

EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES

September-October 1983

Africa

Missions by the delegate-general

Mr. Jean-Marc Bornet, ICRC delegate-general for Africa, was in *Mozambique* from 12 to 14 September where he had discussions with the authorities concerning the activities of the ICRC in the country. In particular, he met representatives from the Ministries of Health and Foreign Affairs, as well as the President and the Secretary-General of the "Mozambique Red Cross".

Mr. Bornet also went to *Zimbabwe* where he presided over a meeting of the heads of ICRC delegations in southern Africa from 15 to 20 September.

Starting on 26 October, the delegate-general carried out a two-week mission in *Angola* where he discussed with the authorities the problems relating to the assistance activities of the ICRC.

Angola

On 28 September, 21 Portuguese nationals, prisoners of UNITA (the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola) were handed over to an ICRC team of two delegates and a doctor in southern Angola. The released persons (10 men, 5 women and 6 children) were then flown in an aircraft chartered by the ICRC to Johannesburg, where they were placed in the charge of consular representatives of Portugal.

During this operations, ICRC delegates also visited 20 Czechoslovakian nationals who were part of a group captured by UNITA last March. The prisoners were able to exchange messages with their families through the intermediary of the delegates.

Assistance activities

On the Planalto the ICRC assistance programme in aid of displaced civilians continued to be dependent on safety factors. In September, some 17,000 persons benefited from 307 tons of relief (food, clothes, and particularly seed) at Bie and from 35 tons at Huambo. In October, the total relief distributed amounted to 152 tons.

In the south of the country, at N'Giva and in the surrounding districts, the medical personnel of the ICRC gave 1772 consultations.

South Africa

Begun on 29 August, the annual series of visits to security prisoners ended on 16 September. A team of four ICRC delegates, including a doctor, had access to ten places of detention where they saw 374 convicted prisoners and one person detained under Section 28 of the Internal Security Act.

The Pretoria delegation also continued to provide assistance to prisoners and their families in need, either by supplying food parcels or by paying the travelling costs for certain people visiting close relatives in detention. In September and October, the value of this assistance amounted to almost 132,000 Swiss francs.

Namibia/South-West Africa

In September, ICRC delegates visited seven security prisoners. They also distributed food parcels and various other relief supplies to prisoners and their families.

Ethiopia

In September, the head of the ICRC delegation in Addis Ababa undertook a tour in the provinces of Eritrea, Hararge and Bale to assess, with representatives from local branches of the Ethiopian Red Cross, assistance programmes on behalf of civilian victims of the conflict or the disturbances. The delegate responsible for the co-ordination of relief visited the provinces of Sidamo and Gondar to evaluate the needs of displaced persons in these regions.

In September, the ICRC distributed 531 tons of relief to some 58,000 persons; the volume of relief substantially increased in October, totalling 749 tons.

During their visit to Geneva in October, at the time of the Red Cross meetings, the President and the Secretary-General of the Ethiopian Red

Cross had discussions with the ICRC director of Operational Activities and the delegate-general for Africa. These talks made it possible to reaffirm the principles and the procedures for the programme of joint assistance undertaken by the ICRC and the Ethiopian Red Cross in aid of displaced persons, victims of the conflict and, sometimes, also of the drought.

Uganda

After the mission of assessment carried out in August, an ICRC delegation including a co-ordinator of relief and a medical co-ordinator, visited Kampala on 22 September with a view to discussing with the authorities and the Ugandan Red Cross the practical procedures for an assistance programme for some 100,000 persons displaced in the regions of Luwero, Mpigi and Mubende, to the north of the capital.

These discussions resulted in the drawing up of an emergency plan which will be carried out, under the ultimate responsibility of the ICRC, with the Ugandan Red Cross and the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. In the context of this programme, the ICRC is called upon to develop its traditional activities in matters of protection and tracing missing persons, to supply medical material and food, and to co-ordinate and supervise relief operations.

The ICRC began providing assistance in the last week of October; nearly 4 tons of food were distributed at Kiboga to some 2,500 displaced persons; medicines and dressings were also supplied to the hospital of Kiboga and the Mulago hospital (in Kampala itself) as well as to the mission of Wumba.

