

EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES

March-April 1987

Africa

Ethiopia

In December 1986, the Ethiopian authorities issued new directives concerning the conduct of the ICRC relief operation in the country's northern provinces (Eritrea, Tigre, Gondar and Wollo). The directives effectively subjected ICRC activities to decisions taken by the National Red Cross Society and the Ethiopian authorities, thus calling into question the principles of independence and neutrality which must at all times and in all circumstances guide ICRC action on behalf of victims covered by its assistance and protection mandate.

Following several months of talks with the authorities—during which time all activities in the field were suspended—in May four delegates were authorized to return to the north of the country; the assistance operation should be resumed gradually from early June.

Somalia

In Mogadishu on 19 March, ICRC delegates registered 15 Ethiopian prisoners of war recently captured in the Ogaden conflict. As in the case of other persons detained in Somalia, ICRC delegates were not authorized to talk to each prisoner without witnesses, contrary to the terms of Art. 126 of the Third Geneva Convention.

Sudan

In southern Sudan, the ICRC's programme of distributing seed and farming implements in the Narus region (some 20 km from the Kenyan border) ended on 12 March, after 107 tonnes of seed had been distributed to about 24,000 displaced persons.

In view of the improvement in the food situation noted by the delegates, and in order to encourage members of the Toposa ethnic group to return to their native regions and plant crops there using the seed provided by the ICRC, food distributions organized in Narus by the ICRC were stopped in early March.

Burundi

Four ICRC delegates, including a doctor, carried out a series of visits to the country's main penitentiaries between 17 March and 4 April. The previous visits had been made in November 1986.

South Africa

On 23 March, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs authorized the ICRC delegation to increase its staff from five to eight members.

On the same day the third training course for "community organizers", organized jointly by the South African Red Cross and the ICRC, began with the participation of 22 persons. In all, there are now 63 community organizers working among the country's black communities; their tasks include assessing needs within the scope of the Red Cross, taking the necessary initiatives to meet those needs, disseminating knowledge of Red Cross principles, and promoting more extensive humanitarian activities and the establishment of local Red Cross branches.

The ICRC delegation based in Pretoria continued its contact, co-ordination and supervision work regarding assistance to Mozambican refugees in Gazankulu and Kangwane.

By the end of April, 16,271 and 6,006 people respectively had benefited from the assistance programme in these two regions. In April the delegates went to Kwazulu province, where refugees from Mozambique were also arriving.

Missions were also carried out in Cape Province, Orange Free State and Natal to follow the situation in the main townships affected by the disturbances.

Mozambique

Following a serious security incident on 31 July 1985 at Luabo (Zambezia province), in which a pilot and an ICRC nurse were seriously injured, the ICRC had to suspend its field activities in the country.

Concerned about the situation in Mozambique, the ICRC again contacted the authorities and the Mozambican Red Cross with a view to drawing up a plan of action. The project is taking shape, thanks to surveys carried out in March and April by an ICRC team (four delegates, including a doctor, a nutritionist and a nurse) in the provinces of Zambezia, Sofala, Niassa, Tete and Nampula.

Latin America

Colombia

Between 9 March and 14 April 1987 three delegates, one of them a doctor, carried out a series of visits to security detainees in places of detention under the control of the Ministry of Justice. A total of 131 detainees were visited in 10 prisons in Bogotá and in the provinces (Cali, Bucaramanga, Popayan, Tunja et Ibagué).

Paraguay

A mission was carried out in Paraguay from 24 March to 1 April 1987, mainly in order to make further visits to security detainees, with the participation of an ICRC doctor. Seven places of detention (five controlled by the Ministry of the Interior and two by the Ministry of Justice) were visited in Asunción and in the Alto Paraná area; the delegates were able to interview five security detainees.

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During the period under review, apart from the series of visits mentioned above, the ICRC continued its action in favour of security detainees in the following countries: *Chile* (visits to prisons administered by the Ministry of Justice and interrogation centres of the Security Corps), *El Salvador* (visits to the penitentiaries and to the detention centre of the Armed Forces and the Security Corps), *Nicaragua* (second annual visit to the Tipitapa prison) and *Peru* (visits to penitentiaries and police centres in Lima and in the provinces, with the exception of the Ayacucho emergency zone).

