

EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES

July-August 1983

Africa

Mission by the President of the ICRC

Mr. Alexandre Hay, President of the ICRC, and Mr. Jean-Marc Bornet, delegate general for Africa, visited Ethiopia and Somalia. They discussed ICRC activities with the authorities and representatives of the National Societies in both countries.

In *Ethiopia* (9-12 August) Mr. Hay met, among others, Mr. Fikre-Selassie Wogderess, Vice-President of the Council of Ministers and Patron of the Ethiopian Red Cross, Mr. Goshu Wolde, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Major Dawit Woldegiorgis, the Relief and Rehabilitation Commissioner, and Dr. Dawit Zewdie, President of the National Red Cross Society.

In *Somalia* (12-16 August) the representatives of the ICRC were received by the President of the Republic, Mr. Siad Barre, and had talks with Mr. Samantar, Minister of Defence, with General Ismail, Commander of the "Custodial Corps", and with senior officials of the Somali Red Crescent.

The President of the ICRC and the delegate general for Africa received a very warm welcome in both Ethiopia and Somalia.

Southern Africa

The annual series of visits to detention centres in southern Africa was initiated with a visit to the Robben Island prison on 29 August, and went on for three weeks. The visits were made by a team of four ICRC delegates, one of whom was a doctor.

Two delegates based in Pretoria went on a mission to Transkei at the beginning of August to assess the situation of the refugees from Lesotho. Limited assistance consisting essentially of blankets (necessary because of the cold season) was provided.

Namibia/South West Africa

On 18 and 19 August, the ICRC delegates visited 14 Angolan prisoners of war and 132 other detainees, 36 of whom were women.

On 16 August, seven Angolan nationals, who had been held in Namibia, were set free at the Angolan border.

Angola

Because of the dangerous conditions prevailing, ICRC activities for the benefit of displaced persons in the Planalto region were substantially slowed down during July and August. Nevertheless, 116 tonnes of relief goods were distributed at Huambo, Katchiungo and Kuito.

The ICRC medical team continued its activities in the south of the country, working from the sub-delegation at N'Giva. In August the team treated 1078 patients and supplied medicaments to several medical posts in Kunene province.

Zimbabwe

In response to a request from the Bulawayo diocese Catholic Commission of Social Service and Development, the ICRC made a special grant of 35,000 Swiss francs for the provision of food (special enriched foodstuffs, milk, etc.) to more than 2,000 children suffering from malnutrition. Similar assistance, to a value of 60,000 Swiss francs, was granted to the Commission in April 1983.

Uganda

The Ugandan authorities granted the ICRC permission to carry out a mission to assess the medical and food situation in the regions north of Kampala. Between 5 and 26 August, a team of five ICRC delegates (including a doctor and a dietician) travelled through the districts of Luwero, Mubende, Mpigi and Mukono. The delegates visited 18 localities with a population of about 55,000 inhabitants, in order to study the needs of the persons displaced as a result of events.

The ICRC will report the mission's findings to the Uganda authorities and discuss with them the arrangements for action it might undertake in aid of displaced persons.

Somalia

On 5 June and 22 and 28 July, ICRC delegates again visited 206 Ethiopian prisoners of war and one Cuban prisoner of war in three

places of detention. During these visits, the delegates distributed some food and medicaments.

On 11 August, the General Director of the Somali Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the head of the ICRC delegation signed an agreement on the opening of an ICRC delegation in Mogadishu.

Chad

Following the renewed fighting between the forces of the Transitional Government of National Union (GUNT) and the Chad National Armed Forces (FANT), the ICRC, with the agreement of all parties, strengthened its staff in Chad by sending teams to Abéché and Faya.

A surgical team, comprising a surgeon, an anesthetist and a nurse (the latter two seconded to the ICRC by the Norwegian and Belgian Red Cross Societies), left Geneva on 11 July for N'Djamena, en route for Abéché, which it reached three days later. It stayed there until the end of July, tending the wounded (civilians, soldiers and prisoners of war) and performing 58 surgical operations. Members of *Médecins sans frontière* at Abéché co-operated with the ICRC team.