Rwanda

From 13 to 28 September, two ICRC delegates, based in Kinshasa, began a series of visits to prisons in Rwanda. This series of visits, which extended into November, started in three places of detention and was conducted in accordance with the rules laid down by the ICRC.

Relief supplies, as well as medical assistance, equivalent to a total value of 35,000 Swiss francs were distributed during these visits.

Tanzania

An ICRC delegate based in Nairobi visited Tanzania where he delivered an address on the principles of the Red Cross and the fundamental rules of humanitarian law before an audience including the Chief

of Staff, senior army officers, as well as officers of the military police. A programme for the dissemination of knowledge of humanitarian law among the armed forces will be conducted at a later date, according to a schedule worked out in agreement with them.

Zaire

In September and October, ICRC delegates in Zaire visited three places of detention, two of them on several occasions. They also delivered various relief supplies to prisoners and their families.

During the same period, twelve lectures on the Red Cross were given to various groups, comprising 1,325 persons.

Latin America

Grenada

On 26 October, the day after the intervention of the multinational armed force on the island of Grenada in the Caribbean, the ICRC offered its services to all the parties concerned to undertake, in its capacity as a neutral intermediary, the humanitarian tasks laid down by the Geneva Conventions.

This offer of services having been accepted, the ICRC regional delegate based in Bogota went to Grenada on 28 October, where he started visiting a first group of Grenadian and Cuban prisoners in the hands of the multinational force. At the same time, the ICRC chartered an aircraft in order to evacuate from Grenada Cuban nationals sick or wounded during the fighting. This aircraft took off from Geneva with an ICRC team of 11 persons aboard, headed by the delegate-general for Latin America and the Caribbean and including a doctor and a nurse, and landed in Barbados on 31 October. On the same day, the ICRC delegates arrived in Grenada, where they visited and registered all the Cuban prisoners in order to inform the Cuban authorities about their nationals and likewise visited and registered the Grenadian nationals taken prisoner by the multinational armed force.

On 2 November, a first repatriation operation was carried out under the auspices of the ICRC: 57 sick or wounded Cuban prisoners and ten members of the Cuban medical personnel held in Grenada were transferred first from Grenada to Barbados; from there they were flown to Havana aboard the aircraft chartered by the ICRC. Five delegates,

including the delegate-general, a doctor and a nurse, took part in this operation.

Afterwards, the delegate-general remained in Havana to co-ordinate further operations with the Cuban authorities and the National Red Cross Society. He had several talks with President Fidel Castro, as well as a discussion with the Cuban Minister of Foreign Affairs. These conversations were particularly concerned with the repatriation of all prisoners and of the mortal remains of 24 Cubans killed in military action.

The repatriation of the other Cuban prisoners detained in Grenada was also carried out under the auspices of the ICRC: flown to Barbados aboard American aircraft, the prisoners were handed over to Cuban representatives by the ICRC, then transferred to Havana aboard Cuban aircraft. Between 4 and 8 November, 600 persons were thus repatriated in six flights. The mortal remains of the dead Cubans were repatriated on 11 November.

The ICRC also concerned itself with two seriously wounded Cubans whom the American authorities had transferred to Porto Rico, where they were hospitalized. They were visited by an ICRC medical delegate, and repatriated on 16 November in co-operation with the Cuban Red Cross.

On the island of Grenada, five ICRC delegates, including a doctor, are continuing their protection and assistance work in aid of captive Grenadian nationals.

El Salvador

ICRC delegates continued their protection and assistance activities in El Salvador, despite the military operations which considerably restricted their movements in certain regions of the country. The number of persons displaced as a result of the events again increased in October, following violent combats in several villages in the departments of Cuscatlan and Cabañas. In September and October, some 52,000 people were assisted by the ICRC in about 15 villages: nearly 435 tons of food (representing a value of 532,000 Swiss francs) were distributed among them.

