

# Can public communication protect victims?

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## **Abstract**

*The phenomenon of 24-hour global coverage of world events has arguably made it more difficult for journalists to remain true to the deontology of their profession. At the same time, humanitarians are at pains to defend the concept of neutral independent action in armed conflicts that have global reverberations. Moral dilemma is often the order of the day for those who have to report on increasingly complex emergencies in war zones or to attempt to alleviate the suffering of victims. With examples from recent conflicts, this article asks whether there are ways in which journalists and humanitarians can contribute to saving lives.*



## **Prologue: A variable triangle**

There was a time when war reporters were routinely consulting ICRC field offices because Red Cross delegates and workers interacted more closely with local communities and were therefore better acquainted with the dynamics of conflicts. This assumption stemmed from the fact that ICRC personnel stay longer in remote areas than reporters do, simply because the nature of their respective work is entirely different.

In order to achieve recognition as neutral intermediaries in time of conflict, ICRC delegates need to build a network of working relations with all sides. The underlying rationale for this “field diplomacy” is threefold: to remind warring factions that there are constraints on the waging of war; to act as a

\* The article reflects the views of the author alone and not necessarily those of the ICRC.

deterrent against violations of international humanitarian law; and to ensure the safe delivery of humanitarian aid where required.

Most reporters would agree with the ethics that underlie these lofty ideals, but the practice of journalism rests on a different *raison d'être*. Journalism is a service to society, and its role is to investigate facts and to inform the public. It is not to advocate the cause of victims or to promote respect for international law as such. In 1921 C.P. Scott, editor of the *Guardian* newspaper, wrote: “A newspaper’s primary office is the gathering of news. At the peril of its soul it must see that the supply is not tainted.”<sup>1</sup>

It has arguably grown more difficult to remain true to the deontology of the journalistic profession since the global media got into 24-hour coverage of world events. Much the same applies to the ability of the ICRC to act as a neutral intermediary in conflicts that have global reverberations; it is striving to maintain the credibility that makes it a reliable source of information for the media.

This paper proposes to examine a few aspects of the dynamics that influence the relations between three relevant players: the parties to conflict, the media, and the ICRC as custodian of the Geneva Conventions. If a line were to be drawn between the three as they stand today, the resulting triangle would look very different from the shape it would have had in post-colonial days. The rules of geometry have not changed, the position of the dots most certainly has.

Each of the three tips of the triangle has its own value system, but none is entirely its private preserve: the political interests or the ideology of governments engaged in armed conflicts are necessarily related to public opinion, the ethical code of journalism is open to public scrutiny and the Geneva Conventions belong to the international community.

## Telling the headline story

When Hunter S. Thompson wrote “Hell’s Angels: A strange and terrible saga” in 1967, he commented: “The difference between the Hell’s Angels in the papers and the Hell’s Angels for real is enough to make a man wonder what newsprint is for.”<sup>2</sup> He was in fact challenging the capacity of traditional “just the facts” reporting to chronicle the tremendous cultural and social change in the sixties, which included the Vietnam War, political assassinations, rock and roll, drugs, the hippie movement, etc. The sixties and seventies witnessed the emergence of new investigative and reporting methods in the American print media in what was one of the major changes that occurred in journalism before the emergence of the World Wide Web (WWW) era.

Researching the topic of a gang of rebellious motorcycle outlaws in the Californian sixties was a step outside the sphere of traditional journalism. By conducting direct interviews with the Hell’s Angels, Thompson questioned many

1 Quoted by Alan Rusbridger in the first edition of the new Berlin format *Guardian*, 9 September 2005.

2 Marc Weingarten, *Who is Afraid of Tom Wolfe? How New Journalism Rewrote the World*, Aurum Press, 2005.

of the assumptions of the law enforcement establishment in those days. Bold as this may have been, it does not measure up to today's challenge of reporting on the insurgency in Iraq.

