

EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES

Africa

ICRC assistance operations

During the first six months of 1981, the main ICRC assistance operations in Africa were in Angola (Planalto region), Uganda (West Nile Province), Chad and the Horn of Africa. It distributed more than 6,000 tonnes of relief, valued at almost 14 million Swiss francs.

Angola

The deterioration of the situation in Angola created serious problems for the delegation there. Its activities were suspended for several weeks, in May and June, in the Planalto region; they were resumed, on 26 June, in the provinces of Bailundo, Huambo and Bié, by means of two aircraft.

In Bailundo, the ICRC is trying to bring the existing hospital infrastructure back into operation. There were many wounded who were cared for by the ICRC medical team. Relief was distributed to the needy in the hospitals, the special feeding centre and the nearby camp.

In Katchiungo, the special feeding centre continued working during the delegates' absence, thanks to its local staff, and a number of new cases of serious malnutrition were admitted for treatment.

In the Bié Province, two relief operations—the first in the area—were carried out: At the Cangala leprosarium in Kuito, clothes, soap and blankets were distributed to some 200 lepers; in Chivanda, about 2,200 displaced persons received clothing and soap. Food assistance was not considered necessary.

On 30 June, the ICRC store in Huambo was attacked and plundered. On 16 July, a mine exploded on the Bailundo airstrip, regularly used by ICRC aircraft, which compelled the delegates to suspend their activities

once again. Only the Katchiungo special feeding centre can still be regularly supplied.

The food stocks built up by the ICRC on the Planalto will be enough to cover needs until November, but after that logistic problems will arise, because the delegation will have to convey new supplies, stored in the port of Lobito, to the Planalto by rail or by road, if conditions are safe; otherwise, another airlift will have to be organized between Lobito and Huambo.

From 26 to 31 August, the ICRC Deputy Director of Operations, Mr. Michel Convers, and the ICRC chief medical officer, Dr. Rémi Russbach, were in Angola to assess the situation, which is still very unsafe. Despite the danger, however, some relief activities were resumed on the Planalto at the end of August.

South Africa and Namibia

The ICRC regional delegation in Pretoria continued its usual assistance to families of detainees, providing food to some 500 persons every month. A similar action was launched in Namibia in July by the ICRC office recently opened in Windhoek.

Ghana

On 7 July, the Government of the Republic of Ghana appealed to the ICRC to provide assistance following clashes between two tribes in the north of the country. The ICRC responded by sending a delegate to make a survey in the area. The delegate reported an urgent need for medicaments and medical equipment. A first consignment of relief, to a value of about 19,000 Swiss francs, was accordingly dispatched from Geneva.

Chad

Following the surveys carried out in March, May and June in several parts of the country, the ICRC delegation in Chad made one last visit, towards the end of July, to Abeche and its surroundings. It reached the same conclusions as those drawn during previous missions, namely that the population no longer needed emergency assistance from the ICRC, but long-term aid from other humanitarian organizations. The ICRC is gradually ceasing its activity in Chad.

It is expected that the ICRC will nevertheless participate in a rehabilitation programme for war disabled, as it has done in other countries.

A workshop will be opened and local staff trained by an ICRC physio-therapist to manufacture, fit and repair artificial limbs.

Up to the end of July, the ICRC continued, in co-operation with the welfare centres, distributing food to undernourished children and needy families in N'Djamena.

On 4 August, sixteen prisoners of war—the last, according to the authorities—were released and received material assistance from the ICRC.

Uganda

From 8 to 17 July, a member of the Executive Board of the ICRC, Mr R. Jäckli, accompanied by Mr D. Helg from the ICRC Operations Department, was in Uganda to discuss protection problems with the authorities. It was considered necessary that the ICRC should continue its protection activities and its medical and food assistance programmes in the West Nile area. On 6 August, four ICRC delegates, including the head of the delegation in Kampala, Mr J.-C. Rochat, returned to Arua to re-open the ICRC office temporarily closed after the incident on 24 June.

An ICRC physician and nurse regularly visit the dispensaries in the West Nile Province to help the local medical staff working there. From January to the end of July, 250,000 Swiss francs worth of medicaments and medical equipment were sent from Kampala to the West Nile.

The ICRC delegation in Uganda continued visiting prisons and distributing food, blankets, clothes and soap for the detainees. To improve its activities in favour of detainees, the delegation was increased by one physician, two nurses and a hygiene specialist.

