

*EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES**January-February 1988***Africa****Southern Africa**

The mission of the President of the ICRC in Southern Africa from 12 to 20 February is described on page ...

**Ethiopia**

Despite many difficulties, relief operations for hundreds of thousands of civilian victims of the conflict and drought continued at the beginning of 1988.

The difficulties encountered in delivering food to Tigre, one of the regions where the needs were greatest, forced the delegates on several occasions to postpone planned food distributions. In Wollo, the ICRC was still unable at the end of February to begin its relief programme.

More than 360,000 persons were given food aid in January and about 540,000 in February. But these results were not satisfactory to the ICRC, which had hoped at the end of 1987 to be able to come more quickly to the assistance of an even higher number of beneficiaries.

The first two months of 1988 demonstrated, however, that the open road policy advocated by the ICRC was by no means being systematically respected. At the end of February, food stocks located near the distribution points were dwindling at an alarming rate.

## **Southern Sudan**

Because of an intensification of hostilities, especially in the region of Kapoeta, the ICRC surgical hospital at Lokichokio, on Kenyan territory near the Sudanese frontier, received a large number of wounded—71 in January and more than 150 in February—whereas in normal times it has only about 50 beds.

## **Uganda**

The delegates continued their visits to places of detention in the capital (Luzira Upper, Luzira Remand, Central Police Station) and the provinces (Mbale and Moroto).

Of the 6,600 prisoners registered, 3,931 were detained under the authority of the National Resistance Army (NRA), which became the government army in 1986. Medical and food assistance, some leisure material and items of basic necessity were given by the delegates to the detainees.

## **Chad/Libya**

In the second half of January ICRC delegates, including a medical delegate, went to Libya, where they visited 52 Chadian prisoners of war. The Chadian Government was informed of the results of this mission at the beginning of February and capture cards and family messages were handed over to government representatives.

## **Angola**

After being suspended since 14 October 1987, following the tragic aircraft accident which claimed the lives of eight persons, ICRC activities were resumed on the Planalto on 22 February.

In view of the needs observed during initial assessments in the provinces of Huambo, Bié and Benguela, food distributions were planned for the beginning of March. In addition, two feeding centres were opened in the Huambo region in February.

## Latin America

### Missions by the delegate-general and his deputy

The delegate-general for Latin America met the new authorities of *Suriname*, including Mr. Shankar, President, and Mr. Arron, Vice-President and Prime Minister, during his mission in that country from 25 to 29 January. In the course of numerous meetings he gave the authorities a full account of the past activities and future objectives of the ICRC in Suriname, where a permanent ICRC delegate has been based since November 1987, including the role of the ICRC vis-à-vis the civilian population and in relation to a possible return of the refugees from French Guyana, dissemination of international humanitarian law among the armed forces, and strengthening of the operational capacity of the National Society.

In *Colombia*, on 3 and 4 February, the delegate-general discussed ICRC activities on behalf of detained persons with the Minister of Defence, General Samudio Molina.

Continuing his mission in *Peru*, the delegate-general informed the authorities of the ICRC's objectives and the difficulties it had faced for more than a year, both in gaining access to certain security detainees and in its work in areas where a state of emergency had been declared, notably in Ayacucho. On these questions, he had talks with the Ministers of Justice, Interior and Defence, the Attorney-General, the Chief of Police and the authorities of Ayacucho. Shortly after this mission, the head of the ICRC delegation in Peru also explained the ICRC's objectives concerning the emergency zones to the chief of the politico-military command of Ayacucho. (Some progress was made in March when the ICRC again received authorization to move freely within the province of Ayacucho.)

During his mission in Latin America, the delegate-general had talks with National Society leaders in every country visited.

The deputy delegate-general visited Haiti at the end of January, where he met the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces and explained to him the role the ICRC could play with regard to detention. He also discussed the dissemination of international humanitarian law among the armed forces. His talks with leaders of the National Society dealt with the ICRC's plan of action to strengthen the operational capacity of the Haitian National Red Cross. The ICRC delegate based in Haiti subsequently had the opportunity of presenting the objectives of the ICRC to the new Head of State, President Manigat.

## Opening of a delegation in Guatemala

On 19 January, the ICRC opened a delegation in *Guatemala*, where it intends to develop activities in the following domains: assistance to the displaced civilian population, visits to detainees, dissemination of international humanitarian law and support for the activities of the National Society.

## Other activities

Security detainees were visited in *Chile*, *Colombia*, *Nicaragua* (where the ICRC at the end of February made a census of detainees in prisons under the authority of the National Penitentiary Service), *Peru* and *El Salvador*, while assistance programmes continued for civilian populations in *Nicaragua* and *El Salvador*.

