

FOREWORD

Since 1889, when it was first published, the Handbook of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement has been intended both as a compilation of the principles and rules that have directed the activities of the Movement since its foundation and a practical guide for all those interested in the life of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

It therefore contains the international conventions and agreements that govern the mission of the Movement's components in time of conflict, the Statutes and Regulations connected with the organization and work of those institutions – the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies – and, finally, the main resolutions adopted by the Movement's statutory bodies.

Originally published by the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Handbook took the form of a twenty-two page pamphlet containing the substance of the resolutions of the first International Conferences of the Red Cross. Increasing considerably in size with each successive issue, the Handbook was most recently reissued in 1951, 1953, 1971, 1983 and 1994. From 1930, it became the International Red Cross Handbook, a joint publication of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the League of Red Cross Societies.¹ Its layout remained unchanged in later editions. The first part contained the Geneva Conventions and several other international conventions with a bearing on Red Cross and Red Crescent work; the second part was devoted to the Statutes and Regulations of the Movement's international institutions; and the third part assembled the main resolutions of International Conferences, the Council of Delegates and the Board of Governors of the League – now the General Assembly of the Federation. This layout has been maintained to a great extent in the current edition, however a fourth part with the main policies of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement has been added.

The ninth edition, in 1951, represented an important step in the development of this publication. It was at that time supplemented by the four Geneva Conventions of 1949, to which the Additional Protocols of 1977 have now been appended. Since 1971, on the other hand, the Handbook no longer gives the texts of the Conventions prior to those of 1949, with the exception of the “mother” Convention of 1864 which, in the present edition, will be found as an inset. A summary of the fundamental rules of international humanitarian law applicable in armed conflicts has been inserted at the end of the work, which makes for easier consultation.

¹ On 28 November 1991 the League changed its name to “International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies”.