



Dual Distribution

CONFERENCE OF PLENIPOTENTIARIES ON
THE STATUS OF REFUGEES AND
STATELESS PERSONS

RECOMMENDATIONS ADOPTED BY THE INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE AT HANOVER (April 1951) ON THE
REFUGEE PROBLEM IN WESTERN GERMANY AND AUSTRIA

Statement submitted by the League
of Red Cross Societies, a non-
governmental organization in
consultative relationship with the
Economic and Social Council.

The Executive Secretary has received the following statement which is
circulated in accordance with rule 27 of the Rules of Procedure of the
Conference.

Submitted: 27 June 1951

Received: 28 June 1951

From 9 to 14 April 1951, an international conference, convened under the
auspices of the League of Red Cross Societies in pursuance of a resolution adopted
by the latter's Board of Governors at its 21st session held in Monte Carlo in
October 1950, met at Hanover, Germany, to study the problem of relief for refugees
in Western Germany and Austria. The Conference was attended by delegates from
the national Red Cross Societies of the following 17 countries: Australia,

Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Denmark, France, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. The International Committee of the Red Cross also sent a delegation. Dr. G.A. Bohny, President of the Swiss Red Cross and Vice-Chairman of the League of Red Cross Societies, acted as Chairman of the Conference. The three High Commissioners - French, British and United States - sent representatives, as did the International Labour Organisation, UNESCO and UNICEF.

The Conference heard several detailed reports on the situation of refugees in Germany and Austria submitted by the German Federal Minister for refugees, the Prime Minister of Lower Saxony, the Secretary of State of the Federal Ministry for refugees, the Minister for refugees of Lower Saxony, the Vice-President of the German Red Cross and the Vice-President of the Austrian Red Cross. The League of Red Cross Societies and the International Committee of the Red Cross also submitted reports, and likewise the national Red Cross Societies which have undertaken relief work for the refugees in Western Germany and Austria.

At the conclusion of its work, the Conference adopted several recommendations of an essentially practical nature defining the scope of the national Red Cross Societies' work on behalf of the refugees in Germany and Austria, and encouraging those Societies to intensify their charitable activities until such time as a solution of the problems concerned can be found at the international level. These recommendations are based on the ideas which predominated throughout the Conference: the Red Cross alone cannot solve the refugee problem, which extends far beyond its scope and capacity, but it can help to alleviate the refugees' sufferings, both directly through its own characteristic means and indirectly by constantly drawing the attention of the authorities, the international organizations and the general public to this gigantic problem, the consequences of which, the Conference recognized, make it as much a world as a German one.

In a particularly important recommendation the Conference asked the national Red Cross Societies to continue their charitable activities until such time as the problem is finally solved at the international level. It expressed the wish that the United Nations would expand its activities on behalf of refugees beyond what has been done in the past, extending its relief measures to categories which have not so far enjoyed legal protection, and working for the economic rehabilitation of all refugees, expellees and stateless persons in the whole world, without distinction of race, religion or nationality.

The Conference also adopted a priority list of the most effective means of helping the refugees in Western Germany and Austria: receiving children into families, hospital treatment for children in appropriate establishments, sponsorship, making homes, gifts in kind, etc.

Other recommendations relate to the need for improving the lot of young people who suffered severely from the war, particularly by developing in them the will to help themselves and by taking the necessary steps to save them from idleness. The national sections of the Junior Red Cross are called upon to play an active part in carrying out the programme of assistance to young refugees in co-operation with the Junior Red Cross organizations in Germany and Austria. The Conference also recommended making it possible for child refugees to be legally adopted.

The important problem of emigration was the subject of thorough discussion which led the Conference to declare that, even if it was not for the Red Cross Societies to take the basic decisions in that sphere, they should, however, give all the assistance to emigrants they could before their departure, during their journey and after their arrival, providing them with the comfort of that human sympathy too frequently absent from official arrangements. As for the International Committee of the Red Cross, it was asked to continue its important work of reuniting families. Another resolution is concerned with the assistance service for refugees and stateless persons instituted in Italy, the development of which should be encouraged.

The text of the first recommendation adopted by the Hanover Conference is annexed to the present statement. The secretariat of the League of Red Cross Societies, 26, Avenue Beau-Séjour, Geneva, will supply the texts of the other recommendations (Nos. 2 - 12) on request.

Enclosure: 1

RECOMMENDATION NO. 1 ADOPTED BY THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON THE REFUGEE PROBLEM IN WESTERN GERMANY AND AUSTRIA

(Hanover, 9-14 April, 1951)

The International Conference summoned at Hanover by the League of Red Cross Societies, assembling the representatives of 17 national Societies, of the International Committee of the Red Cross, and of the League of Red Cross Societies, after having examined the problem of the refugees at present in Germany and Austria, of whom there are nearly 9 millions, and after having studied the official measures already undertaken by the government authorities of the two countries and the efforts which have been made by their charitable organisations, the national Red Cross Societies and other foreign organisations, in an endeavour to mitigate the great distress of hundreds of thousands of these refugees, observes that while the sufferings of these refugees can be alleviated, the problem itself cannot be solved by Red Cross means alone. This problem is essentially of an economic nature and can be solved only by resorting to a form of aid which will enable the refugees and expellees to reconstruct their existence. The necessary steps to achieve this end can only be taken by means of well-organised and constructive national and international co-operation.

In the same way the Conference would be very happy to see the United Nations extend their relief measures to the refugees beyond those already undertaken for the legal protection of a very restricted category of political refugees, and to envisage the economic rehabilitation of all refugees, expellees and stateless persons in the whole world, without distinction of race, religion, or nationality

The Conference

invites the national Red Cross Societies to urge the governments of their countries to take action through the medium of the great international organisations to which they belong, whose task it is to succeed in establishing normal living conditions for the refugees,

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Is of opinion that one of the main tasks of the national Red Cross Societies is to enlighten public opinion throughout the world regarding the refugee problem in order to develop knowledge thereof and thereby stimulate the spirit of mutual assistance.

Asks the national Red Cross Societies to intervene in favour of refugees and expellees with the authorities and institutions concerned, requesting them to initiate such constructive measures as are beyond the powers of the Red Cross.

Suggests that the national Red Cross Societies intensify their charitable activities until such time as a solution, on an international level, of the problems under discussion be found.