The regional delegation in Buenos Aires carried out missions in *Bolivia*, *Paraguay* and *Uruguay* to discuss subjects of mutual interest with the authorities and/or the National Societies there. A similar mission in the *Dominican Republic* was carried out by the regional delegation from San José, Costa Rica.

## Asia

### Afghan conflict

*Afghanistan* — Pursuant to an agreement with the Afghan authorities in December, an ICRC team arrived in Kabul on 26 January to begin visits to detained persons. The team consisted of eight Swiss expatriates and included a doctor and two interpreters.

At the end of February, about 40 Afghan employees were working at the ICRC orthopaedic centre in Kabul, under the supervision of two ICRC technicians who trained them on the job. The centre's workshop started to produce crutches and artificial knees in January.

*Pakistan* — The ICRC delegation in Pakistan maintained regular contact with Afghan opposition movements with a view to gaining access to any prisoners they might be detaining.

The surgical hospitals in Peshawar and Quetta had two relatively calm months, with average occupancies, respectively, of 70% and 95%. The ICRC hospitals usually receive fewer patients in the winter months because many mountain passes are closed by snow and ice and it is difficult to get the wounded there from the interior of Afghanistan.

## **Burma**

At the end of January, the agreement on co-operation between the ICRC and the Ministry of Defence for continued support for the orthopaedic centre at the military hospital in Rangoon was renewed for another year. The ICRC also continued its activities at the Rangoon hospital for civilian amputees, in co-operation with the Ministry of Health and the Burma Red Cross.

## **Kampuchean conflict**

The ICRC continued its negotiations to be able to provide better protection for some 260,000 Khmer and Vietnamese civilians, displaced along the Khmer-Thai border and to gain access to all persons detained in connection with the conflict. In January and February, the three teams working at the ICRC hospital at Kao-I-Dang operated on Khmer and Vietnamese patients. The ICRC tracing services dealt with requests by families for enquiries into the whereabouts of more than 2,200 persons, both Khmer and Vietnamese, along the frontier and abroad. The ICRC also forwarded mail between the camps, handling more than 3,900 letters.

## **Philippines**

In January and February, the ICRC continued its activities in the Philippines, visiting persons detained in connection with insurgency-related incidents or following attempts to stage a coup d'état (visits to 394 detainees), providing relief and medical assistance for persons displaced or isolated by the events, and disseminating knowledge of

international humanitarian law and the fundamental principles of the Movement.

## **Europe**

### **Mission in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics**

The ICRC Director of Operations and the delegate-general for Europe and North America visited Moscow at the end of February to discuss various questions of mutual interest, both with representatives of the Foreign Ministry and the Chairman of the Alliance of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

## **Middle East**

### **Iran/Iraq conflict**

On 17 February 1988, twenty-eight wounded, sick or elderly Iraqi prisoners of war were repatriated from Iran to Baghdad on a plane chartered by the ICRC. A team consisting of a doctor, a nurse and two delegates accompanied them.

This operation brought to 205 the number of Iraqi prisoners of war repatriated by the ICRC since the beginning of 1987.

The ICRC Director of Operations and the delegate-general for the Middle East went to Baghdad, where they had a discussion on 28 February with Mr. Tariq Aziz, Minister for Foreign Affairs. The purpose of this mission was to present to the Iraqi Government a summary of ICRC activities for prisoners of war held both in Iran and in Iraq. A new series of visits to Iranian prisoners of war in Iraq began on 6 February.

From 24 to 28 January an ICRC medical team made a complete medical and nutritional survey of Camp Al Tash, in the Iraqi province of Anbar, where Iranian Kurds are interned. The conclusions of this survey were submitted to the Governor of the province of Anbar.

## **Israel and the occupied territories**

As the unrest in the occupied territories since 9 December continued with mounting violence, the ICRC delegation staff was increased several times to enable it to cope with its tasks of protection, both at the scene of the demonstrations themselves and in the camps and villages placed under curfew. The presence of the ICRC helped to curb the violence and made possible the rapid evacuation of the wounded. The delegates also continued their regular visits to hospitals to visit the wounded, making sure that their families knew where they were and that the medical facilities were sufficient to care for them. The ICRC delegates likewise made regular visits to places of detention, including the new centres opened by the Israeli authorities specifically for the detention of persons arrested in connection with the events in the occupied territories. These visits enabled the delegates to inform the families of detainees, to evaluate the material needs, if any, of the prisoners and observe the conditions of detention.

The delegate-general for the Middle East visited Israel from 19 to 24 January for an overall discussion with the authorities of both the routine activities of the ICRC and those resulting from the recent events.

As four residents of the West Bank were expelled by the Israeli authorities on 13 January, the ICRC issued a press release that same evening expressing its consternation at this act, stressing that the practice of expulsion constitutes a grave violation of Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention and a contravention of humanitarian law.

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