

## THE REPATRIATION OF REFUGEES

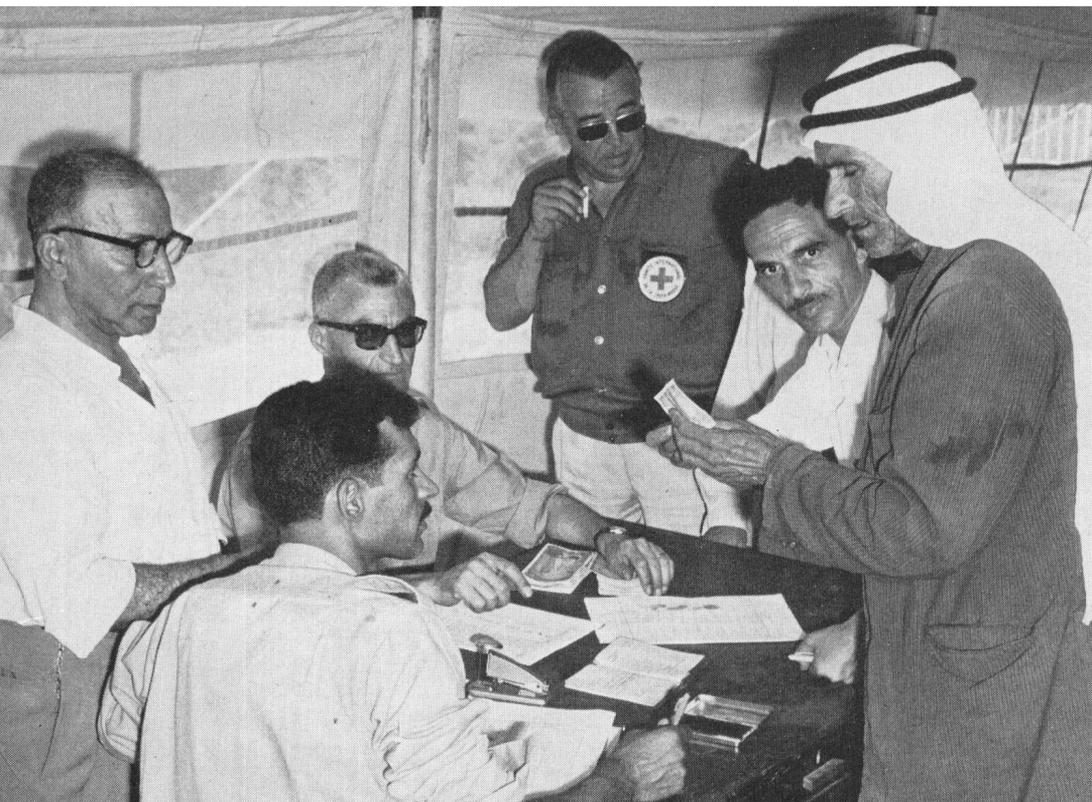


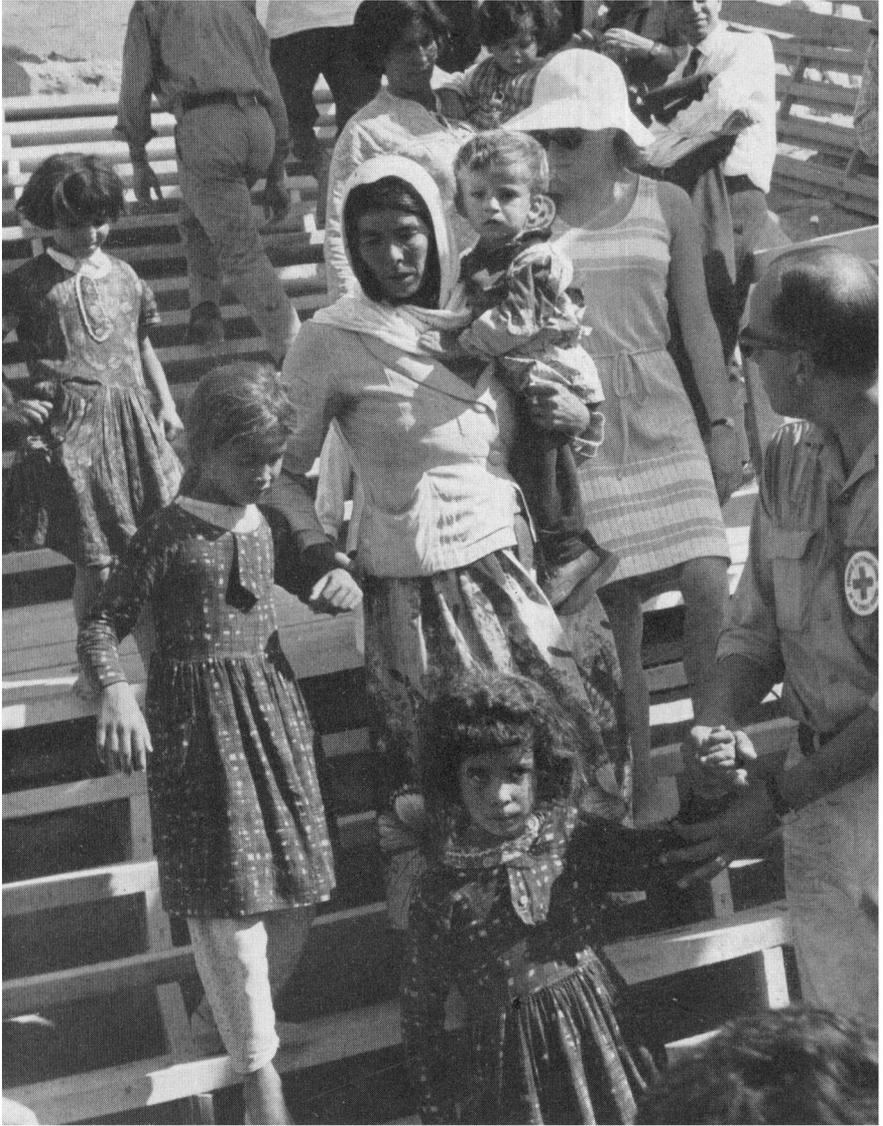
Refugees from Amman arriving near the Jordan.

Photos Albert Flouti, Amman.

