

# INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

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## EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES

### Middle East

#### Lebanon <sup>1</sup>

Throughout July and the first few days of August the ICRC was greatly concerned about the wounded in the Palestinian camp, Tel al-Zaatar. It tried repeatedly to obtain from all parties to the fighting their agreement to the removal of the casualties from the camp, which had been under siege since the end of June.

After several attempts which failed because the cease-fire agreements were not respected, Mr. J. Hoefliger, head of the ICRC delegation in Lebanon, and two other delegates, one of whom was a doctor, managed to enter the camp on 23 July: some thousand wounded were in a desperate situation; medical supplies were exhausted; gangrene and tetanus were rife; the shortage of water aggravated the risk of epidemics. It was apparent that a cease-fire lasting several days would be necessary for the evacuation operation; not the least of the difficulties was the need to clear the road to the camp and make it practicable for lorries and ambulances.

Yet the fighting did not stop; it was resumed as soon as the ICRC delegates had left the camp.

The ICRC redoubled its efforts to induce the parties to make arrangements and give orders to their troops so that the urgently required evacuation operation might take place.

A further attempt to remove the wounded failed on 29 July, because again the essential minimum conditions for the safety of the victims and their rescuers were not provided. Finally, the operation began on 3 August. On the first day 91 casualties were removed on stretchers to the camp entrance where ICRC lorries and ambulances were waiting to take them to the "Palestinian Red Crescent" hospital in the basement of the Arab University in West Beirut.

Next day a further 243 casualties were taken to the same hospital.

However, on 6 August, the third trip had to be called off, and only 74 people were evacuated in distressing circumstances. The population of the camp gave way to panic when the ICRC convoy arrived. Hundreds

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<sup>1</sup> *Plate.*

of men, women and children rushed out of the camp onto the football pitch where the lorries and ambulances were parked, and fought to clamber aboard.

At the same time, snipers began to fire on the wounded people lying on stretchers. Four of these helpless casualties were hit. The ICRC vehicles finally managed to leave with their wounded and with some civilians who clung to them.

The situation being so grave, the ICRC, after consulting its delegates in Lebanon, decided to stop the evacuation operation. It conveyed its decision to the parties and stated that the only genuinely humanitarian solution would be to remove not only the wounded but the whole civilian population from the besieged camp.

Negotiations to that end were begun, but on 12 August Tel al-Zaatar fell. In dramatic circumstances the delegation managed to convey to the "progressive" zone about a thousand Palestinian civilians who had fled Tel al-Zaatar and were in the Christian Dekouane sector.

The ICRC wishes to point out that most of the negotiations for the evacuation of Tel al-Zaatar were carried out in close co-operation with the Arab League representative in Lebanon, Mr. Hassan Sabri Al Kholi.

During the three trips to remove the wounded, the ICRC was helped by volunteers from the Lebanese Red Cross and the "Palestinian Red Crescent" and by drivers who in transporting and looking after the wounded showed courage of a high order.

The ICRC delegation pursued its negotiations with all the parties to the conflict with the aim of ensuring that prisoners would be treated in conformity with the principles underlying the Geneva Conventions. Assurances with respect to those principles were given to the delegation, which on 14 August visited about 80 Palestinian combatants held by the Phalangists.

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The *ICRC hospital* in Beirut (operated by 14 doctors and nurses from the Danish, Finnish, Norwegian and Swedish National Red Cross Societies) was kept very busy, as may be seen from the following figures covering the period from 8 to 14 August:

Outpatients . . . . .	849
Major operations . . . . .	18
Minor operations . . . . .	147
Physiotherapy patients . . . . .	122
Patient-nights . . . . .	344

From 6 July, when the airlift started, to 11 August, the aircraft chartered by the ICRC made thirty-six flights between Larnaca and Beirut and carried about 370 tons of relief supplies.

During that same period thirteen consignments were sent by sea to Jounieh and one to Tripoli; altogether 323 tons were shipped.

From the time when relief operations in Lebanon began in the autumn of 1975 to 13 August 1976, the ICRC sent some 1,260 tons of relief supplies (medical supplies of all kinds, foodstuffs, blankets and clothes) to a value of 10.4 million Swiss francs.

As always, the ICRC endeavoured to come to the aid of all the victims on both sides, without making any discrimination. It should be mentioned that it was possible to provide aid only thanks to the contributions from numerous governments, National Societies and various international organizations in response to ICRC appeals.

The ICRC delegation in Lebanon received in July over 4,300 enquiries about missing persons.

## Africa

### Angola

As mentioned in the June 1976 issue of *International Review*, the ICRC phased out in that month its assistance programme in Angola, following talks with the Angolan Government.

From the time the ICRC began its action in June 1975 until June 1976, it sent (or forwarded) in aid of the victims of the conflict 1,378 tons of relief supplies, to a value of nearly 5.7 million Swiss francs, consisting of 68 tons of medical supplies, 1,250 tons of foodstuffs, 26,000 blankets and 338 tents. Most of these goods were shipped to Luanda, but some were also sent to Kinshasa (for Angolan refugees in Zaire) and Windhoek (to camps of displaced persons set up south of Angola). The actual figures were:

Angola . . . . .	1,274 tons
Kinshasa . . . . .	7 „
Windhoek . . . . .	97 „
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Total	<u>1,378 tons</u>

This assistance would not have been possible without the help, in cash and in kind, provided to the ICRC by numerous governments, National Societies and international organizations.