The medical team based in San Salvador went out 53 times to some forty villages situated in the fighting zones; during these visits it gave 4,515 medical consultations and 1,962 dental consultations. The medical team based at San Miguel was able to resume its rounds in two regions of the department of Usulután, which it had not visited for two months because conditions were unsafe: there it saw 3,163 patients in the course

of 11 visits. At the same time, ICRC medical delegates also carried out several missions to assess the needs of displaced civilians and took part in visits to places of detention and health centres, which they provided with supplies of medicaments.

As regards protection, ICRC delegates carried out 263 visits in September and October to places of detention under the authority of the security forces and the Ministry of Justice, as well as in army barracks; during these visits, they saw and registered 198 persons under interrogation, held for security reasons, and talked to them without witnesses. On 20 and 21 October, 14 members of the Salvadorean armed forces, captured by the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) were released and handed over to ICRC delegates, who escorted them back to the nearest military garrisons. In addition, the delegates visited eight other soldiers, still held by the FMLN, to whom they delivered family messages.

In September and October, the local offices of the ICRC Tracing Agency registered 452 requests for enquiries, bringing the number of persons presumed missing or detained to a total of 2,596 in the first ten months of 1983. Furthermore, an average of 800 people per month visited one or other of the three ICRC tracing offices (in San Salvador, San Miguel and Santa Ana) to ask for news of their relatives presumed missing.

The ICRC also continued its efforts to disseminate knowledge among the armed forces of the principles of the Red Cross and the fundamental rules of humanitarian law, with a view to making its activities better known and understood. To this end, ten lectures were given in October at various barracks in the eastern part of the country to audiences totalling 1,042 officers and soldiers. These lectures marked the beginning of the third phase of the dissemination programme for 1983, carried out in conjunction with the Salvadorean Red Cross; in the course of the second phase, which ended in September, 27 talks had been given to 6,420 members of the armed forces.

Nicaragua

Because of the armed confrontations in the border regions between Nicaragua and Honduras, as well as on the Costa Rica border, the ICRC delegation in Managua built up a stock of emergency relief supplies (food, blankets, tents, kitchen utensils, medical kits, together representing a value of 350,000 Swiss francs) so that it would be able to come rapidly to the aid of Nicaraguan population affected by the events.

From 19 to 23 September three joint teams, made up of ICRC delegates and representatives from the Nicaraguan Red Cross, carried out missions to several departments bordering on Honduras (Nueva Segovia, Madriz, Esteli, Chinandega, Jinotega) to assess the needs of displaced people in these regions. These teams visited about 15 assembly points, as well as seven hospitals, health stations and branches of the National Red Cross.

Following these surveys, the ICRC delegation and the Nicaraguan Red Cross, together with the government departments concerned, distributed nearly five tons of relief (food, blankets, tents, mattresses and mats, kitchen utensils, children's clothing) to some 2,000 displaced persons in the region of Somoto, where an ICRC doctor and nurse have been posted to give medical care to the population.

Relief distributions were also carried out at Jinotega and emergency relief supplies, including medical material, were dispatched to Corinto after the town's fuel depots were destroyed by fire.

Argentina

A complete series of visits to places of detention started in mid-September and continued until 7 October. ICRC delegates visited the prisons of Devoto, Ezeiza and Rawson where they saw a total of 342 prisoners (including 55 women). They also had access to a psychiatric hospital, where they visited one detainee. All these visits were conducted in accordance with standard ICRC procedures.

Colombia

The series of visits to places of detention in Colombia, which started on 11 July, lasted until 14 September. In accordance with the usual procedures, ICRC delegates visited 52 detainees in 14 different places of detention scattered over six departments of the country.

Asia

Missions by the delegate general

Mr. Jean de Courten, ICRC delegate-general for Asia and Oceania, went to Pakistan on 19 September in order to examine, with ICRC delegates in Peshawar and Quetta, the ICRC assistance programme in aid of victims of the Afghan conflict who had taken refuge on Pakistan

territory and to decide on the objectives of this programme for 1984. During his mission, Mr. de Courten met various Pakistani and Afghan officials and discussed with them problems relating to the protection of victims of the conflict in Afghanistan.

