SPANISHNOTE VERBALE DATED 26 JUNE 1984 FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL  
ADDRESSED TO THE MEMBER STATES AND OBSERVER STATES THAT  
ARE STATES PARTIES TO THE GENEVA CONVENTIONS OF 1949

The Secretary-General of the United Nations presents his compliments to ... and has the honour to refer to the tragic conflict between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Iraq, which in its fourth year continues to exact a heavy and mounting toll in human life and material resources of both countries. The Secretary-General has made unremitting efforts to facilitate a just and honourable settlement of the issues of the conflict and to prevent or alleviate the suffering of the people of the two countries, particularly affected civilian populations.

The Secretary-General is deeply gratified at the prompt acceptance by the Governments of Iran and Iraq of his appeal to them for undertakings to end all deliberate attacks and counter-attacks by any means on purely civilian areas. The good faith in which both sides are honouring these humanitarian commitments deserves high commendation from the international community.

Another humanitarian issue which has been of special concern to the Secretary-General is the question of treatment of prisoners of war, which is governed by the Third Geneva Convention of 1949. The four Geneva Conventions of 1949, to which 155 countries are parties, assign specific responsibilities to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which, through its activities, has developed recognized expertise and earned universal regard. In view of this special status, the United Nations has consistently relied on the ICRC in these areas, and the ICRC has kept the Secretary-General informed of those of its activities which are of concern to the Organization.

On 7 May 1983, the ICRC addressed an appeal concerning the conflict between Iran and Iraq to all the States Parties to the Geneva Conventions and informed them of the circumstances which had prompted the International Committee to do so. The ICRC reminded the States Parties of their responsibility, under the identical first article of each of the four Conventions, to ensure respect for those Conventions not only by States involved in conflicts but also by all States Parties to the Conventions.

On 10 February 1984, the ICRC addressed a second appeal, pointing out that, in relation to the treatment of prisoners of war and of civilian refugees and deportees in the conduct of this conflict, the principles of humanitarian law codified in the Geneva Conventions were still being violated. The ICRC also noted that at that time it was still being prevented from satisfactorily discharging its humanitarian tasks.

The Secretary-General has now been informed that the ICRC is being enabled to resume visits to prisoners-of-war camps. While this development is gratifying and encouraging, the Secretary-General remains deeply concerned that serious infringements of the terms of the Geneva Conventions may bring into discredit those rules of law and universal principles.

The Secretary-General is therefore addressing this note to all Member and Observer States that are States Parties to the Geneva Conventions in order to underscore the vital importance of ensuring the observance of the principles embodied in the Geneva Conventions and, in particular, to urge those States to give serious consideration to the call by the ICRC to serve as Protecting Powers, who are vested with a crucial role in the mechanism for ensuring such observance under the terms of those Conventions. The Secretary-General has been assured that the ICRC will continue to discharge its humanitarian mandate under the Geneva Conventions in close co-operation with such Protecting Powers.

It is the Secretary-General's earnest hope that Governments will renew their determination to ensure respect for the Geneva Conventions, which are indispensable instruments in the task of mitigating the effects of war.

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