Since the end of June, the ICRC has two delegates stationed in Luanda, who will keep in touch with problems in abeyance (in particular, handing over tracing activities to the budding Angolan Red Cross Society).

### **South Africa**

In mid-July, the ICRC regional delegate, Mr. N. de Rougemont, visited in a military prison in Pretoria three Cuban prisoners of war in South African hands. This was the third visit made by the ICRC to these prisoners.

### **French Territory of the Afars and the Issas**

On 12 August all the prisoners in Djibouti were visited by ICRC delegates. They saw 247 prisoners with whom they spoke without witnesses. The report on the visit will be transmitted by the ICRC to the competent authorities.

### **Upper Volta**

The Government of Upper Volta informed the ICRC that it released in July 1976 seven nationals of Mali who had been interned at Ouagadougou. These civilian internees, who had been arrested after a frontier clash between Upper Volta and Mali in December 1974, were visited by the ICRC five times. Some other civilians had been released earlier in 1975.

Two nationals of Upper Volta, held as prisoners of war in Mali and whom the ICRC had twice visited at Bamako, had been released in June 1975.

### **Latin America**

#### *Mission by the new regional delegate for countries of the Andes*

Regional delegates Mr. E. Leemann and Mr. L. Isler continued their tour of countries of the Andes. Between 24 June and 23 July, they went to *Bolivia, Peru* and *Ecuador*, where Mr. Leemann introduced Mr. Isler, who has succeeded him as regional delegate for the countries of the

Andes, to leaders of the National Societies and to government officials. They had talks on ICRC work in each of those countries, its activities including visits to places of detention, assistance to detainees and to families of detainees in particularly difficult circumstances, and the dissemination of knowledge of the Geneva Conventions among members of the armed forces and young people.

In *Bolivia*, the ICRC delegates visited seven places of detention in La Paz and outlying districts, holding altogether 175 persons detained for political crimes or on political grounds. The delegates spoke with detainees of their choice without witnesses. They provided detainees with various relief items, such as medicines, mattresses, blankets, toilet articles and games, to a value of 3,650 dollars.

## Chile

In July, the ICRC delegation led by Mr. R. R. Jenny visited twenty-one places of detention, holding in all 471 detainees. As customary, the ICRC delegates distributed various relief supplies to a value of some 3,500 dollars. These included medicines, dental hygiene articles, cleaning products and disinfectants, toilet articles, clothing, mattresses, blankets, foodstuffs, and games.

At the same time, the delegation continued its assistance to detainees' families. In Santiago 507 families, and in the provinces 1,275 families received aid, to a value of 30,000 dollars.

## Asia

### Philippines

Following the mission which Mr. S. Nessi, ICRC delegate-general, carried out in Manila,<sup>1</sup> a series of visits to places of detention in the Philippines took place from 14 June to 16 July 1976.

Two ICRC delegates, Mr. A. Pasquier, regional delegate for South East Asia, and Mr. J. F. Labarthe, ICRC consultant on detention problems, went to eighteen places of detention, holding altogether 1,760 prisoners, of whom about 200 were detainees for political crimes or on political grounds. In all those places of detention, located in widely scattered parts of the country, the delegates spoke with detainees of their choice without witnesses. However, the delegates decided not

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<sup>1</sup> See *International Review*, July 1976.

## BEIRUT



Red Cross trucks waiting at the entrance of the Palestinian camp of Tel al-Zaatar for the wounded...

Photo Gluntz/ICRC

## BEIRUT



... who are transported to West Beirut to be cared for in hospitals.

Photo Gluntz/ICRC

to visit Bicutan Prison, near Manila, as the authorities had refused to allow them to speak with the detainees without witnesses.

Relief programmes for the places they visited were planned by the ICRC delegates, in co-operation with the various local branches of the Philippine Red Cross, which will be responsible for putting them into practice. The programmes included mainly the supply of bedding, toilet articles, workshop materials, games and so forth.

As customary, reports on this series of visits will be sent by the ICRC to the Philippine Government alone. It should be recalled that the ICRC does not communicate to any other persons observations of any kind on the conditions of detention its delegates may have found.

The previous series of visits to places of detention in the Philippines took place in 1974.

## USSR

### *Visit by the President of the Executive Board*

At the invitation of the Alliance of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in the USSR, Mr. R. Gallopin, President of the ICRC Executive Board, Mr. J.-P. Hocké, Director of the ICRC Operations Department, and Mr. M. Borsinger, ICRC delegate general for Europe, were in the Soviet Union from 11 to 23 July 1976.

In Moscow, the ICRC representatives had talks at the Alliance Executive Committee offices where they were received by Dr. V. A. Baltiyski, President of the Executive Committee, Professor Y. E. Danilov, First Vice-President, Dr. A. F. Reshetov and Dr. Y. P. Ostalski, Vice-Presidents, and other senior officials. Discussions centered on the ICRC's activities throughout the world and future prospects for the Red Cross movement.

The ICRC representatives visited various units of the Moscow Red Cross, presided over by Dr. L. I. Molchanova. They went also to Leningrad, where they were received at the headquarters of the Central Committee of the Red Cross in the autonomous region of Leningrad by its President, Dr. V. M. Sokholov.

The President of the ICRC Executive Board was received in audience at the Palace of the Supreme Soviet in the Kremlin by Mr. M. Kholov, First Vice-President, and Mr. M. P. Georgadze, Secretary of the Presidium. At this meeting views were exchanged on the Alliance's activities, on various social problems and on the Red Cross contribution to the maintenance of peace.