The delegate general also carried out a mission to Thailand from 15 to 27 October to appraise activities in progress in connection with the Kampuchean conflict.

Kampuchea

The steps taken by the ICRC delegation at Phnom Penh, in co-operation with relief organizations working in Kampuchea, have succeeded in stemming the epidemic of infectious fever which had affected the Khmer population, and to which children were particularly vulnerable (see our previous issue). The ICRC therefore brought to an end the emergency programme which had been set up for this purpose.

On 23 September, an ICRC nurse arrived in Phnom Penh and will carry out a medical survey in the western provinces as soon as arrangements have been finalized with the authorities in Phnom Penh.

In addition, the ICRC continued distributing relief supplies to five orphanages in the provinces of Prey Veng, Kandal and Pursat.

In September and October, the ICRC organized nine flights between Ho-Chi-Minh City and Phnom Penh to transport nearly three tons of relief supplies worth 24,000 Swiss francs.

Thailand

The heavy rains and bad weather which seriously hampered transport and made access to refugee camps along the Khmer-Thai frontier extremely difficult, and sometimes even impossible, somewhat held up the ICRC protection and assistance activities during September and October.

On the medical side, four surgical teams comprising medical personnel made available by the Red Cross Societies of Denmark, Finland, Italy and New Zealand continued their work in the ICRC hospitals at Khao-I-Dang and Kab Cherng, operating on the wounded evacuated from the frontier (200 at Khao-I-Dang and 68 at Kab Cherng) and treating some 250 other patients. The ICRC mobile medical team was particularly active in the camps to the south of Aranyaprathet, dealing especially with numerous cases of malaria. Relief (medicaments, medical material and food) valued at 208,000 Swiss francs was supplied to the hospitals and camps.

The ICRC Central Tracing Agency continued its activities on behalf of Khmer and Vietnamese refugees in four camps along the border, and at Khao-I-Dang and Panat Nikhom in Thai territory. During September and October, it transmitted 2,493 family messages, handled 631 requests for news, and organized 175 transfers of individuals and 12 family reunions. In addition, 162 new Vietnamese refugees were registered.

Refugees in South-East Asia

The fifth technical seminar of the Tracing and Mailing Services of seven Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of South-East Asia took place at Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) from 25 to 29 September. These services, set up within the National Societies of Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore and the Philippines, in the Hong Kong branch of the British Red Cross and in the Macao branch of the Portuguese Red Cross, were created in 1979 under the auspices of the ICRC Central Tracing Agency in order to enable the Vietnamese "boat people" to trace members of their families.

This was the first time that the National Societies in the countries of final asylum of the Vietnamese refugees had been invited to such a seminar: representatives from the American, British and West German Red Cross Societies took part. The ICRC and the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies also sent representatives.

As before (the fourth seminar had been held in Manila in June 1982), the principal objective of this working meeting was to discuss the technical procedures used by these services, to take stock of their activities and to give participants in the seminar an opportunity to exchange views.

Before and during the working sessions of the seminar at Kuala Lumpur, several participants visited the Tracing and Mailing Service of the Thai Red Cross, as well as the ICRC Tracing Agency office in Bangkok; they also went to the refugee camps of Panat Nikhom and Sikhiu (Thailand), Poulo Bidong and Sungei Beisi (Malaysia) and Galang (Indonesia).

Pakistan

Continuing its activities in aid of victims of the Afghan conflict, the ICRC surgical hospital in Peshawar registered 242 admissions of Afghan war casualties in September, the highest monthly figure since the beginning of the year. The number of patients admitted in October totalled 208. During this two-month period, the ICRC surgical teams,

consisting of personnel made available by the Red Cross Societies of the Federal Republic of Germany and of Switzerland, carried out 589 operations and gave 1,517 consultations, whilst the mobile teams, based respectively at Parachinar and Miramshah, evacuated 197 wounded from the frontier to the hospital.