On 20 July an ICRC doctor-delegate and two other delegates from Geneva reached Faya. They were joined six days later by a medical team provided by the Red Cross Societies of Belgium, Denmark and Sweden, together with another two delegates from Geneva. The delegation worked under arduous conditions for three weeks: the surgical staff carried out 84 operations on injured civilians, soldiers and prisoners, most of whom have since been gradually removed to N'Djamena by the FANT, which, on 7 August, evacuated the whole team to N'Djamena.

Since then the ICRC has made overtures both in Geneva and in Chad with a view to providing protection and assistance, and in particular to gain access to the prisoners of war taken by both sides. Mr. Michel Convers, Head of the Operations Department was in N'Djamena from 22 to 25 August for further discussions with the Chad authorities on the ICRC's duties during armed conflicts, and on the belligerents' obligation relating to the protection of all categories of persons not or no longer taking part in the fighting, civilians and wounded belonging to the adverse party and prisoners of war.

Zaire

In July, the ICRC delegates based in Kinshasa visited several times three places of detention; in August they again visited the same places

of detention. In the course of these visits they provided nearly 800 kgs of medicaments and hygiene articles.

In connection with the National Society's development, the ICRC organized a training seminar for lecturers in the Zaire Red Cross. In addition, nine other talks on the Red Cross were given to various sections of the public, totalling about a thousand listeners.

Furthermore, the delegates carried out missions in August to *Congo, Gabon* and the *Central African Republic* in order to renew contact with the authorities and to assess the possibilities of action, mainly for the dissemination of knowledge of the Red Cross principles and the fundamental rules of humanitarian law.

Lome regional delegation

Mr. Jean-Claude Rochat, ICRC regional delegate for West Africa, carried out a number of missions in July and August to countries within the regional delegation's territory.

In *Cape Verde* he visited the Mindelo prison in which there was a detainee of interest to the ICRC. He also delivered a lecture on the Geneva Conventions and their Protocols to a group of army and police officers and NCOs.

In *Gambia* he conferred with officials of the National Red Cross Society on the dissemination of knowledge of international humanitarian law.

Mr. Rochat went also to *Guinea-Bissau* and *Senegal* to make contact and keep informed.

Latin America

El Salvador

In July, ICRC delegates received the authorization of the Salvadorean Government to resume their activities in the north of the departments of Morazan and La Union, where precarious security conditions had previously hindered their movements. They carried out missions to evaluate medical needs in these sectors and to organize further distributions of relief supplies.

During the month of July, approximately 170 tons of foodstuffs were distributed in thirteen villages to about 23,000 displaced persons. In August, the number of recipients increased considerably to 43,000 persons in 22 villages.

The two ICRC mobile medical teams, one based in San Salvador and the other in San Miguel, visited about 60 villages and treated almost 15,000 patients.

Visits were regularly carried out, both in the capital and in the provinces, to the temporary and permanent detention centres under the authority of the armed forces, the security forces and the Ministry of Justice. During 303 visits made according to the customary ICRC criteria, the ICRC delegates saw and registered 208 new detainees.

Finally, the Central Tracing Agency's local offices registered 460 tracing requests for persons presumed missing or detained.

Chile

A new series of visits to places of detention in Chile took place from 11 July to 1 August, during which ICRC delegates saw 169 persons detained for reasons of security. These persons, 58 of whom were seen for the first time, were being held in 25 places of detention in the central and southern sectors of the country. The previous complete series of visits to detainees had taken place in November 1982.

Colombia

In Colombia, two ICRC delegates started a new series of visits to places of detention on 11 July, scheduled to continue until the beginning of September. After having visited the three prisons in the capital, the delegates went to the provinces. The visits were interrupted for a few days so that one of the delegates could participate in a seminar on the dissemination of knowledge of international humanitarian law, organized by the Colombian Red Cross in Cali from 4 to 6 August for a group of relief workers and members of the press.

Paraguay

From 15 to 20 August, two ICRC delegates based in Buenos Aires, one of them a medical delegate, carried out a mission to Paraguay, where they visited four places of detention and saw 49 detainees. The delegates also purchased some medicaments and instruments for minor surgery, which they delivered to the physician responsible for the prison institutions.

