

# INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

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## INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE'S ACTION IN THE YEMEN

After several months of relative calm, a renewal of fighting has been reported in North East Yemen, a region in which is located the field hospital established by the International Committee of the Red Cross last November.

This new situation has resulted in an influx of seriously wounded which renders the task of the medical team, now under Dr. de Puoz, even more difficult. The hospital's capacity has already been exceeded with eighty Yemenis undergoing treatment and the doctors are consequently obliged only to admit the most serious cases from now on. The sick and lightly wounded are cared for at the policlinic. Two months ago these amounted to 40 a day. Now 160 or more are given daily treatment there.

### *Great difficulties*

Fairly fresh temperatures in December and January have been followed by intense heat in the Yemen desert. During the day more than 40° C has been recorded in the hospital tents. The Head of the ICRC mission recently wrote: "The problem will soon become serious and only the very robust will be able to endure this climate".

Such heat has in fact increased the difficulties of water supply, daily requirements having risen from 3,500 to 9,000 litres within a few weeks. Since the nearest well is more than 25 miles from the hospital and as it is not possible for the water truck to make many additional journeys, the medical team has been obliged to ration water.

*German and French doctors.* — In response to an appeal launched some time ago by the ICRC, the German Red Cross in the Federal

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Republic of Germany placed two persons at its disposal, Dr. Ernesto Fernandez Ruiz de Villegas and male nurse Wolfgang Jungbluth, who arrived at the Uqhd hospital at the end of February.

Two doctors delegated by the French Red Cross, Dr. Maximilien Récamier and Dr. Jean Pascal Grellety-Bosviel have been working there since March 23.

These two teams have been placed under the control of the International Committee and will increase the hospital's strength.

The British medical team, consisting of Dr. Colin Wilson-Pepper and male nurse Arnold Plummer, will for its part also be working at Uqhd, after having spent several weeks in the western fighting area. It will be replaced in that sector by Dr. Hans Rudolf Wolfensberger and male nurse Alfred Moser, who are both Swiss.

*Financing of the action.* — The financing of the medical mission in the Yemen and more especially of the hospital at Uqhd has been a serious problem for the International Committee for some considerable time.

At a time when this hospital is becoming more indispensable than ever to aid the victims of the conflict, the ICRC cannot now consider interrupting this great humanitarian task. It can, however, not pursue it unless it is able to count on considerable financial support from Switzerland and from other countries.

*Relief activity on the Republican side.* — With the end of Ramadan, the ICRC delegation in Sanaa, capital of the Arab Republic of the Yemen, renewed its "milk for children" action and is at present making a daily distribution to some 700 to 800 sick children and orphans. This is shortly expected to exceed 1000 in number. In addition to milk, gifts of cheese, medicines and tonics in tablet form are also now being distributed.

*Aid to prisoners.* — The ICRC is continuing to bring aid to prisoners of war and political detainees on both sides. At the El Radaa prison in Sanaa, capital of the Arab Republic of the Yemen, Mr. Charles de Blonay, delegate, has visited some thirty of these detained persons, who included six members of the Imam's family. Thanks to his knowledge of Arabic, he was able to talk

with them without witnesses and distributed relief to them. He then submitted a report to the detaining authorities on the observations he had made during his visit.

On the Royalist side as well, the ICRC sees to the prisoners' conditions. It made representations with a view to assuring the safety of captives in certain areas near the fighting zone.

*Transmission of messages.* — In this conflict, as in so many others in the past, the ICRC is acting as intermediary between prisoners and their relations. It has in a number of cases already been able to transmit messages and thus allay the anxiety of families by informing them that someone dear to them, of whom they had been without news, is alive.

However, the ICRC continues to receive requests for news, demonstrating the anxiety felt by families. In some cases, contact has already been established, thanks to steps taken by the ICRC and its Central Tracing Agency.