In addition, 15 patients were admitted to the paraplegic centre, where the number of disabled persons undergoing treatment reached 60 at the end of October. The prosthetic workshop produced 83 orthopaedic appliances, bringing to 881 the number of prostheses produced since December 1981 when the workshop became operational.

At the second ICRC surgical hospital, set up in July at Quetta, the capital of the Pakistani province of Baluchistan, the number of Afghan war casualties admitted in September and October rose to 120. The surgical team made available by the Italian Red Cross (one surgeon, one anaesthetist and one theatre nurse) carried out 126 operations and treated 470 out-patients. This team is assisted by four ICRC nurses, who are responsible for looking after the wounded, training local nurses and giving consultations to patients with less serious complaints. Close co-operation was established between the ICRC and the Pakistani branch of the Red Crescent at Baluchistan, which supplied two mobile first-aid teams along the southern frontier between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Finally, it should be mentioned that a dissemination programme was set up in Quetta in order to familiarize combatants with the principles of application of humanitarian law in general, and of the Red Cross in particular, in times of armed conflict.

Indonesia/East Timor

As part of the programme for the repatriation and reuniting of families carried out in aid of the inhabitants of East Timor, the ICRC organized the transfer of 18 persons to Portugal on 11 September and 21 persons to Australia on 2 October.

Philippines

A new series of visits to places of detention began in October and will continue during the coming months. Between 3 and 21 October, two ICRC teams went to 16 places of detention, where they saw 164 detainees, 160 of whom were classified as "public order violators".

Middle East

Missions by the President

From 24 to 27 September, the President of the ICRC, Mr. Alexandre Hay, undertook a mission to *Iran* to talk to the authorities about the activity of the ICRC in that country. Accompanied by Mr. Jean-Pierre Hocké, director of Operational Activities, and Mr. Jean Hœfliger, delegate-general for the Middle East and North Africa, Mr. Hay met Mr. Ali Khamenei, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran as well as Mr. Ali Akbar Velayati and Mr. Hossein Kazempour Ardebili, respectively Minister and Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs. Their discussions were concerned with the application of the Geneva Conventions, especially the treatment of prisoners of war within the context of the Iraq-Iran conflict.

The ICRC representatives also had talks with the President of the Iranian Red Crescent, Mr. Wahid Dastjerdi. They went to the disaster areas of Khuzestan and visited the regions of Ahvaz, Hoveizeh, Abadan and Khorramshahr.

Following on his mission to Iran, President Hay also visited *Irak* from 28 November to 1 December where, together with Mr. Hocké, he had discussions inter alia with Mr. Izzat Ibrahim, Vice-President of the Revolutionary Command Council, and Mr. Tarek Aziz, Vice Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs.

These two missions by the President were in line with the efforts deployed by the ICRC to overcome the obstacles encountered in carrying out its humanitarian mandate — obstacles which had made it necessary to address a formal appeal in May to the States signatories to the Geneva Conventions.

Lebanon

Deadly combats in Beirut and the Chouf, armed clashes in the region of Tripoli, outbreaks of violence in Beirut and the south: tragic events again shook Lebanon during September, October and November, causing more victims among the civilian population and necessitating action by the ICRC virtually throughout the country to provide protection and assistance. In each case, ICRC personnel on the spot worked in close co-operation with the Lebanese Red Cross in what were often extremely dangerous conditions.

On 16 September, the ICRC launched a special appeal for funds to a number of governments and National Societies, asking for 12 million

Swiss francs to finance an emergency assistance programme in aid of some 100,000 displaced persons, victims of the events.

Activities in Beirut and the Chouf

During the fighting in the Chouf and Beirut, ICRC delegates evacuated the seriously wounded to hospitals in the capital and in Saida (80 wounded and 52 dead evacuated). They provided emergency medical supplies in the areas close to the front lines, brought relief to the inhabitants of isolated or cut-off villages, distributed and collected family messages.