Asia

Kampuchea

The ICRC delegation in Phnom Penh, in co-operation with the relief organizations working in Kampuchea (World Vision, Church World Service, Oxfam, UNICEF), has taken steps to stop an epidemic of dengue hemorrhagic fever, which mainly affected children and which caused a 20% death rate among young patients in July. Rapid and effective action helped to improve the situation (the death rate fell to 8% in August), but treatment and preventive measures are being continued.

The ICRC has also continued its assistance programme for five orphanages in the provinces of Prey Veng, Kandal and Pursat, and relief supplies (mats, blankets, cooking utensils, etc.), purchased locally or shipped from Bangkok, are being distributed.

Furthermore, eight flights between Ho Chi Minh City and Phnom Penh, organized by the ICRC during the months of July and August, airlifted 4.5 tons of relief supplies, worth approximately 38,000 Swiss francs; this does not include the material supplies for UNICEF and the medical teams of the Swedish, Swiss and French Red Cross Societies working in Kampuchea.

Thailand

Despite the relative calm brought about by the rainy season, the situation remained tense along the Thai-Khmer border during the months of July and August. The wounded continued to be evacuated to the ICRC hospitals at Khao-I-Dang and Kab Cherng, where 9 doctors and 13 nurses made available by various National Red Cross Societies continued to tend patients and perform surgery (during the same two months, 431 patients were admitted and 781 small operations on others were performed). Furthermore, the ICRC mobile medical team continued its activities in the dispensaries of Nong Pru and Taprik, south of Aranya-prathet, where it treated 1,074 and 1,757 patients respectively.

Relief supplies (medicaments, medical and para-medical supplies, foodstuffs) worth 285,000 Swiss francs were distributed in Khao-I-Dang and Kab Cherng, and in the border camps.

During the month of August, approximately 10,000 Khmer civilians arriving from Prey Chan were resettled at a new site called Dongrek,

bringing the number of Khmer refugees living in that camp to 14,000. The ICRC delegates are keeping the state of health of the people there under close observation and regularly evaluate needs, especially medical needs.

For its part, the tracing office attached to the delegation at Bangkok set up two branch offices near the border, one at Dongrek, the other at Ban Sangae, to facilitate the reception and distribution of family messages. In July and August, it transmitted 1,403 letters between Khmer refugees and their families settled abroad. It also registered 488 requests for information and arranged several transfers of refugees from one camp to another with a view to reuniting families.

Viet Nam

On 18 August, the ICRC organized a repatriation flight for 141 persons, who flew to Taiwan via Bangkok. Since 14 September 1976, the ICRC has repatriated a total of 5,034 persons living in Viet Nam and without consular representation there.

Indonesia/East Timor

In July, the ICRC suspended its activities on the main island of East Timor, following the refusal of the Indonesian authorities to allow its delegates access to all the localities in need of assistance. The ICRC has specified, however, that it is willing to resume its humanitarian programmes as soon as it is authorized to work according to its established procedure. For its part, the Indonesian Government has indicated that the restrictions placed on the movements of ICRC delegates were only a temporary measure.

However, the ICRC, in co-operation with the Indonesian Red Cross, is continuing its assistance programme on the island of Atauro, off the coast of East Timor, where a total of about 4,000 persons have been displaced since 1980. This programme consists in the distribution of foodstuffs (mainly maize, beans, butter oil and salt) and emergency medical assistance for people suffering from malnutrition and prone to endemic diseases. An ICRC nurse-nutritionist regularly visits the island and organizes distributions of foodstuffs.

The ICRC is also continuing its programme of repatriation and family reuniting for people living on East Timor. In July and August it organized the transfer of 24 persons to Australia and of 33 persons to Portugal.

Pakistan

In July, the ICRC opened a sub-delegation in Quetta, the capital of the Pakistan province of Baluchistan, and set up in that city a surgical hospital for the treatment of Afghans wounded in the war. The hospital has been operational since 15 July; on 18 July, the medical team made available to the ICRC by the Italian Red Cross performed its first surgical operation. By the end of August, 65 war casualties had been admitted and 66 surgical operations and 221 medical consultations had been carried out. The hospital also has a laboratory (opened on 17 August) and a blood bank (19 August). Furthermore, the ICRC, in collaboration with the local branch of the Pakistan Red Crescent Society, is finalizing arrangements for the formation of two mobile aid teams, one of which will be based at Chaman, the other in the district of Zhob.