On 27 March, the Ugandan Government announced an amnesty in favour of some 3,000 detainees. The first 1,425 persons were released on 25 July. The ICRC delegation helped them return to their families.

Gambia

In August, just after the events that occurred at the end of July in Gambia, two ICRC missions went to Gambia. First, a medical delegate and a relief specialist went to Banjul to make an initial survey; then at the end of August the regional delegate for Central and West Africa, Mrs. J. Egger, was in Gambia to transmit to the authorities the ICRC's offers of service, especially for protection, and to establish contacts with the national Red Cross Society.

A first consignment of medicaments and medical equipment for the hospitals, amounting to 15,000 Swiss francs, was dispatched by the ICRC from Geneva and Dakar.

Ethiopia

The Debré Zeit rehabilitation centre for the disabled, which is run under the supervision of the ICRC, continued working for military amputees. From January to the end of July 1981, the centre made 136 artificial limbs, 105 wheelchairs and 350 pairs of crutches.

Negotiations are under way to open similar rehabilitation workshops for civilian disabled, in Asmara and Harar.

From January to the end of June, the ICRC continued supplying the Ethiopian Red Cross with relief that was distributed to some 40,000 needy persons in the provinces.

Latin America

Delegate-general's mission

From 6 to 29 July, Mr A. Pasquier, ICRC delegate-general for Latin America, carried out a mission to five countries: Nicaragua, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala.

In *Nicaragua*, the delegate-general's talks with the authorities resulted in authorization being granted to ICRC delegates to visit places of detention under the authority of the police. Until then, only prisons directed by the national penitentiary service had been visited by the ICRC. He also put forward some proposals designed to bring some improvements in the prisons' medical services.

Mr. Pasquier also met leaders of the Nicaragua Red Cross and attended a meeting of its National Council, to whom he spoke about ICRC activities.

In *Costa Rica*, the delegate-general discussed with officials of the National Red Cross Society its programme for the dissemination of knowledge of international humanitarian law and Red Cross principles. He also took part, in Costa Rica, in a working session of the League's regional bureau, during which the five-year development plan of the National Societies of Latin America and the Caribbean and the dissemination of international humanitarian law were discussed.

In *El Salvador*, the delegate-general conferred with the President of the Junta and Ministry of Defence officials. Among the questions discussed, particular attention was paid to those relating to the ICRC's protection work in the civilian and military places of detention.

Mr. Pasquier also raised the question of ICRC assistance activities to displaced persons. In the department of Morazan, there are at present 25,000 displaced persons to whom the ICRC distributes aid. The relief action has to overcome difficulties relating to logistics and dangerous conditions in the department of Chalatenango. The ICRC has confirmed on the spot that the needs of the displaced persons, the vast majority of whom are women, children and aged people, are acute.

Mr. Pasquier conferred with National Red Cross Society officials about the humanitarian activities in aid of the victims of recent events and how the ICRC and the Salvadoran Red Cross could collaborate in the joint programme to bring aid to displaced persons.

In *Honduras*, the delegate-general met representatives of the authorities and National Red Cross Society leaders.

In *Guatemala*, he conferred with the President of the National Red Cross.

El Salvador

The ICRC delegation in El Salvador continued its protection and assistance tasks in aid of persons affected by the events.

Early in July, the delegates visited a camp for displaced persons in Suchitoto where overcrowding had raised problems. From San Miguel, they continued to distribute various relief goods to the conflict areas in the department of Morazan; in June, weekly distributions were organized in 14 villages, containing about 25,000 displaced persons. Food aid amounting altogether to about 185 tonnes was distributed. The mobile medical team continued to provide medical care in Morazan. These relief operations are being continued.

Moreover, the ICRC delegation continued to provide assistance to detainees. In June and July, the delegates carried out 202 visits in 94 places of detention in various parts of the country and in the capital, San Salvador.

Bolivia

The Minister of the Interior renewed the authorization previously granted to the ICRC to visit places of detention, thus allowing Mr. A. Kobel, ICRC regional delegate for the Andean countries, to go

to two centres of detention of the Special Security Service, where he saw a dozen detainees. He also went to a hospital to visit a trade union leader who had been severely injured when arrested. When the Bolivian authorities informed Mr. Kobel that they were prepared to release this detainee on account of his injuries, the ICRC delegate made arrangements for the transfer of the injured detainee to a hospital in Boston (United States). He was taken on board a regular flight and was accompanied by Mr. Kobel and a doctor of the Bolivian Red Cross.