In addition, the ICRC reminded the parties engaged in the conflict of their humanitarian obligations: indeed, on several occasions, convoys of the ICRC and the Lebanese Red Cross were not allowed through, even when temporary truces had been duly negotiated. On 5 September, a first appeal was launched to all the belligerents to respect the agreed cease-fires. In fact, that very day, a convoy bound from Beirut to the Chouf, with the purpose of declaring neutral the hospitals there and evacuating the seriously wounded, had to turn back after nearly being hit by a shell. A second appeal was made on 7 September, both locally and from headquarters in Geneva, demanding an immediate and effective general cease-fire and recalling the respect due to the Red Cross emblem, ambulances and hospitals and, especially, the need to spare the civilian population. These demands were repeated twice, on 8 and 10 September.

An upsurge of work, resulting from the escalation of hostilities in the Chouf and Beirut, compelled the ICRC to increase its medical staff by one doctor and two nurses, as well as four other people recruited locally. The medical coordinator and a nurse made daily rounds of the hospitals in the capital and in its southern outskirts to assess needs there, supplying medical assistance to the hospitals (medicaments, dressings, X-ray films, blood units) and restocking several dispensaries with emergency supplies. After the cease-fire established on 26 September, the two ICRC nurses based in Saida carried out a comprehensive assessment mission in the hospitals and dispensaries situated in the Chouf, where they also provided medical assistance.

Clashes in the Chouf caused massive movements of the civilian population and led the ICRC to help nearly 80,000 displaced persons. Between 12 September and 25 November, the ICRC delegation organized 28 convoys (including 11 to the encircled village of Deir-el-Kamar) to transport 1,615 tons of relief supplies to civilians displaced in the Chouf, the regions of Aley and of Upper-Metn. These relief supplies consisted mainly of food (1,318 tons), blankets (76,000), kitchen utensils (1,600) and various commodities other than food.

For humanitarian reasons, the ICRC also evacuated 990 children and old people, and several dozen sick people, from Deir-el-Kamar to Beirut. This operation necessitated five convoys between 1 and 8 November.

Activities in the region of Tripoli and the Bekaa

Fierce fighting between several armed factions in the region of Tripoli caused numerous victims in the civilian population, necessitating rapid intervention on the part of the ICRC to evacuate the wounded to hospitals and to distribute medical supplies to the hospital centres. Once again, the ICRC appealed to all parties concerned to make every possible endeavour to avoid inflicting injuries on the civilian population and to respect all the hospitals in the region.

On 5 November, the Islamic Hospital in Tripoli was declared a neutral zone and placed under the control of the ICRC, which then doubled its capacity (from 80 to 160 beds) and installed an additional surgical unit as well as a preliminary examination centre for the wounded. The ICRC also declared neutral the Franco-Lebanese School, situated near the hospital, for use as a post-operative centre. The ICRC medical staff at the Islamic Hospital was considerably reinforced by the arrival of two doctors, two nurses and a surgical team, made available by the National Red Cross Society of the Federal Republic of Germany, consisting of a surgeon, an anaesthetist, a nurse and a theatre nurse. Within the space of one week, some 120 wounded were admitted to the Islamic Hospital and sixty patients were treated at the Franco-Lebanese School.

Precarious cease-fires enabled ICRC delegates to assess the general situation and the needs in the hospitals and dispensaries of Tripoli, where they distributed transfusion equipment, various medical supplies and provided blood. Assistance was also given to several private hospitals, and to the hospital of the "Palestinian Red Crescent".

From 16 October to 11 November, the ICRC assisted over 15,000 displaced civilians, in and around Tripoli, by supplying 71 tons of food and various relief supplies.

In the Bekaa, the surgical team placed at the disposal of the ICRC by the National Red Cross Societies of Canada and Belgium carried out 15 operations at the Government Hospital at Baalbeck during the first two weeks of September; it also gave consultations at the Government Hospital of Hermel. The situation in this region of Lebanon remaining relatively calm, the team ended its three-month mission on 17 September and was not replaced. Subsequently, a nurse and two

ICRC medical coordinators carried out tours of assessment and inspection in all hospitals and dispensaries still functioning in the "cazas" of Aley and Upper-Metn and supplied the hospitals in Bhamdoun, Hammana, Aley and Sofar with medical material.