A retired four-star general, knowledgeable about the urban warfare going on in Baghdad and other cities across Iraq, recently admitted to *Time* magazine that: "We're good at fighting armies, but we don't know how to do this, we don't have enough intelligence analysts working on this problem."<sup>3</sup> In the light of this predicament, it hardly comes as a surprise that telling the story from Iraq has cost the highest number of journalists' lives in any conflict so far (72 since 2003, including 37 Iraqis). Foreign reporters in Baghdad have to remain confined to their high-security offices for most of their time and only venture out in disguise or with heightened protection, whilst "Iraqi journalists aren't allowed the luxuries of the fast car and the bodyguard and often have houses and families in the local area. The Iraq War is the biggest story in the world right now and Iraqi photographers, cameramen and reporters are all under pressure from their bosses — not to mention themselves — to deliver something that is becoming increasingly impossible to deliver."<sup>4</sup>

Even before the 1991 Gulf War, it was a foregone conclusion that the ICRC could not remain aloof from developments in the media industry and that the 24-hour coverage of major crises would have consequences for its *modus operandi*. It took the ICRC some time to adjust to developments, but it eventually had to reconsider its age-old tight-lipped policy towards the media. Over the past two decades, the ICRC has built up a network of media relation officers (communication delegates in ICRC parlance) and integrated them into all its operations worldwide.

In the aftermath of the scandal caused by the mistreatment of detainees by US privates at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, the concept of the confidentiality of ICRC reports came in for public scrutiny. What had been taken for granted, namely that the unique approach of the ICRC served the best interests of detainees, was cast in doubt. Although there was little the ICRC spokespersons could say to placate the enraged mobs on the spot, it was essential to reach out to the media with a view to holding the detaining powers responsible and maintaining the fundamental rights of detainees. An exercise in diplomacy, perhaps, but one that the ICRC could not afford to escape in today's global media world.

## Telling the story of forgotten crises

Nineteenth-century projections of the world displayed a number of white spaces indicating uncharted territories until a number of explorers and adventurers eventually put up flags in the remotest parts of it and helped to fill in those

3 John Kleinwith, *Time* magazine, 26 September 2005.

4 Ghaith Abdul-Ahad, "How can you establish a free media in such fear and anarchy?", *The Guardian*, 26 September 2005.

blanks. In the age of global communication, the World Wide Web criss-crosses the continents and satellite transmitters can potentially beam to any point of the planet. Yet the map of Africa in the twenty-first century retains many blank patches for the international media that attempt to “cover” more than fifty countries out of one or two offices.

This raises the question of responsibility in the exercise of both the media and the humanitarian professions. Whose duty is it to investigate issues such as conflicts, epidemics and famine and to alert the international community to disasters in the making before they actually unleash their full effects? Is it the role of humanitarian organizations or that of the media to ring the alarm bell and draw attention to emergency situations?

In August 2005 John Birt, outgoing BBC Director-General, delivered the MacTaggart lecture in Edinburgh. He estimated that “the British broadcast and print journalism, like Parliament itself, performs a critical job — holding those in power to account day-by-day for those things plainly going wrong.” He went on to say “Our media are less good at something at least as important — pressing governments to do the right thing, to diagnose the deeper causes of our problems, many of which have been decades in the making, and to devise and to pursue robust long-term solutions to them.”<sup>5</sup>

The same statement can apply to issues of foreign policy inasmuch as humanitarian crises very often go unnoticed until they actually flare, with deadly consequences. The outbreak of the conflict in Darfur is a telling example; so is the famine in Niger in the summer of 2005. Numerous other situations come to mind and humanitarian agencies, including the ICRC have coined the term “forgotten conflicts” to describe the man-made disasters in remote areas of the planet.

Is it possible that change is in the offing with the emergence of citizen journalism and the soaring number of bloggers who provide firsthand accounts of life in some war zones where Internet connections are available? Salam Pax was a phenomenon during the invasion of Iraq in the spring of 2003 because he became the voice of the ordinary Baghdadis. Does it follow that bloggers can influence the political agenda of governments or that they can force a storyline onto the mainstream media?

On 26 December 2004, the BBC found itself overwhelmed by over fifty thousand text messages sent by people who had survived the tsunami in South-East Asia. There was no way this material could be edited and used for immediate coverage. The event had taken the world by surprise and reporters could only fly in to provide media coverage in the aftermath of the disaster. The established media networks quickly took over from the surge of private messages and demonstrated that news journalism requires a level of professionalism that goes beyond the mere fact of taking a picture of an event one happens to have witnessed.

5 *The Guardian*, 26 August 2005

In the wake of the explosions that rocked central London on 7 July 2005, there was no visible surge of citizen journalism in the UK, most likely because the British media are extremely diverse and cater to almost any conceivable need for information amongst the public.