Colombia

In July, two ICRC delegates visited the prison of La Picota, where they saw 111 detainees. Their visits were carried out in accordance with standard ICRC procedure.

Cono Sur

At the beginning of July, Mr. E. Corthésy, ICRC regional delegate for the countries of the Cono Sur, went to Chile, then to Paraguay at the beginning of August, and later in August to Uruguay.

In each of those countries, the regional delegate conferred with the authorities and with National Red Cross Society officials.

Asia

Delegate-general's mission

From 28 June to 17 July, the ICRC delegate-general for Asia, Mr Jean de Courten, went to the People's Democratic Republic of Korea, the People's Republic of China, and Pakistan.

The delegate-general stayed in the People's Democratic Republic of Korea, at the invitation of the National Red Cross Society. He was received by members of the Government and of the National Society, and in particular by the Vice-Prime Minister, Mr. Kim Gyong Ryon, and the President of the Red Cross, Mr. Son Song Pil. He conveyed to them the ICRC's interest in the solution of the humanitarian problems, especially the separation of families, affecting the Korean population since 1947. He confirmed that the ICRC was prepared, if it was thought opportune, to fulfil its traditional role of a neutral intermediary to facilitate contacts between the two National Societies concerned and to try and speed up the solution of these problems.

In the People's Republic of China, the ICRC delegate-general had various interviews with representatives of the National Red Cross and of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. They discussed, in particular, some matters connected with the border conflict with Viet Nam and the forthcoming International Red Cross Conference in Manila.

Mr. de Courten's visit to Pakistan will be referred to under the heading dealing with that country.

Thailand

In July and August, the ICRC delegation continued its activities in aid of refugees in the camps along the border between Thailand and Kampuchea, an area which is still the scene of occasional military operations.

Following armed clashes between opposing groups at the beginning of July, a large number of casualties were admitted to the camp hospitals and dispensaries. Later on the situation calmed down to a certain extent.

In July and August the ICRC maintained its medical staff in Thailand: there were two teams working in the camps south and north of Aranya-prathet, and in the camp at *Khao-I-Dang* there was a surgical team composed of 12 persons sent by the British, Danish, Finnish, Irish and Swedish Red Cross Societies. After the above-mentioned events in July, *Khao-I-Dang* hospital received 234 new patients, 62 of whom were wounded by mines or bullets.

The ICRC delegation also continued to supply medicaments and medical equipment to the teams of other humanitarian organizations assisting the refugees. In July 72,000 dollars worth, and in August 67,000 dollars worth of medical and paramedical equipment was distributed in the border area.

The three Khmer traditional medicine centres set up by the ICRC in the camps at Kamput, Sakaeo and *Khao-I-Dang*, which have been operating for several months, are currently treating about 1,000 patients a day. They were placed under the responsibility of the Order of Malta on 15 July.

The medical assistance given by the ICRC also includes transportation of a large number of sick and wounded refugees to hospital for better treatment.

In addition to providing medical aid and occasionally distributing relief, the ICRC is also carrying out protection activities. It visits some persons who are detained in refugee camps near the border and in other places of detention. The delegation concerns itself with the situation

of some Vietnamese and Khmer nationals in particularly dangerous surroundings. It also tries to reduce the tensions between refugees of various origins and between the refugees and the local population.

Protection activities include the still considerable task carried out by the Tracing Agency in registering refugees, tracing missing persons and transmitting family mail. From April to the end of July, for example, the delegation transported and distributed some 20,000 letters of refugees; this was done in close co-operation with the tracing and mail services of the Thai Red Cross Society.

The Agency office also drew up some 2,000 files on unaccompanied refugee Khmer children, about 800 of whom are in the camps in Thailand set up by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. After steps being taken with the Kampuchean authorities and thanks to the co-operation of the Red Cross in Phnom Penh, the ICRC hopes to trace the families of the children when they are still alive and bring the children and their relatives together again.

The ICRC delegation and the Thai Red Cross also co-operated in providing medical assistance and distributing food to the Thai population living in the border area and affected by the events and the presence of refugees.

Kampuchea

The ICRC delegation in Phnom Penh continued its medical aid to hospitals in Kampuchea.

At the end of July, the ICRC completed its fourth distribution to hospitals in the 19 provinces of medicines and medical equipment in the form of 500 kits specially prepared to meet the requirements of 10,000 patients over a period of three months. Some of the hospitals (in Phnom Penh especially) received extra kits containing medical supplies to cover 6 months.

