

2.1.6 Non-government Organisations (NGOs)

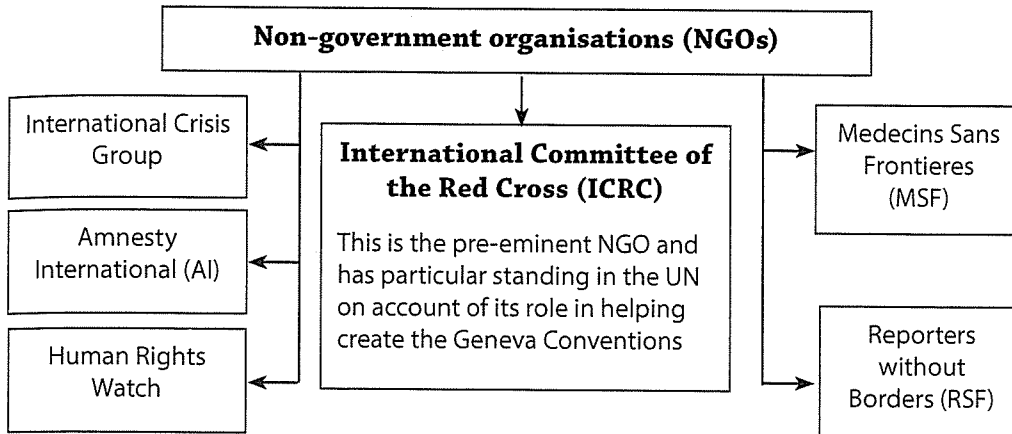


Figure 7 A summary of the main NGOs

Non-government organisations (NGOs) are special interest organisations that focus on particular issues and seek to ameliorate the issues and to raise broad public awareness about the issues. NGOs are independent organisations and many of them are very well known and use the media to great effect.

These are organisations which may or may not be considered political in nature and operate outside of the government. They include Amnesty International, the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement and Medecins Sans Frontieres ('Doctors without Borders'), the International Crisis Group and Human Rights Watch. NGOs are increasingly important and under the UN Charter are consulted with where relevant. NGOs are special interest based, non-violent in nature and have become very powerful lobby groups that can gather information, provide assistance and use the media to great effect in order to draw attention to problems of world order, or inconsistencies between State and international law.

The independence of NGOs

A crucial aspect of NGOs is that they remain free from government and particular political influence. This aspect makes NGOs non-aligned and therefore they can carry out their work without generally being considered politically biased and without being allied with any particular nation State or ideology.

The independence of NGOs ensures that State sovereignty will not be under threat from the work of NGOs.

World In Order 10 The Work of NGOs



Two very important NGOs are the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement and Medecins Sans Frontieres ('Doctors without Borders').

Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement (ICRC)

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is the world's largest humanitarian organization, with 186 member National Societies. As part of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, our work is guided by seven fundamental principles: humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality.

Source: <http://www.ifrc.org/>

This is a particularly important NGO because of its early roots and relationship to the United Nations. The Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement began initially in 1863 as the International Committee for Relief of the Wounded. The early work of this organisation led to the development of the subsequent Geneva Conventions. The Movement itself grew and is now the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) that has UN sanction to provide medical aid and supplies to war torn areas. The ICRC is independent of government and is primarily focussed on upholding, creating and developing international humanitarian law. Examples of relatively recent (August 2010) humanitarian works of the ICRC movement include:

- Assisting in efforts to relieve suffering due to monsoon flooding in Pakistan
- Assisting to relieve victims of bushfires in the Russian Federation, and
- Humanitarian aid for victims of Cyclone Hubert in Madagascar

The Red Crystal

Since 2005 the ICRC has changed its symbol to that of a crystal ('diamond'). The symbol is intended to remove any implied reference to religion that can be 'read into' the use of a cross (Christianity) or Crescent (Islam).

Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF)

This is one of the largest and most active organisations that supplies emergency medical aid to victims of war, disasters and epidemics. Médecins Sans Frontières is an international, independent, medical humanitarian organisation that delivers emergency aid to people affected by armed conflict, epidemics, healthcare exclusion and natural or man-made disasters. MSF, like the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, is independent of government, religions and economic powers in order to remain impartial and have access to people who need help in any nation. Funding comes from donations from private individuals. MSF also aims to ensure that international humanitarian law is upheld.

Source: <http://www.msf.org/>

The International Crisis Group

This is another extremely important NGO working to assist in resolving global conflict through analysis and reporting as well as through assisting in mediation through negotiations with conflicting parties.