The situation is completely different in South Korea, where the phenomenon of citizen journalism took root in 2000 when a frustrated journalist Oh Yeon Ho launched a platform that is now receiving contributions from tens of thousands of individuals. The Ohmynews site publishes stories about a wide variety of topics, including comments on current affairs such as the conduct of hostilities in Iraq. This Korean experiment has not remained unique. There are now a number of sites worldwide that aim at overcoming the limitations inherent to regular bloggers' pages by introducing a measure of professional editing before contributions are put online.

"These sites are changing the nature of news," said Elizabeth Lee, who launched iTalkNews. "Traditionally there has been a percolation from the top down. We want to see news that comes from the people, upwards. Our method is a way of providing news that is much more responsive to attitudes and concerns out there in the world."<sup>6</sup>

According to Professor Mary Kaldor of the London School of Economics, "global civil society is a platform inhabited by activists (or post-Marxists), NGOs and neo-liberals, as well as national and religious groups, where they argue about, campaign for (or against), negotiate about, or lobby for the arrangements that shape global developments. (...)The emergence of this phenomenon makes the term "international relations" much less appropriate."<sup>7</sup>

Against this rapidly changing backdrop on the stage of world events, the established media outlets are keenly aware of the urgency to restate their mandate and to live up to the expectations of fickle audiences. Rupert Murdoch, for one, said in April 2005 that "young people don't want to rely on the morning paper for their up-to-date information. They don't want to rely on a god-like figure from above to tell them what's important."<sup>8</sup> The great lady of the world's media, the respectable BBC itself, is considering plans to provide training to citizen journalists in the wake of the survivor reports of the 2004 Asian tsunami.

For all the fuss about new media, the fact that access to the Internet is by no means universal must be reckoned with. In many local armed conflicts, the victims mostly belong to the disenfranchised segments of society, live in remote areas and have no access to a telephone, let alone a computer.

And yet the technological gap may not be the main obstacle to the flow of information between deprived communities in Africa, Latin America or Asia and the global media networks. The editorial constraints in the newsroom are the real testing ground for the journalist who has witnessed terrible things in a

6 David Mattin, "We are changing the nature of news", *Media Guardian*, 15 August 2005.

7 Professor Mary Kaldor, "The idea of global civil society", Martin Wight Memorial Lecture, University of Essex, 31 October 2002.

8 Maureen Dowd, "Smoke gets in our news", *New York Times*, 20 April 2005.

corner of the earth that happens not to be on his editor's news agenda. Whilst the anger of a reporter calling from the scene of atrocities may at times be one-dimensional, it is the role of the editor to put it into perspective, not to dismiss it. Alas, the American newsroom truism remains scandalously true to this day: "One dead fireman in Brooklyn is worth five English bobbies, who are worth 50 Arabs, who are worth 500 Africans."

Is the humanitarian idealist plodding through a desolate refugee camp, the ICRC delegate striving to deliver medical equipment to a hospital emergency service swamped in the blood of bomb victims, in a better position to raise his voice and be heard "in a world of communication in which uninterrupted and instantaneous information flow is the norm?"<sup>9</sup>

### A crisis in the media?

In a lecture he delivered in Melbourne in October 2004, David Hare, the author of "Stuff Happens," a play about the diplomatic process leading up to the invasion of Iraq, argues that:

"Everyone is aware that television and newspapers have decisively disillusioned us, in a way which seems beyond repair, by their trivial and partial coverage of seismic issues of war and peace. (...) Front-page apologies in a couple of the more august American newspapers, admitting professional gullibility are hardly adequate..."

The unprecedented amount of attacks against the media in the past couple of years have triggered a wave of introspective articles and comments in the mainstream broadsheets that demonstrate that there is widespread concern about the media, both amongst newsmen and in society at large. Alan Rusbridger, editor of *The Guardian*, puts it down to "a convergence of presentational techniques, a sense that market forces increasingly determine content and a widespread feeling that newspapers are failing in their duty of truly representing the complexity of some of the most important issues."<sup>10</sup>

If there is a crisis, it may be as much about a generation gap as it is about national interests. There are those in the profession who remember the days when they thought they could make a difference and genuinely believed in the independence of the media, and there is a new media environment that they don't recognize. "I don't understand the business any more," says Seymour Hersh, "it is as if all words are weighted equal."<sup>11</sup> As for the national aspect of things, the emergence of global media networks in all major languages around the world have led to a "parochialization" of audiences, as everyone can connect to a news outlet that represents a culture they recognize as their own, be it

9 "This media tribe disfigures public life", address by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, at Lambeth Palace, 15 June 2005.

