

## *EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES*

*September-October 1986*

### **Africa**

#### **South Africa**

Following the decision reached on 28 October by the Twenty-fifth International Conference of the Red Cross to suspend the South African government delegation from participation in its work, the ICRC was requested by the South African authorities to suspend its activities in South Africa and to leave the country at the latest by 30 November. The ICRC delegates based in South Africa therefore made the necessary arrangements to close down the delegation and return to Geneva by that date.

On 26 November, however, in response to the letter sent by the President of the ICRC to President Botha recalling the ICRC's objection to the decision reached by the Conference, the South African government informed the ICRC that it had reconsidered its decision. The ICRC delegates were therefore authorized to resume their tasks in South Africa.

In September and October, before the ICRC's work was suspended, the delegation had continued its activities in South Africa, and, in particular, further strengthened its co-operation with the National Society.

In September, the delegates carried out their annual series of visits to places of detention: they saw 304 sentenced security prisoners in 7 detention centres in South Africa and two security detainees held in *Venda* and 14 in *Ciskei*.

## **Sudan**

In September and October, owing to the lack of adequate safety guarantees, the ICRC was unable to resume its airlift to southern Sudan. However, the food aid operation launched in Narus from Kenya was regularly carried on throughout the period under review. Also in Narus the medical assistance operation took on particular importance in view of the increased number of wounded, who were taken to four different hospitals—the tent hospital in Narus, and Lokichokio, Lodwar and Kakuma hospitals (the latter three in Kenya). The ICRC provided these four hospitals with medical supplies.

## **Ethiopia**

From 27 September to 1 October, Mr. A. Pasquier, ICRC Director of Operations, was in Ethiopia for discussions with the Minister of the Interior, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and the head of the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission.

## **Togo**

On 11 October, two delegates and a doctor visited twenty persons in Lomé who had been arrested after the attempted *coup d'Etat* of 23 September.

## **Latin America**

### **El Salvador**

In the hours following the earthquake that struck the city of San Salvador on 10 October, the ICRC delegation joined the National Society and the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in helping to evacuate the wounded, supply the hospitals and first-aid posts with medical equipment and medicaments and distribute food and basic necessities to some 123,000 homeless persons.

Once the initial emergency was over, the ICRC delegates resumed their usual activities throughout the country (visits to

security detainees in 143 places of detention in September and in 98 detention centres in October; joint food-aid programme carried out with the National Society; medical and sanitation programmes).

After protracted negotiations, the delegates finally made a first visit, on 19 October, to a prisoner who had been held by the opposition for the past year.

In *Nicaragua*, assistance for civilians affected by the conflict situation was carried on, in close co-operation with the National Society, in areas along the Atlantic coast and, in the north-east (Rio Coco area) and north-west of the country. ICRC visits to places of detention in Nicaragua continued throughout the period under review.

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In *Chile*, the ICRC continued its visits to security detainees held in the prisons under the authority of the Ministry of Justice and, as from October, the detention centres under the authority of the National Information Centre (CNI). The delegates also continued their visits in *Peru* and *Colombia*.

On 14 October 488 *Haitians*, passengers on board a ship hijacked to Miami but stranded en route in Cuba because of serious damage, were repatriated under ICRC auspices from San José to Guantanamo by means of three aircraft chartered by the Cuban Government.

## Asia

### Afghan conflict

The head of the New Delhi regional delegation and a physio-therapist arrived in Kabul on 4 September to discuss with the Afghan Red Crescent and make concrete arrangements for medical projects (rehabilitation of the physically disabled; war surgery) and a project for the dissemination of knowledge of international humanitarian law, which will be jointly carried out by the ICRC and the National Society. The ICRC physiotherapist remained in Kabul until mid-October to continue preparations.

Negotiations also took place at the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs concerning activities which the ICRC is seeking to develop in aid of persons detained in the country.

Discussions continued, in Geneva, with the government and Red Crescent delegations taking part in the Twenty-fifth International Conference of the Red Cross.

### **Kampuchea conflict**

Concerned about the security of civilians arriving in the central area of the Khmer-Thai border, the ICRC pursued its efforts to persuade the Thai authorities to let these persons be transferred to a safer place on Thai soil. The outcome of these efforts was a large-scale operation carried out on 25 October under the auspices of the ICRC and with logistical support from the United Nations Border Relief Operation (UNBRO), involving the transfer of 1,123 Khmer and 58 Vietnamese nationals to Evacuation Site No. 2. Another group of 23 Vietnamese had already been transferred there at the beginning of the month.

The ICRC chief medical officer went to Phnom Penh on 25 September for discussions with Kampuchean authorities on setting up a medical team in Kampong provincial hospital (a Polish Red Cross team working under ICRC responsibility); the authorities had already given their agreement in principle. The ICRC provides logistical and administrative support to Australian, French, Swedish and Swiss medical teams, working in various Kampuchean hospitals.

### **Viet Nam**

In co-operation with the Vietnamese Red Cross, the ICRC organized an international humanitarian law seminar at Ho Chi Minh City from 23 to 26 September. The seminar was held for persons in charge of the provincial Red Cross branches in the south of the country; several government representatives and members of the armed forces also took part.

## **Middle East and North Africa**

### **Iran/Iraq conflict**

In Iraq, ICRC delegates carried out a series of visits in October to some 10,000 Iranian prisoners of war whom they visit on a regular basis. The Iraqi authorities also authorized the ICRC to visit two camps holding Iranian prisoners of war captured in 1986 and which the ICRC had not yet visited. From 22 to 25 October, the delegates were thus able to register 2,810 new prisoners of war.

In Iran, however, the ICRC has still not been able to resume its protection activities in aid of Iraqi prisoners of war; these activities were suspended by order of the Iranian authorities on 10 October 1984.

In September and October, the ICRC continued exchanging family messages between Iranian prisoners of war and their families and between Iraqi prisoners of war and their families.

### **Lebanon**

After the fighting that broke out on 1 October in southern Lebanon, especially around the Palestinian camps outside Tyre and Sidon, the ICRC remained in constant touch with the parties involved so as to be able to intervene in aid of the victims and to evacuate the wounded, in co-operation with the Lebanese Red Cross. Throughout October, the ICRC delegates regularly visited the hospitals and dispensaries in southern Lebanon and distributed medicaments and medical equipment according to needs. Material assistance, blankets especially, was also provided to displaced families that had fled the Tyre area and had sought refuge in Sidon.

The delegates were able to enter Rashidiyeh camp on 12 October and, two days later, seven wounded and sick persons were evacuated by the ICRC and the Lebanese Red Cross. Since 17 October, the ICRC delegates have, however, no longer been able to enter the camp.

A number of people were arrested on both sides during the fighting. The ICRC has offered its services to visit persons detained by the Palestinian groups and Amal and to exchange family messages.

**Western Sahara conflict**

From 6 to 11 October, two ICRC delegates and a doctor carried out visits in Morocco to 99 Algerian prisoners in Moroccan hands. The ICRC had not been able to visit these prisoners since 1984.

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