In July and August, 21 Afghan war casualties were admitted to the ICRC hospital in Peshawar, and 344 operations were performed by the two surgical teams. One is made up of ICRC personnel, and the other was made available to the ICRC by the National Red Cross Societies of the Scandinavian countries, of the Federal Republic of Germany and of New Zealand. The paraplegic centre continued to treat the disabled (50 patients in July and 49 in August), and the prosthetic workshop produced some 80 artificial limbs for war invalids.

The first-aid courses organized by the ICRC for Afghan refugees were continued; in August, several students finished a special two-week course, bringing to 276 the number of qualified first-aid workers trained by the ICRC since the courses began.

Sri Lanka

Following the intercommunity disturbances that broke out in Sri Lanka towards the end of July, two ICRC delegates went to Colombo to offer the ICRC's services to assist and protect the victims of the events. At the same time, the ICRC flew in emergency relief supplies of food and medicaments worth about 100,000 Swiss francs in three flights between 29 July and 3 August.

The Sri Lanka authorities, however, declined the ICRC's offer of services to protect and assist the wounded and the persons displaced or arrested as a result of events. The ICRC declared that it regretted this decision, which it hopes is temporary, and asked its delegates to return to Geneva.

Middle East

Conflict between Iraq and Iran

After its appeal in May 1983 to the States signatories of the Geneva Conventions, the ICRC continued its activities in these two countries, attempting to carry out the mandate entrusted to it by the international community.

Thus, to the extent that they were permitted to do so, the ICRC delegations in Baghdad and Tehran continued, in July and August, to bring assistance and protection to the victims of the Iraq-Iran conflict.

Iraq

In July, the ICRC delegation in Baghdad carried out a series of visits to prisoners of war interned in five camps and three hospitals.

A new procedure was adopted by which visits would in future take place at the beginning of the month. The next series of visits has therefore been scheduled for September.

Also during July, ICRC delegates had access to the Iranian civilian population displaced in Iraq. Two assessment missions were carried out in accordance with the customary criteria: the first to Kurds interned in the camp of Al Tash, not far from Ramadi, the second to Khuzistanis in villages in the south, near Basra.

Iran

The ICRC delegates recommenced visits to prisoners of war on 27 June. Since that date, the delegation in Tehran has visited 6 camps, namely Takhti, Qasr-Firozeh, Karaj I, Karaj II, Mehrabad and Bandar-e-Anzali. The two latter visits had to be broken off because of the hostile attitude of some of the prisoners towards the delegates. As the protection work of the ICRC could not be done satisfactorily, visits were suspended indefinitely on 27 July.

Lebanon

During the months of July and August, the general situation in Lebanon remained extremely tense: armed clashes and outbursts of violence continued without interruption in the different regions of the country.

During the same two months, the ICRC delegation in Lebanon continued its protection and assistance activities. At the beginning of July, the delegation comprised 68 persons, delegates and medical personnel, plus 102 local employees. Furthermore, several hundred volunteers from the Lebanese Red Cross constantly co-operate with and assist the delegation in its work.

In July and August, the delegation was particularly active in the field of medical assistance, caring for the victims of the war and transporting them to hospitals, in three regions: Beirut and the mountainous Shouf region south of the capital, Tripoli in the north, the Bekaa valley. For example, approximately 30 casualties were evacuated from the Shouf to hospitals in Beirut following violent fighting. Another example: from 16 July to 4 August the surgical team made available by the Canadian and Belgian Red Cross Societies performed 19 operations in the governmental hospital at Baalbek; on 7 August alone, following the explosion of a booby-trapped car, it performed 3 surgical operations and treated 15 other wounded persons.

At the same time, ICRC delegates visited hospitals and dispensaries and replenished stocks of medicaments and medical equipment. Material for radiological examinations, for example, sent by the Italian Red Cross, was handed over to the hospital at Bhamdoun, while the hospitals in Aley received general medical equipment.

The orthopaedic centres at Sidon and Beit Chebab continued their programmes for the disabled. Fifty persons at Beit Chebab and 71 at Sidon received artificial limbs during the first half of the year.

A medical assessment mission was carried out by a delegate and a doctor who had come from Geneva especially for that purpose. They visited Tripoli and the Bekaa valley where they met the personnel and the representatives of the Lebanese Red Cross to assess with them medical needs at the time and over the next few months.