10 "This is not about name-calling, it is about scrutiny", commented Alan Rusbridger in the *Media Guardian*, 14 March 2005.

11 Seymour Hersh, "Scoop", *Times Literary Supplement*, 9 October 2004.

al-Jazeera or Fox News or anything in between. Major media conglomerates may not necessarily have a specific political take on every issue worldwide, but their business-driven agenda aims at upholding a corporate-friendly environment rather than challenging government policies on issues of justice and survival in the developing world.

It now seems to be an uphill battle for the public broadcasting service, where it exists, to maintain standards in the face of the corporate interests of global networks. Helen Boaden, Director of BBC News, recently said that she has a clear idea of what she expects from BBC news, especially its rolling news service. "I think News 24 is about being first, right and reliable. The danger with 24-hour news is that it becomes a rolling service of rumour and speculation and that is absolutely not what we want for News 24."<sup>12</sup>

When it comes to reporting on a hyped armed conflict, the 24-hour news system is quickly up against the problem of having to sustain its self-inflicted fast pace of "breaking news" to keep abreast with competitors. It does this at the risk of misrepresenting the actual developments on the ground. The offensive against Iraq in the spring of 2003 was the epitome of worldwide media frenzy. I recall occasions, whilst acting as ICRC spokesperson in Baghdad, when newscasters actually asked me in satellite phone interviews: "What is the most appalling sight you have seen in the past few hours?"

The problem with this kind of communication is that it deals in sound bites. It leads to a stereotyped language and carries the risk of misrepresenting reality, as everything one says is likely to end up as a sound bite. Every word counts, and that puts paid to any attempt at putting things into perspective and trying to make sense of events as they unfold.

## ICRC tongue-tied?

*Verba volant scripta manent*, the Romans believed. Words fly if spoken but remain if written. In today's media environment, it is more as though both can fly and take on a spin that an institution like the ICRC is permanently guarding itself against.

The Gordian knot of the ICRC's mission originates in its dual mandate under the Geneva Conventions. On the one hand, the ICRC has to elicit compliance with the provisions of international humanitarian law, while on the other it has to protect prisoners of war and other persons entitled to protection under that law. More often than not it therefore finds itself in the awkward position of having to limit itself to making confidential representations to the non-compliant party in an armed conflict and elude questions from the media.

A recent media advisory note circulated internally by an ICRC delegation illustrates this quasi-untenable position. It stresses that while visibility in the international media for the ICRC operation in country X is desirable, the

12 Matt Wells, "Have I got news for you", *Media Guardian*, 12 September 2005.

process of ensuring that visibility may not be, especially when the presence of accompanying teams of journalists is contrary to the image and identity projected by the ICRC within the country, an identity that is central to operational requirements of acceptance, access and security.

ICRC delegates set up camp in war-torn regions and deliver aid. At the same time, they endeavour to intercede with the warring parties in the hope of alleviating the unnecessary suffering of persons protected under the Geneva Conventions, namely prisoners of war and civilians not taking part in the hostilities. The ICRC's trademark has always been neutrality and impartiality, but these concepts remain open to interpretation by the parties to conflict. In many cases they tolerate the presence of ICRC delegates in the field, and especially in places of detention, only on condition that the ICRC neither publicizes its findings nor comments on the conduct of hostilities.

The conflict in the former Yugoslavia with its litany of horrors perpetrated between 1992 and 1995 in Bosnia, and in particular the massacre of Srebrenica, has brought to the fore the parameters of international humanitarian law. The deliberate contempt of the warring factions for specific provisions of the Geneva Conventions had the unintended consequence of alerting news reporters to the need to report on violations of international humanitarian law. The strongest possible case for respect for the Third Geneva Convention was in fact made when the infamous pictures of starved prisoners of war hit the front pages worldwide. It was certainly beyond the capacity of the ICRC to argue the case for the detainees it stood to protect.

