

# INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

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## *EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES*

### **Middle East**

#### **Assistance to the Libyan aircraft victims**

On 21 February 1973, a Libyan airliner was brought down in the Sinai desert.

The ICRC promptly offered the authorities concerned its services for the transmission of information regarding the victims, and asked to be allowed to visit the survivors.

On 22 February, ICRC delegates went to Beersheba hospital where they saw the injured. Further visits were made on 27 and 28 February. All the information obtained on the condition of the survivors was immediately conveyed to the various authorities.

At the request of the governments concerned, the remains of 90 Arab passengers from the Libyan aircraft were handed over to the authorities of the Arab Republic of Egypt on 23 February. The operation took place on the Suez Canal. The body of a child subsequently found in what remained of the aircraft was also conveyed across the Suez Canal on 4 March 1973.

#### **Visits to prisoners of war**

ICRC delegates in Israel and in Arab countries, over the past few weeks, have made several visits to prisoners of war and, as usual, interviewed them privately.

*In Israel*, the 109 Arab prisoners of war (58 Egyptians, 41 Syrians and 10 Lebanese) held in a military camp prison were visited on 14 and 28 February 1973 and the five Syrian officers on 19 February.

*In the Arab Republic of Egypt*, the ten Israeli prisoners of war in a military prison were visited on 5 and 19 February 1973.

*In Syria*, the ICRC delegate visited the three Israeli prisoners of war on 1 and 14 February.

### **Operations on the Suez Canal**

On 14 February 1973, a family reuniting operation took place on the Suez Canal, under the auspices of the ICRC; 105 persons joined their people in the Arab Republic of Egypt and 63 crossed the canal in the other direction. The ICRC delegates were in the Canal zone the previous day, when 91 Egyptians from the Sinai returned from their pilgrimage to Mecca at the end of 1972, as recently announced in *International Review*.

## **Asian sub-continent**

### **Bangladesh**

ICRC delegates visited, at the end of January 1973, seventy-four Pakistani prisoners of war in the central prison of Dacca. They were not, however, permitted to converse in private with the prisoners.

### **India**

*Repatriation of prisoners.*—On 19 February, the ICRC repatriated 179 seriously wounded or sick Pakistanis (162 POWs and 17 civilians) across the Indo-Pakistani frontier post of Wagah. This was the first repatriation by train and ambulance.

At the same time, the ICRC delegates in Pakistan handed their colleagues in India some 3,000 parcels for Pakistani prisoners of war.

*Visit to seamen and other civilians.*—From 5 to 10 February, ICRC delegates in India were in the Meerut camp visiting Pakistani merchant seamen and other civilians.

### **Pakistan**

*Assistance to Bengali communities.*—The ICRC helps the Bengali communities in Pakistan, especially at Karachi, Islamabad, Peshawar

war and Lahore. Over the last few weeks, it has distributed six tons of CSM (corn-soya-milk), three tons of powdered milk, medicaments and small sums of money to needy persons.

*Mail for prisoners and detainees.*—In January, the Tracing Agency's office in Islamabad received from New Delhi 75 mailbags containing 904,845 letters from Pakistani prisoners of war in India, and 5 mailbags from Bangladesh containing 28,873 family messages for Bengali civilians and servicemen in Pakistan. The Islamabad office forwarded 33 bags containing 322,814 letters to New Delhi for distribution to Pakistani prisoners of war. It also sent to Dacca 7 bags containing 15,295 family messages from Bengali civilians and servicemen in Pakistan.

### **Delegate-General's mission in Asia**

On 4 March 1973, the ICRC Delegate-General for Asia, Mr. Jean Ott, returned from a several-week mission which took him to Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, the Republic of Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, Malaysia and Sri Lanka.

In each country he had many discussions with government authorities and National Society leaders on current problems. In addition, several working meetings were held in the countries where the ICRC maintains delegations.