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In *Nicaragua* and *El Salvador*, the usual activities of the ICRC continued, in addition to visits to detainees: assistance to detainees and the civilian population in regions affected by the current events, dissemination of international humanitarian law, the work of the Tracing Agency and the orthopaedic programme in Managua. In *Nicaragua*, a team of delegates made a preliminary survey in March 1987 of the situation and needs of the civilian population living along the upper reaches of the Rio Coco (in the north of the country, near the border with Honduras); this evaluation mission revealed the need for the regular presence of the ICRC in the area. In *El Salvador*, 20 war disabled of the FMLN were evacuated by air on 4 March to host countries, under ICRC auspices. Three civilians held by the FMLN were released and handed over to the ICRC by the Front.

Asia

Kampuchea conflict

Following the Thai government's decision to move the population of Khao-I-Dang closer to the Khmer-Thai border, two groups of refugees were transferred to Site "B" on 1 March (230 people) and 17 April (175 people) respectively.

At the end of April, the ICRC presented to the Thai authorities a memorandum reminding them of the ICRC's role within the context of the Kampuchea conflict, reaffirming its concern with

regard to the protection of the civilian population against the effects of the fighting, and pointing out that the ICRC's mandate covers all the civilians assembled along the border and all persons captured in connection with the conflict.

Viet Nam

On 23 April, 156 persons of Chinese origin were repatriated to Taiwan, via Bangkok, on a flight organized by the ICRC. A Korean who had been held in Viet Nam since 1975 also left the country on the same flight to return to the Republic of Korea.

Indonesia

On 20 March, the eleventh group of officials of the former Portuguese administration of East Timor was repatriated to Lisbon; this group comprised three former officials and their families (24 persons in all). On the same day, four other persons returned to Lisbon to be reunited with their family, under the auspices of the ICRC.

The ICRC carried out another series of visits to persons detained in connection with events in East Timor: between 18 March and 3 April, 228 detainees were visited in four places of detention in Dili and Jakarta. This was the first series of visits in 1987.

Hong Kong

In April 1987 the ICRC opened a permanent regional delegation in Hong Kong, covering Hong Kong, the People's Republic of China, Taiwan, Macao, the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Philippines

During March and April, ICRC delegates continued visiting persons arrested in connection with the events, in the Muntinlupa penitentiary (Manila) and in regions 5 (Leyte, Samar) and 8 (Bicol). In all, they visited 109 persons.

In close co-operation with the Philippine Red Cross, the ICRC delegation also pursued its activities for displaced persons, mainly on the island of Mindanao. Each month about 22,000 people benefited from general distributions of rice and oil; and at the same time some 2,000 people were given medical consultations by the ICRC.

In April, a first-aid course was organized for 19 members of the medical staff of MILF at Cotabato, under the auspices of the local branch of the National Society.

Conflict in Afghanistan

In accordance with the agreement reached between the Afghan authorities and the ICRC in January 1987, a team of five delegates, including a doctor, began its visit to Pul I Charki prison in Kabul at the beginning of March. After a general tour of the prison, however, talks were resumed with the authorities on practical arrangements for the visit which, as a consequence, was suspended.

In the border region between Pakistan and Afghanistan, ICRC delegates had access at the beginning of April to Afghan prisoners held by a commander of one of the opposition parties. Some of the prisoners had already been seen twice in 1986, and others were registered by the ICRC in the course of this visit.

In Pakistan, the ICRC continued its medical activities for victims of the conflict. ICRC surgical hospitals at Peshawar and Quetta took in 136 and 90 wounded respectively in March, and 117 and 102 wounded in April.

Sri Lanka

Deeply concerned by the situation in Sri Lanka, the ICRC reminded the Sri Lankan authorities of its offer of services made in May 1986 and explained once again what activities it wished to undertake in order to protect and assist all the victims of the conflict.

Europe

Missions by the President of the ICRC

Mr. Alexander Hay, President of the ICRC, accompanied by Mr. Moreillon, Director General, Mr. A. Pasquier, Director of Operations and Mr. M. Veuthey, delegate-general for Europe and North America, visited *Moscow* from 1 to 4 April 1987 at the invitation of the Alliance of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. During talks with Mr. Shevardnadze, Soviet Foreign Minister, M. Hay raised a number of operational, legal and financial matters. The contribution of the Peace Movement was one of the points discussed with Dr. D. Venedictov, President of the Alliance. The welcome extended to Mr. Hay was a very warm one: he was presented with Dr. Pirogov's medal and a diploma from the Soviet Red Cross.