## Shared dilemma

This is where the ICRC and the media face the same challenge, but from different sides, namely to explore the limits of their respective methodological approach. For the ICRC, it means having to decide, usually on a case-by-case basis, what the pros and cons of a public statement about a given situation would be. Is there any reason to believe that the plight of a group of individuals can be significantly improved — and lives can indeed sometimes be saved — by an official statement or an appeal that the media will circulate? Would such a move necessarily toll the bell for the end of the ICRC's presence and activity on the territory of the faction incriminated?

For the media it raises the question of determining whether journalists have a responsibility to report on armed conflicts in terms of what constitutes a violation of international humanitarian law, and if so, how should they go about it? Should journalists report factually on the perpetration of an illegal act of war in the same way as they would cover a regular criminal investigation? Or is it the role of journalists to engage in an agenda to uphold the principles of humanitarian law, to denounce violations thereof, to speak up on behalf of victims, to promote peace? The shift may be gradual, but taken to its logical conclusion it turns journalists into advocates and militants.

Civic journalism has been a debatable concept since the end of the Cold War, bearing in mind that it has historically been a type of journalism employed on both sides of the Iron Curtain in support of diametrically opposed political agendas. Soviet officials used it to give legitimacy to their control of the press, whereas US-sponsored radio programmes used it to reach out across the borders and promote a liberal agenda in the Eastern bloc.

The build-up of the military campaign to topple the Iraqi regime provides a more recent example of the risks of partisan media coverage. Independent TV networks such as Fox News adopted a definite pro-war line, whereas al-Jazeera went on hosting the Iraqi Minister of Information unquestioningly until the last hours before the fall of Baghdad.

This was in stark contrast to the professional code of conduct stipulating that “decisions are made only for good editorial reasons, not as a result of improper pressure, be it political, commercial or special interest.”<sup>13</sup> Some media may have fallen prey to the temptation to cater to the chauvinistic expectations of their audience, but for others the war on Iraq was a litmus test for the independence of editorial decision-making. The BBC has had to struggle through a series of inquiry commissions to live up to its own commitment of integrity.

In accordance with its neutrality, the ICRC has no say with regard to the reasons why nations or factions go to war with each other. It cannot comment on the legitimacy of one political discourse versus another, but it does remind governments and their armed forces of their duty to enforce rules of engagement that are compatible with the provisions of international humanitarian law. Before the onset of hostilities in Iraq in March 2003, it made representations to the governments of all the Coalition countries and to the Iraqi government. This move was public and the Financial Times and Le Monde agreed to publish an editorial penned by the Director-General of the ICRC.

So far, so good. There is a similarity between the neutrality of the ICRC and the editorial integrity and independence of the media. In terms of ideals, both the press and the humanitarians are free to decide for themselves what roles they choose to play as independent agents. The reality test comes in the form of the moral dilemma they encounter as they try to act professionally in the midst of increasingly complex emergencies in war zones.

War reporters may at times perceive ICRC delegates in the field as being excessively secretive, but old hands at war reporting will in general value the remarkable reliability of the ICRC as a source of information. The relationship between an independent humanitarian agency, such as the ICRC, and independent media cannot be one in which either party attempts to make use of the other. On the contrary, if both face the same dilemma, there are certainly ways to share partly in the solutions.

It took the ICRC some time in the seventies and eighties to shed its institutionalized suspicion vis-à-vis the media. Now it is keenly aware of their potential to influence public opinion and ultimately the decisions of strategists

13 BBC Producers' Guidelines, p. 7.

and politicians during armed conflicts. Coverage of the mortar bomb attack on a Sarajevo market in February 1994 was instrumental in securing NATO's ultimatum to stop the bombardment of the city. BBC correspondent Martin Bell spoke of a journalism of "attachment," and went on to say that journalists "were drawn into this war as something other than witnesses and chroniclers of it. We were also participants."<sup>14</sup>

Journalists can therefore be partners in humanitarian endeavour by reporting appropriately on acts of war, i.e. by holding parties to conflict responsible under specific articles of the Geneva Conventions. They do not have to give up the objectivity and integrity of their reporting to do so. They merely need to be aware of the significance, from the point of view of international humanitarian law, of the facts they report. More than one journalist has learnt this lesson firsthand by reading the Geneva Conventions in long nights spent in bomb shelters in Sarajevo.

