

# EVEN WARS HAVE LIMITS

## SOUTH ASIA – MILESTONES

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the four Geneva Conventions of 1949. As the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), we witness the everyday achievements of international humanitarian law (IHL) – a wounded person allowed through a checkpoint, those not involved in fighting being spared, detainees able to send a message to their families and many other examples that may not always be visible to the public. In such instances, it is clear that complying with the humanitarian law can make a meaningful difference. Created for the worst of times, the Geneva Conventions preserve the core of our common humanity.

Over the years, there have been many instances in South Asia when the application of the Geneva Conventions has offered real protection to those caught between conflict.



The Swiss delegation sign the Final Act of the Diplomatic Conference, Geneva 1949.

*“The Geneva Conventions... continue to remind us most forcefully of our common obligation to care for each other.”*  
– Nelson Mandela



Amongst the resolutions adopted was Resolution XIII, approving in principle the New Delhi Draft Rules, which set the tone for an agreement amongst States on the need to improve protections for civilians during times of conflict. This agreement would prove fundamental to the process of adopting the two Additional Protocols of 1977 to the Geneva Conventions.



After the 1971 war, the ICRC with the help of the Pakistan Red Cross Society visits and registers 90,000 Pakistani prisoners of war (POW) being held in Indian camps and forwards more than one million Red Cross messages containing brief family news.



India hosts the **XIXth International Red Cross Red Crescent Conference** from 28 October to 7 November.



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With the support of the ICRC and in accordance with the Third Geneva Convention, Iraq and Iran begin the **repatriation of thousands of POWs** detained in connection with the armed conflict of 1980-88. In 2003, the parties announced that there are no POW in their respective countries.



The then rebels, Nepal Communist Party (Maoist), **release 33 police officers, two soldiers and two civil servants unconditionally** under the aegis of the ICRC. The ICRC then hands over them to the Nepali government authorities.



In Sri Lanka, up to 14,000 sick and wounded people and their companions are evacuated by ship from LTTE-held areas to GoSL-controlled areas.



Days after the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (Taliban) takes 33 people, including university teachers and students, hostage in Afghanistan's Ghazni province, the ICRC intervenes and helps with the handover and transfer of these people to their families. Significantly, the **Taliban's provincial representative had sought the ICRC intervention** in the handover process.



India chairs the 2017 and 2018 rounds of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons teachers and students, hostage in Afghanistan's Ghazni province, the ICRC intervenes and helps with the handover and transfer of these people to their families. Significantly, the **Taliban's provincial representative had sought the ICRC intervention** in the handover process. In its final report in 2018, the **GGE provides ten possible guiding questions that note that IHL applies fully to all weapon systems**, including autonomous weapon systems.

1947



As a neutral intermediary, the ICRC sends a delegate from Geneva to Karachi and New Delhi for **facilitating repatriations** and visiting refugee camps in both the countries.

1957



In Bangladesh, the ICRC carries out the organization's **biggest humanitarian operation** at the time to alleviate the suffering of those displaced by the war of 1971. It facilitates the return of **118,070 people to Bangladesh and 117,727 people to Pakistan**, an operation taking several years.

1971

1972

1974



Over **180,000 family parcels** are exchanged between Pakistani POWs being held in Indian camps and their families with the help of Pakistani Red Crescent Society.

1988

2004

2009



The first-ever **Regional Conference on IHL for South Asia** is organized in Nepal. The then Prime Minister, Pushpa Kamal Dahal attends the conference as chief guest.

2009

2012



The Government of Bangladesh pays a tribute to the work done by the ICRC by bestowing the organization with **"Friends of Liberation War Honour"**.

2014

2017-2018

