
Presentation ceremony, Paul Reuter Prize 2003
Thursday, 22 May 2003
Recipient: Professor Ruth Abril Stoffels
Cardenal Herrera University, Valencia, Spain

Address by Professor Daniel Thürer, Vice-Chairman of the Paul Reuter Fund Committee and member of the ICRC

It is a pleasure and a great honour for me in my capacity as Vice-Chairman of the Paul Reuter Fund Committee to present the Paul Reuter Prize for 2003 to Professor Ruth Abril Stoffels.

The jury for the prize consisted of Professor Paolo Bernasconi, who is the Chairman of the Paul Reuter Fund Committee and a member of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Professors Christian Dominicé and Giorgio Malinverni of Geneva University, and several members of the ICRC staff. With the support of two legal experts who formerly worked at the ICRC, Hans-Peter Gasser and Christophe Swinarski, they unanimously decided to award Professor Ruth Abril Stoffels the Paul Reuter Prize for her work entitled *La Asistencia Humanitaria en los Conflictos Armados: Configuración jurídica, principios rectores y mecanismos de garantía*.

Professor Ruth Abril Stoffels is from Spain, and holds a doctorate in law. In 2000, following a postgraduate diploma in European Studies at the College of Europe, in Bruges, she defended her thesis on humanitarian assistance during armed conflict at Complutense University in Madrid, and it is for this thesis that she is receiving the Paul Reuter Prize 2003 today.

Mrs Abril Stoffels is currently professor of international law and international relations at the faculty of law and social sciences of Cardenal Herrera University in Valencia. In that capacity, she regularly gives lectures and takes part in a large number of seminars in Spain and abroad.

She has also established close links with the Spanish Red Cross, in particular with its Centre for the Study of International Humanitarian Law, where she teaches and promotes that body of law to groups that include the security forces. Indeed, it was with the Centre's support that she was able to publish her thesis.

Mrs Abril Stoffels has published a number of articles on a wide variety of subjects.

The work for which she has won this prize is her thesis, written under the direction of Professor Manuel Pérez González, who holds the Chair for international public law at Complutense University in Madrid and is Technical Director of the Centre for the Study of International Humanitarian Law of the Spanish Red Cross. The jury selected this study because it examines not only all concepts and problems of humanitarian aid during armed conflict, but also the practical aspects.

Professor Abril Stoffels starts by discussing the legal status of humanitarian assistance, its definition and its theoretical objectives, thereby setting up a clear frame of reference, particularly with respect to the debate regarding aid versus protection.

She analyses the legal regime governing assistance within international law, including international humanitarian law, together with the duties of States and the rights of victims. She then moves on to consider implementation mechanisms and the related legal procedures, including the problem of so-called "intervention on humanitarian grounds". This is followed by the definitions and scope of humanitarian aid in the light of humanitarian principles, particularly those of impartiality, proportionality and neutrality. Professor Abril Stoffels ends with some 20 conclusions. These alone could serve as a basic handbook on the subject!

There is also an imposing bibliography, which includes a very comprehensive list of relevant publications, including documents from United Nations bodies, the European Union and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, together with relevant jurisprudence.

This work is not just a valuable tool for promoting the rules governing humanitarian aid, covered – and it is this which gives the document its strength – in a most comprehensive fashion; it is also a reference work, making a major contribution to the conceptualization of current aid issues. It will hence be of great practical value to all governmental and non-governmental bodies involved in this area, and to ICRC delegates and the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

The quality and usefulness of Professor Abril Stoffels' work render it worthy indeed of a prize that commemorates that great jurist, that generous and committed individual, the late Professor Paul Reuter, who contributed so much to the development of international law, as the members of the United Nations International Law Commission present will testify.

The Paul Reuter Prize was set up in 1983 through a donation made to the ICRC by the late Paul Reuter, Honorary Professor at the University of Paris, member of the Institute of International Law and former Chairman of the United Nations International Law Commission.

This is the seventh time that the Paul Reuter Prize has been awarded for outstanding work in the field of international humanitarian law.

Finally, before presenting the Prize, I wish to announce that the Paul Reuter Fund Committee has decided to promote Mrs Abril Stoffels' work by supporting its translation into English, thereby making it accessible to a wider audience.

It is therefore my great pleasure to present the Paul Reuter Prize 2003, and the accompanying diploma, to Professor Ruth Abril Stoffels.