

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

Missions by the President of the ICRC

On the occasion of the Eighteenth Conference of Arab Red Crescent and Red Cross Societies, which was held in Doha (Qatar) from 2 to 5 March (*see account on p. 224*), Mr. Alexandre Hay, the ICRC President, and Mr. Cornelio Sommaruga, the President elect, visited several Gulf countries from 21 February to 5 March. They were accompanied by Mr. Serge Nessi, Head of the Financing Division.

Mr. Hay was thus able to introduce his successor to officials in the main *Gulf countries* and continue the dialogue with them. The discussions mainly concerned ICRC activities in Islamic countries, notably in connection with the Iran-Iraq conflict, the dissemination of international humanitarian law and the financing of ICRC activities. The National Societies visited, which conduct various activities both nationally and internationally, expressed their willingness to co-operate with the ICRC.

In *Saudi Arabia*, the ICRC presidential party met Prince Saud Al-Faisal, the Foreign Minister, Ambassador Gafaar Allagany, his Director for international organizations, the Minister of Health and leading officials of the Saudi Arabian Red Crescent Society.

In *Kuwait*, the ICRC President and his successor had talks with officials of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society, including Mr. Abdul Aziz Al-Saqer, its President, and Mr. Barges Hemoud Al-Barges, the Secretary General.

They also met Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Mr. Rashid Abdulaziz Al-Rashid, Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs.

In *Bahrain*, they met leading officials of the National Society, Sheikh Mohamed Bin Mubarak Al-Khalifa, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Dr. Ali Fakhro, who is both Minister of Education and President of the Bahrain Red Crescent Society.

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From 15 to 17 March, Mr. Hay and Mr. Sommaruga, accompanied by Mr. Michel Veuthey, delegate-general for Europe and North America, went to *Rome* where they were accorded a private audience by His Holiness Pope John Paul II. They also met Cardinal Casaroli, Secretary of State, Mgr. E. Martinez Somalo, deputy Secretary of State and Mgr. A. Silvestrini, Secretary of State for the Public Affairs of the Church.

At the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the ICRC representatives had talks with Mr. Giulio Andreotti, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Renato Ruggiero, secretary general, Ambassador Patrizio Schmidlin, director general of the Department of Co-operation in development, Ambassador Boris Biancheri, director general of the department of political affairs, and Ambassador Franceschi, who heads Italy's Permanent Mission in Geneva.

This visit to Rome by Mr. Hay and his successor is part of the ICRC's current effort to make its activities better understood by the States party to the Geneva Conventions and to impress on them its concern in the face of the grave violations of humane standards today being committed in several armed conflicts. The visit was also an opportunity for Mr. Hay to convey to the Italian authorities the ICRC's gratitude for the financial support provided by their country in the past several years and to express his confidence that this support will be maintained and perhaps augmented in future.

During their stay in Rome, Mr. Hay and Mr. Sommaruga also met representatives of the Italian Red Cross. These were Dr. Ugo Ciantelli, Deputy Commissioner, Professor Renato Pons, Director General, Mrs. Manuela Lavagnino, head of the International Affairs department, Mrs. Maria-Pia Fanfani, Vice-President of the League and Chairman of the National Women's Committee of the Italian Red Cross.