

WXPost
Red Cross
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Criticizes
Baby Lift

From News Dispatches

Adoption of South Vietnamese children and the process by which they are identified for adoption is not being done according to Geneva Convention laws governing protection of civilians, a spokesman for the International Red Cross said yesterday in Geneva.

According to the spokesman, the Convention provides that education of such children should be provided where possible by persons of the cultural tradition.

Parties in the conflict, he said, are required to take all necessary measures to ascertain family ties of children under 12 years of age and certify them for adoption.

"All these conditions do not appear to be being fulfilled in adoptions at present being carried out in various countries of the world, because children are being taken away from their cultural milieu," the spokesman said.

Conditions under which the children are leaving Saigon will make complete identification of the children difficult unless Red Cross officials in welcoming countries take step to remedy the situation immediately, he said.

According to the spokesman, the 1949 convention permits provision of temporary homes for war children but forbids "formal and definitive adoption such as is being practiced now when everyone wants to import Vietnamese children."

The convention lays down certain "guarantees" for receiving and housing children under age 15 in a neutral country while conflict lasts, he said.

They stipulated in particular that children who had been orphaned or separated from their families should not be left on their own, that every effort should be

made for their upkeep and their education and that opportunity should be provided for practice of their religion.

In Saigon, the anti-government Buddhist An Quang Pagoda criticized the government yesterday for its "mass evacuation" of orphans and demanded that they be returned to South Vietnam as soon as peace is restored.

In a communique, the venerable Tri Thu said, "The government used a humanitarian pretext for political ends whose deplorable consequence was the death of nearly 200 children in the air crash April 4 near Saigon."

The evacuation is "a shameful act which risks killing their patriotic ardor forever," the communique said.

The South Vietnamese government has come under severe criticism from many Vietnamese, particularly members of the opposition to President Thieu, for sending the children abroad.

For a variety of cultural, religious and political reasons, most Vietnamese officials oppose sending the children from orphanages in Vietnam to foreign countries.

No war orphans were abroad five U.S. Air Force C-141 Starlifter planes which flew into Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines yesterday with 114 adults and children, mostly Americans.

In Peking, a report in the Chinese press yesterday described the airlift of South Vietnamese children to the United States as an abduction, not mentioning that the children are orphans or that many of them were fathered by American servicemen, John Burns of the Toronto Globe and Mail reported.

A Hsinhua news agency dispatch carried by most papers in the country citing a statement from Hanoi reported the evacuation under the headline "United States condemned for abducting South Vietnamese children."

In Phnom Penh, a U.S. embassy spokesman said talks were under way with the Cambodian government to airlift as many as 750 children a day out of the besieged city.