The Japanese Red Cross donated two ambulances, one of which was given to the provincial hospital of Kompong Speu and the other to Svong Hospital in the province of Kompong Cham.

The ICRC also continued regularly forwarding human blood concentrate to the hospitals. This will not be necessary much longer because a blood bank was inaugurated in Phnom Penh on 25 August.

The Swiss Red Cross signed an agreement with the authorities to send a medical team to the provincial hospital of Kompong Cham.

The Australian Red Cross donated 56 tons of protein biscuits, which were distributed to 39 orphanages throughout the country.

In July and August, the plane chartered by the ICRC made 24 flights between Bangkok and Phnom Penh and transported to Kampuchea over 50 tons of medical equipment and food, valued at over 270,000 dollars.

The Tracing Agency office in Bangkok drew up some 600 files on unaccompanied refugee Khmer children in Thailand and transmitted them to Kampuchea, in the hope that relatives could be traced there. The Red Cross in Phnom Penh and the ICRC delegation are actively co-operating in the tracing of the families.

Indonesia

Timor

The ICRC and the Indonesian Red Cross are continuing a reduced relief operation in East Timor, as mentioned previously. An ICRC delegate, Mr C. Neukomm, was there at the end of June and the beginning of July and visited seven villages still receiving assistance. The situation, according to him, was quite encouraging: the medical programme and the relief distributions conducted by the Indonesian Red Cross medical staff and voluntary workers were proceeding very satisfactorily.

Philippines

The ICRC regional delegate, Mr. J.-F. Olivier, and a medical delegate, Dr. Willi, carried out a four-day mission on the island of Pata (extreme south of the Philippines), where some 700 persons had been displaced as a result of disturbances last February. Dr. Willi examined 253 patients. Some medical relief was provided. This mission was successful. A survey mission had been made in the same area, at the end of March.

Vietnamese refugees in South-East Asia

In an attempt to stop piracy which is still causing so much suffering to refugees crossing the Gulf of Siam from Vietnam to a country of first asylum, contacts were established in August, in Geneva, between the UNHCR, UNICEF, the League and the ICRC, on the one hand, and the representatives of various Western countries, India, Australia, as well as Thailand and Malaysia, on the other. The ICRC and the HCR are continuing to urge these governments to take energetic action to discourage and repress acts of piracy in the territorial and international waters of the Gulf of Siam.

Pakistan

During his visit to Pakistan at the beginning of July, the ICRC delegate-general for Asia, Mr Jean de Courten, accompanied by the head of the ICRC delegation in Pakistan, Mr J.-M. Monod, had a number of interviews with the Pakistani authorities and the Red Crescent. It was agreed that ICRC activities should henceforth focus to a greater extent on war surgery and on the hospital for Afghan casualties opened in June in Peshawar. The hospital's capacity would be raised to care for the increased number of wounded, and a prosthesis workshop would be set up for the disabled. It was also agreed that vehicles, medical relief and personnel would be made available to the Pakistani Red Crescent to enable it to run, jointly with the ICRC, three first aid centres in the « Tribal Agencies », where the wounded receive emergency care before being transported to the ICRC hospital in Peshawar.

As part of the re-distribution of medical tasks, responsibility for public health matters has been taken over by the Pakistani Government and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. The three mobile ICRC teams, which had previously worked in the "Tribal Agencies", were replaced in mid-July by HCR teams.

During his mission, the delegate-general also discussed protection problems, and especially the protection of prisoners, with the various parties concerned.

Middle East

Lebanon

In July there was a short and relative lull in the general situation, followed by a sudden deterioration in southern Lebanon and Beirut.

During the second half of July, the ICRC had to increase its medical assistance to hospitals and dispensaries in the south of the country, particularly in Nabatieh, Tyre and Sidon. The ICRC delegation organized three convoys to replenish the medical supplies of its sub-delegation in Tyre, which was completely cut off from the rest of the country. These convoys had to cross makeshift bridges and fords during a cease-fire negotiated with all the parties. In Beirut the ICRC increased its medical support to the Lebanese Red Cross and the "Palestinian Red Crescent".

The ICRC expressed to the parties involved in the conflict its grave concern about the escalation in violence during the recent events and reminded them of the respect due to the civilian population and property.