President Hay was in Paris on 14 and 15 April 1987, accompanied by Mr. Cornelio Sommaruga, President-elect of the ICRC, and by Mr. Pasquier and Mr. Veuthey, for discussions with the French Government and the National Red Cross Society. The ICRC delegation met Mr. François Mitterrand, President of the Republic, Mr. Jean-Bernard Raimond, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Claude Malhuret, Secretary of State attached to the Prime Minister and responsible for Human Rights, as well as a number of high-ranking officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ambassador Louis Dauge, President of the French Red Cross, and senior members of his staff. The conversations dwelt on the main ICRC operational activities under way and the financing of the institution.

At the invitation of the President of the Turkish Red Crescent, the President of the ICRC went on a mission to *Ankara* and *Istanbul* from 21 to 25 April 1987, accompanied by the delegate-general for Europe and North America. This first visit to Ankara by a President of the ICRC provided an opportunity for a very thorough and cordial exchange of views at the highest level with the Turkish Government and Red Crescent. The President of the ICRC met Mr. K. Evren, President of the Republic, Mr. Güzel, Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs and Mr. Nushet Kandemir, Under-Secretary of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Middle East

Iran/Iraq conflict

On 17 March, 76 disabled or sick Iraqi prisoners of war were repatriated under the auspices of the ICRC. The prisoners, who were accompanied by two doctors, two nurses and an ICRC delegate, left Teheran aboard an aircraft chartered by the ICRC and flew to Baghdad, where they were handed over to officials representing the authorities of the Republic of Iraq.

Visits to prisoners of war continued in Iran. Delegates went to two camps in March and April, i.e. the sixth and seventh camp since visits were resumed in Iran in December 1986. The delegates saw some 5,000 Iraqi prisoners of war in the two camps.

In Iraq, ICRC delegates continued their visits to Iranian prisoners of war. From early March to early April, they carried out a complete series of visits to ten camps and one hospital, seeing 12,750 prisoners in all. At the end of April, they began a fresh series and revisited 1,612 prisoners in two camps.

Lebanon

Throughout March and April, delegates continued to attend to the needs of the civilians affected by fighting whenever it occurred in the country, but especially those living in villages situated along the line demarcating the "security zone". Foodstuffs, blankets and cooking utensils were distributed to those most affected. Finally, mobile clinics were organized jointly by the ICRC and the Lebanese Red Cross to provide medical consultations for civilians living in villages along the "security zone" boundary which have no medical facilities.

During these two months, the ICRC had access to the Palestinian camps, both in the south of the country and in Beirut. Delegates thus assessed the situation in the *Rashidiyeh* camp near Tyre on 12 March and thereafter entered the camp once a week, essentially to distribute and collect Red Cross messages and provide some medical supplies. A medical evacuation was carried out on 28 April. ICRC delegates also entered the camps in the Beirut area. On 8 April, 25 injured or sick people plus others accompanying them

were evacuated from *Shatila* by the ICRC and the Lebanese Red Cross. The next day, 57 persons, 47 of them injured, were evacuated from *Borj-el-Brajneh*.

Visits to persons detained by various parties to the conflict were also continued.

Conflict in the Western Sahara

The new regional delegate and his predecessor carried out a mission to Algiers and the Sahara from 16 to 22 March to re-establish contact with leading representatives of the parties involved. The two delegates were received by Mr. Mohammed Abdelaziz, secretary-general of the Polisario Front, with whom they reviewed ICRC activities in the context of the conflict in the Western Sahara. During their meeting, the delegates renewed the ICRC's offer of its services to visit all of the prisoners captured since the beginning of the conflict and held by the Polisario Front. They obtained a very positive reply in principle. The delegates also met Mr. Habiballah, President of the "Sahrawi Red Crescent". In Algiers, the delegates had talks with Dr. Belaouane, President of the Algerian Red Crescent.

People's Democratic Republic of Yemen

From 22 to 30 April, a team of three ICRC delegates visited 89 security detainees arrested in connection with the events of January 1986. The visit, carried out in accordance with the ICRC's normal criteria, was the first made to those detainees.