World In Order 11 The International Crisis Group (ICG)

The International Crisis Group is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation (NGO) committed to preventing and resolving deadly conflict.

- The Crisis Group was founded in 1995. By 2011 it had an annual budget of US\$17m
- It has some 130 permanent staff worldwide, from 49 nationalities speaking 47 languages
- It has covered over 60 conflict and potential conflict situations
- Annually it publishes around 80 reports and briefings
- It has published over 1,000 full-length reports and briefings since 1995
- The Crisis Group published over 200 opinion pieces annually

The International Crisis Group is now generally recognised as the world's leading independent, non-partisan, source of analysis and advice to governments, and intergovernmental bodies like the United Nations (UN), European Union (EU) and World Bank, on the prevention and resolution of deadly conflict. ICG work has been applauded by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan ('a global voice of conscience, and a genuine force for peace'), former U.S. President Bill Clinton ('in the most troubled corners of the world, the eyes, the ears and the conscience of the global community'), and the President of the European Commission Jose Manuel Barroso ('a highly influential and inspiring voice in the field of conflict prevention').

Source: <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/about.aspx>; accessed on 27th July 2011

Human Rights Watch

World in Order 12 Human Rights Watch (HRW)

Human Rights Watch is one of the world's leading independent organisations dedicated to defending and protecting human rights. By focusing international attention where human rights are violated, HRW gives voice to the oppressed and hold oppressors accountable for their crimes. For more than 30 years, Human Rights Watch has worked to lay the legal and moral groundwork for deep-rooted change and has fought to bring greater justice and security to people around the world.

Mission Statement

Human Rights Watch is dedicated to protecting the human rights of people around the world. HRW stands with victims and activists to prevent discrimination, to uphold political freedom, to protect people from inhumane conduct in wartime, and to bring offenders to justice. HRW investigates and exposes human rights violations and holds abusers accountable. HRW challenges governments and those who hold power to end abusive practices and respect international human rights law.

Source: <http://www.hrw.org/about>; accessed on 27th July 2011

Amnesty International

Amnesty International, founded in 1961 by British lawyer Peter Benenson, is a global movement of more than 3 million supporters, members and activists in more than 150 countries and territories who campaign to end grave abuses of human rights. Its vision is for every person to enjoy all the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and other international human rights standards. Amnesty International is independent of any government, political ideology, economic interest or religion and is funded mainly by our membership and public donations.

Source: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/who-we-are/history>

Reporters Without Borders (RSF)

Every day, reporters face threats of censorship, danger or death in carrying out their jobs of informing others. **Reporters Without Borders** (RSF – Reporters sans frontieres) is there to investigate their cases, expose the limits on press freedom and support journalists who are being persecuted. RSF is **the largest press freedom organisation in the world**, with over 120 correspondents across the globe. Founded in 1985, RSF has been working to protect and defend journalists for nearly 30 years.

Reporters Without Borders:

- **defends** journalists and media assistants imprisoned or persecuted for doing their job and exposes the mistreatment and torture of them in many countries.
- **fight**s against censorship and laws that undermine press freedom.
- **gives** financial aid each year to journalists or media outlets in difficulty (to pay for lawyers, medical care and equipment) as well to the families of imprisoned journalists.
- **works** to improve the safety of journalists, especially those reporting in war zones.

In some countries **a journalist can be thrown in prison for years for a single offending word or photo**. Jailing or killing a journalist removes a vital witness to events and threatens the right of us all to be informed. Reporters Without Borders has fought for press freedom on a daily basis since it was founded in 1985.

Source: <http://en.rsf.org/introduction-24-03-2011,32617.html>

Review Activities – Non-government organisations (NGOs)

1. Define the term Non-government Organisation (NGO).
2. Explain the importance of the neutrality and independence of NGOs
3. Identify FIVE (5) NGOs.
4. What do the following letters denote?
 - a. ICRC
 - b. NGO
 - c. MSF
 - d. ICG
 - e. AI
 - f. RSF
 - g. UN
 - h. HRW
 - i. EU
 - j. UDHR
5. Discuss the aims and goals of the ICRC.
6. Explain whether you think the use of a red crystal as a symbol is appropriate for an independent, humanitarian NGO.
7. Who are MSF and what are their aims?
8. Who are the International Crisis Group and what are their aims?
9. Why is an organisation like Human Rights Watch important to global peace and order?
10. Outline the vision for Amnesty International.
11. How would Reporters Without Borders (RSF) protect peace and security in different nations?