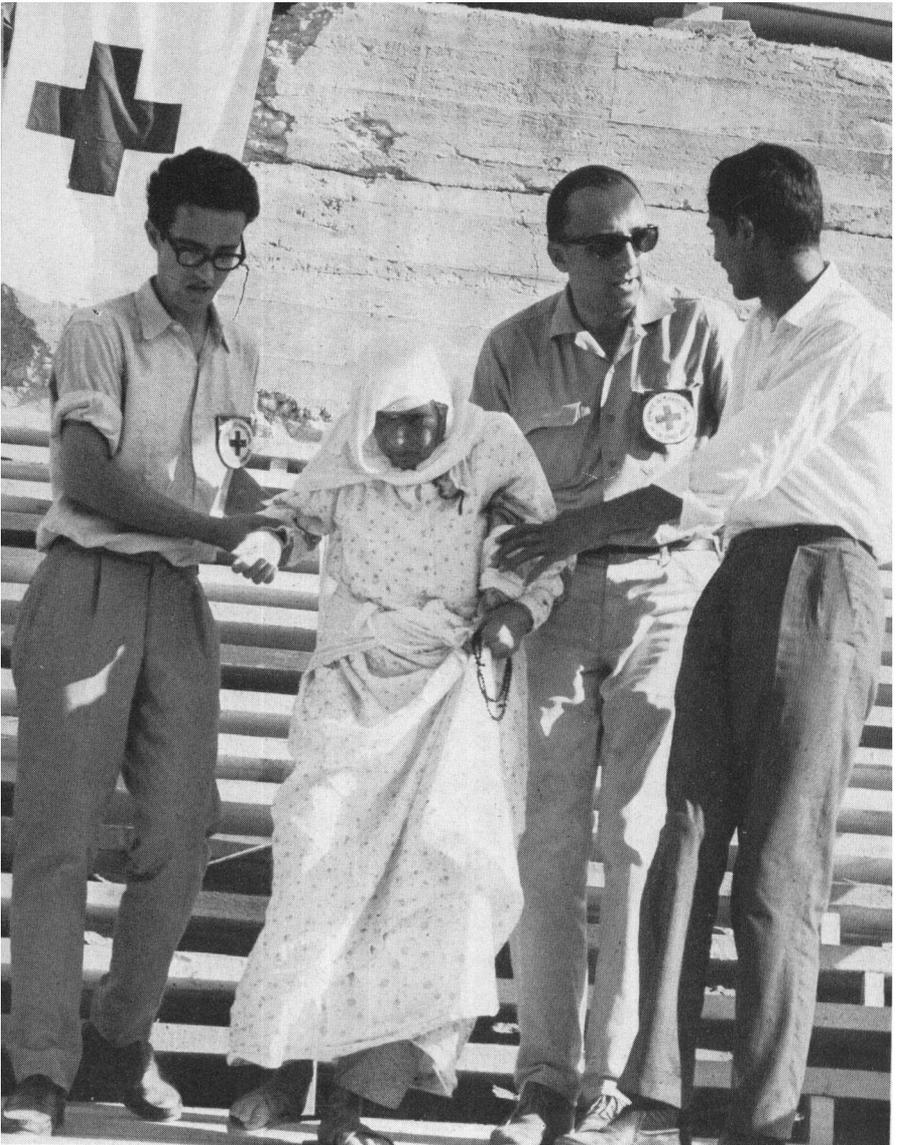


Repatriation operations in process.





With the help of the ICRC's delegates...



... the first refugees crossing a bridge over the river.

# INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

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## **The International Committee's action in the Near East**

In July and August 1967, the *International Review* published general articles on the development of the relief action which the ICRC has undertaken in the Near East countries since the beginning of hostilities.

It is worth describing the situation of various categories of war victims for whom the ICRC has intervened up to August 1967.

**On behalf of prisoners and detainees.** — The ICRC has actively intervened, under the terms of the Geneva Conventions, in order to arrange for the return home of prisoners of war and detainee civilians.

A total of 226 seriously wounded Egyptian and Jordanian prisoners has so far been repatriated by means of a DC4 aircraft chartered by the ICRC.

On August 10, 33 civilian Lebanese imprisoned by the Israelis were able to return to their homes, whilst one pilot and three Israeli civilians held in the Lebanon were handed over to the Israeli authorities.

The delegates of the ICRC in the Gaza area also intervened in repatriation operations of women and children to the United Arab Republic.

A reciprocal repatriation of Israeli and Jordanian prisoners had previously taken place.

In addition, 361 Syrian prisoners and 328 civilians requested by Syria were repatriated on July 17 under ICRC auspices. The

Syrian authorities, for their part, handed over one Israeli prisoner of war and three civilians to the Israeli authorities.

By the end of August 1967, there remained in Israel 3,503 Egyptian prisoners of war and 386 civilians asked for by Egypt; ten Israeli prisoners of war and six civilians requested by Israel are still in Egypt. These prisoners have, for the most part, been visited by the ICRC delegates, who can see to their treatment conforming to the Conventions' provisions. These