

## **Financing the International Committee**

To cover its operational expenditure, the International Committee of the Red Cross receives regular contributions from the Governments which signed the Geneva Conventions and from National Red Cross Societies, besides which there are donations and legacies. It also has the income yielded by the management of its funds.

Government participation in the financing of the ICRC is based on Resolution XI of the 1949 Diplomatic Conference in Geneva, which reads thus: "Whereas the Geneva Conventions require the International Committee of the Red Cross to be ready at all times and in all circumstances to fulfil the humanitarian tasks entrusted to it by these Conventions, the Conference recognizes the necessity of providing regular financial support for the International Committee of the Red Cross".

The Swiss Government makes larger contributions than any other. From five hundred thousand francs per year for 1950 to 1964, its annual contribution rose to one million francs from 1965 to 1967, and then to 2.5 million from 1968 to 1971. In addition to its basic contribution, it has made various extraordinary contributions, according to the commitments the ICRC has had to assume.

As from 1972, therefore, a new system of contributions has been instituted under a Swiss Federal Order of 9 March 1972.

This system provides:

- (a) for an annual contribution of 7.5 million francs instead of the former 2.5 million;
- (b) for possible supplementary annual contributions of up to 5 million, to cover expenditure of a temporary nature.

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## INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE

If it is to fulfil the humanitarian duties assigned to it by the Geneva Conventions, the ICRC must in some circumstances call for additional staff, recruited for a limited period which may range from three months to one year, be extended or curtailed.

This staff, composed mainly of temporary delegates, is recruited in business, medical or university circles, and makes an appreciable effort in favour of the ICRC.

This procedure was chosen in order to avoid the permanent maintenance of a heavy administrative machinery in Geneva. It is being applied for an initial period of four years, from 1972 to 1975, in accordance with the provisions of the Federal Order referred to above.

All operational expenditure is thus covered by clearly specified receipts in no way connected with any donations made for the relief of victims.

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Under the present distribution of work between Red Cross bodies, the ICRC does not take action in cases of natural disaster. This is the field of National Red Cross Societies, whose activities in such circumstances are co-ordinated by the League of Red Cross Societies.

The ICRC acts mainly in cases of international conflict, civil war or internal disturbances. The relief it is called upon to supply in such cases is partly financed by the yearly collection in Switzerland from 25 August to 25 September.

The proceeds of the collection are entirely allocated to relief programmes, and no deduction is made for any overhead expenditure. Yet the sums collected do not cover all such programmes. This is where donations and legacies come in, made for specific purposes such as the Vietnam conflict, aid to Bengalis or aid to the victims of the Middle East conflict.

The strict use made of the funds collected is one of the basic principles of the ICRC's financial administration. The application of this principle may, in extreme cases, go as far as a refund where the ICRC is unable to fulfil the donor's wishes.

Finally, there are the occasional large-scale relief actions in major conflicts involving expenditure: Nigeria (1967-1970), Jordan (1970), Bangladesh (1971-1972), etc. So large is ICRC commitment in such situations that *ad hoc* financing is imperative. A plan of action and a budget are then submitted to Governments and National Red Cross Societies with the request that they ensure financing.

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## **El Arish – Mecca**

### **through the Red Cross**

*During a mission to the Middle East, Miss Françoise Bory, ICRC press attaché, went to the occupied territory of Gaza-Sinai. Here she describes an ICRC action about which hardly anything is known: that of opening the road to Mecca for pilgrims.*

It is the duty of every practising Muslim to go on a pilgrimage to one of the five places sacred to his religion at least once in his lifetime.

It is no easy matter for the inhabitants of Gaza-Sinai occupied territory to fulfil that desire. They hold Egyptian identity papers and therefore require an official permit from the occupation authorities before they can go to an Arab country.

They therefore turn to the International Committee of the Red Cross. During the month of December, 721 persons anxious to go on a pilgrimage to Mecca applied to the ICRC delegation in Gaza, through the local chapter at El Arish. The ICRC delegation promptly contacted the Israeli authorities and the ICRC delegation in Cairo with a view to organizing the trip for them.