The danger to the Palestinian population in the camps around Sidon continued to be of great concern to the ICRC delegation. The delegates visited these camps daily, as they did the camps at Tyre, where the situation is calmer.

The delegates continued their regular visits to the some 5,000 prisoners being held at Insar camp. During these visits, the delegates delivered family messages for the prisoners, and collected family messages written by the prisoners. They also distributed sports and leisure items, such as 2,600 books for study or pleasure. From 18 July to 15 August, 283 prisoners were released, 78 of whom were repatriated under ICRC

auspices. Furthermore, the delegates contacted several embassies with a view to finding countries willing to accept other released detainees.

As it has done before, the ICRC delegation visited persons detained by the armed forces involved: on three occasions it visited 21 prisoners held by the Israeli forces at Nabatiyeh; it also visited 179 security detainees in Beirut (parcels and family messages and toilet articles were given to them), 6 Israeli prisoners of war being held by the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and to whom it delivered books, parcels and family messages, 3 Israeli prisoners of war being held by the Syrian armed forces and 293 Syrian prisoners of war being held in Israel. On 26 July, a sick Syrian prisoner was repatriated from the camp at Atlit under ICRC auspices.

The Tracing Agency attached to the ICRC delegation continued its activities. From 15 July to 15 August, for example, it handled over 50,000 family messages either for or from the prisoners at Insar camp alone. During the first half of 1983, a total of about 350,000 messages were exchanged between the prisoners at Insar and their families. During that same period, the Agency drew up 1,659 certificates of captivity for the prisoners or their families, which allows the families to receive benefits. Furthermore, the Agency traced 1,409 missing persons and informed the families who were looking for them; it also transmitted some 2,000 family messages from Lebanon to other countries.

At the end of July, the ICRC appealed to the donators who usually support its activities for a further 13 million Swiss francs to continue its protection and assistance activities until the end of 1983.

Israel and occupied territories

The ICRC delegation continued its protection and assistance activities in the atmosphere of extreme tension that prevailed in July and August.

During the whole month of July, assassinations, curfews, the dismissal of municipal authorities, interventions by the army, demonstrations by students and the general population, with deaths and injuries, and a general strike took place in rapid succession from Hebron to Nablus.

The delegates travelled to Hebron on several occasions in July in the hope that their presence would ease the tension. They visited the local prison on 11 July. They negotiated with the army the suspension of the curfew to allow supplies to reach the town. They toured the entire region frequently. On 1 August they visited the military prison at Far'a. Calm was restored at the beginning of August.

We wish to mention also that, in June, the ICRC delegates visited the prison at Gaza after two detainees were killed by one of their fellow detainees.

Also in June, two persons of Jordanian and Iraqi nationality were transferred to Jordan via the Allenby Bridge through the intermediary of the ICRC.

Yemen Arab Republic

The ICRC regional delegate for the Arabian Peninsula, Mr. G. B. Bachetta, carried out a mission to the Yemen Arab Republic from 16 to 27 July. He met with the Minister of the Interior, the Minister of Health, the plenipotentiary Minister in charge of the consular section in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and with representatives of the North Yemen Red Crescent.

The first purpose of the mission was to visit the security detainees at the central prison in Sana'a. The first complete visit to these detainees had taken place in November 1982, as reported in our January-February 1983 issue. From 16 to 17 July, the ICRC regional delegate saw and registered 111 security detainees according to normal ICRC procedure. However, since some of the detainees were not visited, this second visit cannot be considered completed.

The second purpose of the mission was to assess, with a view to a possible assistance programme, the situation of the persons displaced in the southern border area of the country following internal disturbances. As arms had been laid down, the authorities in Sana'a will assist the population in the south; the ICRC will therefore not be called upon to do so.

Europe

Poland

The ICRC and the League of Red Cross Societies have appealed for 5,086,000 francs to finance their humanitarian programmes in Poland during the latter half of 1983. These programmes are essentially for the provision of assistance to hospitals and dispensaries and medicaments to the Polish Red Cross "SOS" pharmacy. During the previous budget period, from 1 November 1982 to 30 June 1983, the cost of the assistance programmes for the benefit of the victims of events in Poland amounted to 12,402,907 francs.