In addition to these activities made necessary by the events, the ICRC delegation in Lebanon is discharging other tasks throughout the country, such as making surveys, followed by distributions according to needs; visiting detainees; assisting persons displaced by occasional fighting; interventions and provision of relief to families whose houses are being destroyed.

To cover medical requirements in periods of tension, when transport is difficult or impossible, the ICRC built up stocks of medicaments and medical equipment in six different areas of the country.

The ICRC reactivated and is now supporting the blood banks of the Lebanese Red Cross and the Lebanese People's Relief, in Tyre and Sidon. It transported by air to Beirut a large quantity of fresh blood, offered by the Norwegian Red Cross to the Lebanese Red Cross.

In June, a poliomyelitis epidemic was feared in Zahle, which was then under siege. The ICRC supplied and conveyed, during a special cease-fire, 20,000 doses of vaccine.

An ambulance was offered to the Lebanese Red Cross by the Egyptian Red Crescent. Along with the other vehicles given previously by other National Societies, this gift contributed to reducing the shortage of ambulances in the country.

The ICRC delegation also afforded support to foreign nationals in Lebanon. It made special efforts to help some 200 foreign workers, mainly Indian and Sri Lankan nationals, who were stranded in Zahle without any means. It co-operated with the "Palestinian Red Crescent" to shelter and subsequently repatriate 220 Egyptian workers who had lost their jobs as a result of the events.

The Tracing Agency office attached to the ICRC delegation is dealing with a large number of family messages. During the second quarter of 1981 and as a consequence of disturbances, the quantity of family messages gathered, conveyed and distributed throughout Lebanon increased three-fold as compared to the first three months of the year.

Syria

During the first half of 1981 the ICRC delegation in Damascus continued its protection and assistance activities for persons affected by the Israelo-Syrian conflict (i.e. Tracing Agency work and relief activities for civilian Arab internees in Israel and the territories occupied by Israel and for displaced persons from the Golan). It also continued, as a consequence of the situation in Lebanon, its efforts in aid of Syrians detained in Lebanon and Lebanese detained in Syria.

Iraq/Iran conflict*Prisoners of war*

In July and August, the ICRC delegations in Iraq and Iran continued their protection activities in aid of prisoners of war. They visited the camps, sometimes also the prisons and hospitals, where prisoners of war were held. During their visits, they generally distributed toiletries, clothes, books and cigarettes.

Second repatriation

The second repatriation of severely wounded prisoners of war and civilian internees between Iraq and Iran took place on 25 August 1981, under the auspices of the ICRC. At Larnaca airport (Cyprus) the ICRC handed over 45 Iraqis and 40 Iranians to the representatives of their own countries. It was the second repatriation organized by the ICRC since the beginning of the conflict, the first having taken place on 16 June.

An aircraft specially chartered for the operation by the ICRC had left Geneva on the evening of 24 August. Four tons of relief supplied by the Swiss Red Cross and the League of Red Cross Societies for the victims of the earthquake in Iran had been loaded on board and were afterwards handed over to the Iranian Red Crescent.

Occupied territories

The ICRC delegates continued visiting the Iranian territories occupied by the Iraqi armed forces. On 13 July, for instance, they visited the area of Qasr-I-Shirin, where there were only Iraqi soldiers.

Iran*Mission to Kurdistan*

From 17 to 25 August, four ICRC delegates, including one medical delegate, visited several places of detention in Kermanshah and Sanandaj, in Iranian Kurdistan, where they saw over 1,800 detainees. For the first time, they were allowed access to places of detention in two Pasdars' barracks in these towns.

During their mission, the ICRC delegates also visited a displaced persons' camp with some 3,200 Iranians who had been displaced from Khuzistan by the war.

The delegates had interviews with the Governor of Kermanshah, the Vice-Governor of Sanandaj and with officials of the revolutionary tribunals. They also met the heads of the local branches of the Iranian Red Crescent and talked with the local authorities in charge of assistance to displaced persons.

Israel and the occupied territories

During July and August, the ICRC delegation in Israel and the occupied territories made 477 visits to security detainees under interrogation, held by the army. The delegates also went to 9 prisons where they visited detainees awaiting trial or already sentenced, held by the prison service.

During those two months, the ICRC also organized the passage of two groups of students (53 persons in all), at Kuneitra, between the occupied territory of Golan and Syria. Four released security detainees were transferred under the auspices of the ICRC to Jordan across the Allenby bridge, two others at Kuneitra to Syria and one at Roshanikra to Lebanon.
