

# INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

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## EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES

### Middle East

*Reuniting of Families.*—An important humanitarian operation took place under the auspices of the International Committee on 8 October 1969 at El Qantara on the Suez Canal. This was the 35th reunion of families whose members had been separated since the war in June 1967.

The ICRC delegates organized this operation by means of which 131 Palestinians from the United Arab Republic returned to their families in the Gaza and Sinai areas and 89 Egyptians from El Arish returned to the western bank of the Suez Canal.

*Repatriation of Dead Egyptian Military Personnel.*—On 18 September, at El Qantara, the bodies of two Egyptian pilots were repatriated under ICRC auspices. Their aircraft had crashed in Sinai. The two bodies were taken across the Suez Canal in a boat flying the Red Cross flag.

Simultaneously with the family reunion operation on 8 October at El Qantara as mentioned above the ICRC delegates also saw to the repatriation of the mortal remains of six Egyptian military personnel killed in action against the Israeli army on the eastern bank of the Suez Canal on the night of 3-4 October.

Two other dead Egyptian soldiers killed on 8 October in operations in the region of the canal were repatriated under ICRC auspices on 13 October.

*Visit in Israel.*—On 4 October representatives of the International Committee visited two Egyptian prisoners of war captured on 3 October by the Israeli armed forces.

*Visit in the United Arab Republic.*—The ICRC was authorized to visit an Israeli prisoner of war, captured on 19 August 1969 by the Egyptian armed forces. On 4 October the ICRC delegates interviewed the prisoner without witnesses and handed him parcels and family mail. The prisoner, who was wounded, also wrote a message to his family. The ICRC representative visited him a second time on 28 October.

*Visits to Prisons and Distribution of Parcels.*—The delegation of the International Committee in Israel has begun a further series of prison visits, including six on the west bank of the Jordan, four in Israel and one in Gaza. The ICRC representatives will see more than 2,500 men and women detainees.

During the first week of October the ICRC delegates in Israel and the occupied territories distributed standard parcels to civilian Arab detainees in seven Israeli prisons. Circumstances do not permit their relatives to visit them.

Nearly 400 parcels were distributed in the prisons of Ramleh, Kfar Yona, Tulkarem, Jenin, Ashkelon, Nablus and Gaza. In the last three the prisoners received not only parcels but some fruit.

Parcels were first distributed in these prisons in September 1969, since when the delegation has also arranged a bus service for detainees' families which cannot afford to go to see their relatives in prison.

## **South Yemen People's Republic**

*Relief to the Civilian Population in Aden.*—The ICRC delegates co-operating with the Red Crescent of South Yemen are continuing to distribute relief to the Aden populace.

The ICRC delegation has received a further consignment of 9½ tons of powdered milk. This enabled it to extend its relief to a greater number of people. During September more than seven hundred families, or some 5,600 persons, including 2,800 children, received milk rations in the Mansoura, Crater, Maalla and Sheikh Othman districts of Aden. In addition, 200-500 milk rations were daily distributed in the Tawahi district.

## SAUDI ARABIA



September 1969<sup>1</sup>: H. M. King Faisal discusses with ICRC President, Mr. Naville.

<sup>1</sup> See "International Review", October 1969.

*Medical Assistance.*—The two medical teams are still working in the South Yemen People's Republic to provide medical care for the population. In Aden the hospital is manned by three doctors made available by the Bulgarian Red Cross, whilst at Mukallah a Swiss doctor and a Swiss anaesthetist have taken over the hospital's operating services.

### **Arab Republic of the Yemen**

Continuing the relief action started in November 1968, ICRC delegates distributed relief several times in the last few weeks. More than a ton of milk was shared by six Sanaa hospitals in September. These rations are mainly intended for several hundred children.

Clothing donated by the Red Cross of the German Democratic Republic has been delivered by ICRC representatives to the Sanaa girls' school for its 156 pupils and teachers. Seven pairs of crutches were also delivered to disabled people.

