

## Soldiers: Fight for the Good

The role of the soldier is greater than we assume. It is not just to follow orders, to defend the nation, to act with courage. It is more than fighting for what they believe. All this is good, but not good enough. Soldiers can do much more for their nation and for humanity, if they retain their humanity, including their intelligence, conscience, and goodwill.

Large-scale organized conflict depends on the masses doing what they are told, by politicians, military officials, and the electorate. That is where we have to act. There is always a place for the intelligence and conscience of the individual.

Many soldiers are quite idealistic, willing to sacrifice their very lives for a cause they believe in. But let's make sure that cause is a good one. And let's make sure that they use their courage, their willingness to fight and to sacrifice, for a cause that is truly worthy.

Let's begin by recognizing that there is a goal more important than victory or national interest. That is, there is something that supercedes our personal interests. How can we find out what that is? Well, at a minimum, we should give it a try. That means exploring the world around us and the consequences of our actions. To begin, soldiers should try to understand the nature of the conflicts in which they are involved, including the suffering, grievances and needs of all sides. They should think about the effects of what they do on others – on the opposing side, on your own society, and on themselves.

Understanding is a first step, but certainly not enough. We need to find a resolution to the conflict. Not just a negotiated settlement, but a resolution that brings opposing sides together. That overcomes hatred and recognizes the opponent as brothers and sisters.

Putting an end to the cycle of ignorance and misunderstanding is a grand task. While still doing their duty, soldiers can use force for protection, assistance, and building, rather than merely aggression. They can act with understanding, compassion, and courage, fighting not just for victory, but for a lasting and meaningful resolution to conflict.

### Principles

- There is a standard higher than national victory.
- Take responsibility for your actions as a soldier.
- Be sensitive to your own humanity and the humanity of your opponents.
- Accept costs to oneself. Be willing to sacrifice.
- Understand the causes of the conflict and the suffering, grievances and needs of all sides.
- Join with friend and foe, soldier and civilian.