Ten years later, the world has moved on and a new United Nations declaration on "The Responsibility to Protect" is opening up new prospects. As many as 191 countries have agreed to a restatement of international law, namely that the world community has the right to take military action in the case of "national authorities manifestly failing to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity." This will not erase the memory of Bosnia and Rwanda, but it is an attempt at preventing the perpetration of such atrocities in the future.

## Representations and perceptions

"The mythic narrative of war is what most at home desire to see and hear. The reality of war is so revolting and horrifying that if we did see war it would be hard for us to wage it."<sup>15</sup>

The ambivalent nature of this hypothesis summarizes the complex attitude of the media and the public towards the representation of war. At a time when so-called "reality shows" are pervading television programmes worldwide, there has been a lot of debate about the broadcasting of images considered offensive.

To mark the 60th anniversary of the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima, the BBC broadcast "a powerful and disturbing 90-minute documentary drama" on what actually happened, with eyewitness accounts, original footage, computer graphics and full-scale reconstructions. The film tells the story of extreme trauma: the science, the politics, the mission, the blast, the fires, the after-effects.<sup>16</sup> The historical distance from the event enables the public to view this type of production as purely documentary and to cope with it as such: the phenomenon, for all its

14 Mark Thompson, *Forging War: The Media in Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Article 19, The Bath Press, Avon, 1994.

15 Chris Hedges, "On war", *New York Review of Books*, 16 December 2004.

16 Dart Centre for Journalism & Trauma, website visited on 2 September 2005.

ghastliness, is over. The film is informative, and for some of those concerned it might even help to bring closure, albeit too late for most.

The crude images shown of the beheading of hostages in Iraq had the reverse effect. Euronews, for one, broadcast the gruesome scene once and immediately withdrew it from its news bulletins when it clearly aroused widespread public revulsion. There was debate for weeks as to the nature of the taboo that renders the broadcasting of such images reprehensible — quite apart from their political exploitation, as al-Jazeera continued to use them for some time.

When Channel Four in the UK decided to tackle the issue of the mistreatment of prisoners in Guantanamo Bay, it took the innovative approach of actually recruiting volunteers willing to be subjected to solitary confinement, rigorous interrogations and other techniques reportedly used there. In that sense the film was not mere acting; it was as real as can be, given the fact that the volunteers could ask to step out if they felt they had reached their limits. Quite apart from the forcefulness of the demonstration (volunteers actually begged for mercy), the broadcasting of such scenes raises numerous questions as to the sensitivities of the public and the tendency of contemporary media to exploit them.

Once again, such a programme might have done more to build up a public opinion opposed to the practice of torture than official press releases of the ICRC or other human rights organizations. Yet this pragmatic utilitarian argument does not necessarily mean that such programmes are immune to moral questioning.

Whether this type of programme tends in the long term to desensitize the public to issues of violence, destruction and the perpetration of gross violations of fundamental rights in situations of conflict remains to be seen. “Yahoo, in its first big move into original online video programming, is betting that war and conflict will lure new viewers. It is now hiring Kevin Sites, a veteran television correspondent, to produce a multimedia Web site that will report on wars around the world. Mr Sites said he hoped that Yahoo users understood that what he was doing was different from the mass of opinion blogs and other Web sites. We are a journalistic entity, he said, trying to do things in a responsible way you don’t always see on the Internet.”<sup>17</sup>

As was said earlier, the Geneva Conventions belong to the international community. Neither the ICRC nor journalists have a monopoly on their interpretation, but each has a specific responsibility to engage with those who are ultimately accountable for compliance with the provisions of international humanitarian law.

The ICRC is mandated to act as a neutral intermediary between parties to armed conflicts, and on behalf of persons protected under the Geneva Conventions. “The traditional watchdog function requires media to report on disregard for the law, especially if that is the attitude of a State or an institution supported by taxpayer’s money.”<sup>18</sup>

17 Saul Hansell, “Yahoo hires journalist to report on wars”, *New York Times*, 12 September 2005.

18 Roy W. Gutman, “Spotlight on violations of international humanitarian law”, *International Review of the Red Cross*, No. 325, December 1998, p. 619.

Active neutrality on the part of the ICRC and editorial integrity on the part of the media will probably be a tough call in the years to come, but neither the ICRC nor the war reporter can afford to ignore it.