delegates are also dealing with a lot of individual cases, aliens either possessing or not possessing domicile in territory under Israeli military control, consular representatives of various Arab countries still in detention, or families whose members have been separated as a result of the events of June.

**On behalf of civilians.**—The number of family messages transmitted by the delegates of the ICRC on the spot has now exceeded two hundred thousand. Four thousand civilian messages and three thousand requests for inquiries have been transmitted to the Central Tracing Agency in Geneva.

In addition, the difficult material situation in which many civilians find themselves in territory under Israeli military control has obliged the ICRC to intervene in a new sphere.

The disruption since last June of facilities for the remittance of funds from Arab countries to persons living West of the Jordan or in the Gaza Strip has given rise to considerable hardship.

In order to remedy this situation and assist the many families in need, the International Committee, in co-operation with the various authorities concerned, devised a system intended to permit the resumption of cash transfers to territories under Israeli control. A special ICRC account has been opened with a Swiss Bank in Geneva. Funds may be remitted to this account from all countries involved; they will be transferred for payment to beneficiaries through local banks in the main towns of West Jordan, the Gaza Strip, Sinai and Syrian territory under Israeli control.

Recipients receive payment in Israeli currency.

National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in the remitting countries have been informed by the ICRC so that they may make

known locally the arrangements for the resumption of cash remittances.

**The repatriation of refugees.**<sup>1</sup> — However, the most important event in August was the starting of a large-scale operation for the repatriation of refugees who left the West bank of the Jordan at the beginning of June to seek refuge on the other side of the river.