### **Lebanon**

Following the events in the Lebanon towards the end of October, the Beyrouth delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross visited seven wounded Palestinians in the south of the country and two soldiers and two Palestinians in hospital in Beyrouth.

In addition, the ICRC delegation visited 34 other Palestinians interned in the Lebanon. As is customary, the ICRC representatives were able to interview the detainees without witnesses and to enquire into detention conditions.

### **Vietnam**

In August 1969 ICRC delegates visited ten civilian North Vietnam seamen interned in Da-Nang. They talked in private with these internees who then wrote to their families. Their letters were sent to the Red Cross of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in Hanoi. Since then these seamen have been released.

In addition, the ICRC delegates in the Republic of Vietnam visited twenty-two places of detention in August and September 1969. They went to two prisoner of war camps, five military hospitals, nine re-educational centres, three collecting points and three interrogation centres.

During the course of these visits, they had talks without witnesses with the prisoners of war. A report on each visit has been sent to the Detaining Power.

### **Central America**

In our issues for August and September 1969, we mentioned the ICRC's humanitarian work—with the co-operation of the two National Societies concerned—for the benefit of the victims of the conflict which broke out in July between Honduras and El Salvador. We now report that, following on an agreement concluded between the Salvadoran authorities, representatives of the Organization of American States (OAS) and delegates of the International Committee, the last Honduran civilians held in El Salvador were released and repatriated on 6 October. They crossed the frontier at El Amatillo.

The repatriation of these civilians thus ends the ICRC's action in El Salvador and Honduras, undertaken as a result of the armed conflict which broke out on 14 July 1969.

### **Biafra**

It will be recalled that the ICRC had submitted to the authorities of both Lagos and the secessionist territory a plan for daylight flights into Biafra. As mentioned in our previous issue, the ICRC was informed on 16 September that the Biafran authorities considered that the agreement on day flights between their representatives and the ICRC was incompatible with that reached by the ICRC and the Nigerian Federal Military Government.

It was for the purpose of continuing negotiations with the Biafran leaders and of coming to an agreement with them on the start of the daylight airlift of relief supplies that Mr. Paul Ruegger,

member and former President of the ICRC, accompanied by several advisers, left Geneva for Biafra on 13 October. The mission stayed several days in Biafra. After its return the ICRC published the following press release on 27 October:

*The mission had several exhaustive talks with the Biafran authorities, dealing mainly with the resumption of ICRC relief flights. In spite of the open and sincere atmosphere of the discussions, it was not possible to reach an acceptable agreement on day flights. The Biafran authorities made it known in particular that the agreement signed in Lagos between the ICRC and the FMG did not give sufficient guarantees for the security of Uli airport.*

*Mr. Ruegger and his four companions were able to see the extent and increase of suffering endured by the civilian population due to a lack of medical, pharmaceutical and food relief. The very existence of a generation is indeed in peril. In view of this suffering, the ICRC will continue to make every effort to find, with the appropriate means and with the agreement of the parties concerned, an effective, in so far as possible, and above all humane solution to the problems of relief to Biafra.*

*Meanwhile, its teams are continuing to carry out its tasks on the ground, where some sixty delegates have been working without stop for the protection of prisoners of war and the tracing of missing persons, whilst its surgical teams are continuously operating in five hospitals and a group of paediatrists are engaged in wiping out epidemics breaking out amongst the children. In addition, the ICRC is participating in the vaccination campaigns against smallpox, TB and measles.*

*The ICRC's work is much appreciated by the Biafran authorities. At the latter's request the ICRC has therefore decided to maintain and, if possible, to increase its numbers. It is thus holding itself in readiness at any moment to resume relief distribution on a wide scale.*

*The continuation of the actions undertaken in Biafra as in Nigeria demands financial resources. The ICRC therefore asks all those who have given it their support to continue to do so. It has to maintain its air fleet for some time still, in a reduced form, should relief flights be able to be resumed.*