On August 6, 1967, an agreement was signed between Jordan and Israel, under ICRC auspices, in the execution of which the Geneva institution is assisting. This was described in the following press release of August 10, 1967:

*The agreement on the repatriation to territory under Israeli control of persons who have sought refuge on the East bank of the Jordan, concluded on August 6, 1967, between Jordan and Israel under the auspices of the International Committee of the Red Cross, will be put into effect with the help of that organization.*

*After having assumed the rôle of neutral intermediary and assisted the two parties concerned in order to reconcile their two respective points of view, the ICRC remains at their disposal to remove difficulties which may yet arise.*

*This agreement comprises the following provisions:*

- 1. Forms to be completed for requests of repatriation shall bear the title-heading of the International Committee of the Red Cross followed by the names of the two countries concerned.*<sup>2</sup>
- 2. The date fixed for return to the west bank of the Jordan has been extended to August 31.*
- 3. Persons submitting such requests must also present their passports, their UNRWA identity card (for refugees registered with that organization) and a Jordanian identity certificate or any other document considered to be acceptable by the Israeli authorities.*

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<sup>1</sup> *Plate.* — Refugees from Amman arriving near the Jordan. Repatriation operations in process.

With the help of the head of the ICRC delegation in Israel, Mr. L. Marti, and his colleagues, the first returning refugees cross a bridge over the river.

<sup>2</sup> *Folded inset.* — Form of application of repatriation, according to the agreement of August 6, 1967.

4. *The documents mentioned above should bear a photograph of the holder.*

*Forms when completed will be handed over on the Jordan bridge by the ICRC delegate in Jordan to the delegate of the ICRC in Israel. The latter will pass these to the Israeli authorities, who will examine them with the least possible delay. Once the examination has been terminated, the forms will then be handed back to the delegate, who will return them to the Jordanian authorities.*

*It has been arranged that the Jordanian authorities will see to the transporting of refugees as far as the east bank of the Jordan. The crossing of the river will be carried out in the presence of the ICRC delegates.*

*On their arrival on the west bank, refugees will be taken in charge by the Israeli authorities, who will ensure their transport to their former homes.*

*The delegation of the ICRC has made contact with the Director-General of UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees) in Beyrouth, who has offered to provide, if necessary, material and medical assistance to refugees when crossing the Jordan river.*

*Persons repatriated will receive a certain amount of food on returning to their homes. Furthermore, the Jordan Government will give them some funds to cover their emergency needs.*

On August 16, 1967, the repatriation of Jordanian refugees to the west bank of the Jordan started. It is being carried out with the help of ICRC delegates at two bridges over the Jordan (Allenby and Um al Sharot), one of which being allocated to refugees dependent on UNRWA.

On that date, the International Committee's delegates handed over for examination by the Israeli authorities 21,000 application forms for repatriation, representing 80,000 persons.

At the end of August, the operation was continuing, actively supported by the delegates of the ICRC. Informed, however, of the decision taken by the Israeli Government to maintain the expiry date of August 31 for the return of refugees to the west bank of the river Jordan, the International Committee appealed to the Israeli

Government to reconsider this decision and allow the continuation of this operation in view of the technical difficulties encountered on both sides of the Jordan. Large numbers who had submitted requests for repatriation had not yet received replies. In addition, amongst refugees whose return had been agreed there were many who were still waiting for means of crossing the river.

**Relief.** — The International Review has already published details of aid brought to the victims of war, in the form of material relief. This (books, clothing, blankets, etc.) whose amount continues to increase reached, from June to the end of August, a value of nearly four million Swiss francs emanating from a large number of National Societies, as well as from other sources. To this should be added relief of a far higher value which donors, belonging or not belonging to the Red Cross, sent to the beneficiary country direct.

The International Committee, as can be seen, remains present in the Near East and its work demands extensive representation on the spot. It has at present in the countries affected by the recent conflict, between twenty-six and thirty delegates and assistant delegates, placed under the control of Mr. Pierre Basset, delegate-general for the Near East, who replaced Mr. Pierre Gaillard on August 12.

The ICRC is thus represented in the UAR, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. The headquarters of the general delegation is in Nicosia. In Israel and in territories under Israeli control, the ICRC has established sub-delegations at Kuneitra, Jerusalem (two sub-delegations for the west bank of the Jordan, one north of Ramallah, the other to the south comprising Ramallah) and in Gaza (with residence at Ashqelon) for the Gaza area and Sinai. The delegates of the ICRC are everywhere giving indispensable aid in distressful circumstances where large numbers of the war victims are living.

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