In addition, the ICRC distributed 73.2 tons of various relief supplies (food, blankets, soap, etc.) to the needy population of the Bekaa.

During the period from 1 September to 15 November, the ICRC distributed throughout Lebanon medical material, "dispensary", "hospital" and "front" medical kits, wheel-chairs, crutches, etc.) and medicaments worth approximately 1,600,000 Swiss francs. These relief supplies also included 700 blood units, valued at 250,000 Swiss francs, provided by the Red Cross Societies of Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Norway and Switzerland. Three ambulances were sent by the National Society of Finland and 14 by the National Red Cross Society of the Federal Republic of Germany, seven of these being financed by the ICRC. The Norwegian Red Cross also supplied a field hospital (valued at 154,000 Swiss francs), which arrived in Lebanon on 14 November.

Other activities

On 23 October, following the explosions in Beirut which wrecked the buildings housing the headquarters of the American and French contingents of the multi-national force, the Lebanese Red Cross and the ICRC immediately went to the scene of the disaster. The Lebanese Red Cross set up two hospital tents and stationed six ambulances and 25 Lebanese first-aid workers near the American building (6 wounded received first aid and 10 were evacuated), as well as one ambulance and four first-aid workers near the French building. The situation remained very tense in the southern outskirts of the capital, and ICRC surveys and medical activities there had to be intensified. Despite the danger involved, an ICRC nurse visited several hospitals and dispensaries where she handed over medical kits and medicaments.

The ICRC also went to the Tyr headquarters of the Israeli armed forces immediately after the explosion there on 4 November and, through the Tracing Agency office in this town, informed the families of the deceased.

Release of prisoners

Some 4,300 prisoners held by Israel and six Israelis held by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) were released on 24 November in the course of an operation supervised by the ICRC.

The operation, which was the culmination of several months of negotiations conducted separately by Israel and the PLO with the ICRC,

was carried out in stages and had the full support of the parties concerned, as well as of the Algerian, Egyptian and French governments.

During the night of 23 to 24 November, over 1,100 prisoners, detained in southern Lebanon (mainly in the camp of Insar) as well as in other places of detention were freed and conveyed to Algiers, via Cairo, aboard three Boeing 747's placed at the ICRC's disposal by the French government. The aircraft also carried the archives of the Palestinian Research Centre, seized in Beirut by the Israeli army in 1982.

At the same time, some 3,300 other prisoners detained at Insar were also released and accompanied by the ICRC to different regions in southern Lebanon, where they rejoined their families.

In the meantime, and after a final visit by the ICRC delegates at Tripoli, the six Israeli prisoners were escorted to a French ship whence, under the supervision of the ICRC, they were transferred to an Israeli ship to return home.

It should be remembered that, before this release operation took place, the ICRC had regularly carried out its usual visits to the camp of Insar, distributed Red Cross messages to the prisoners (approximately 500,000 messages exchanged between prisoners and their families since the camp opened in July 1982) and provided them with medical assistance and relief supplies; on 16 September, in particular, the ICRC delivered 120 sheep to Insar for the prisoners to mark "Al Adha", the Moslem Day of Sacrifice.

The six Israeli prisoners of war in Palestinian hands had also been visited at regular intervals by ICRC delegates who gave them family messages and leisure items; the last visits took place on 15 September, 14 October, 8 and 11 November.

The ICRC also continued to see other prisoners detained by the armed forces in power:

— on 5 and 6 September, ICRC delegates visited 293 Syrian prisoners of war detained at Atlit; on 23 September, these prisoners were transferred to the camp of Meggido, where they were again visited from 18 to 20 October;

— the three Israeli prisoners of war in Syrian hands were seen on 26 September and 27 October; the ICRC visiting delegates gave them Red Cross messages as well as leisure items (books, games, etc.);

— on 26 November, the ICRC visited two Israeli prisoners of war held by the "People's Front for the Liberation of Palestine—General Command (PFLP-GC)";

— the 25 women prisoners held by the Israeli armed forces at Nabatiyeh were seen twice a month (20 and 24 September, 6 and 19 October);

— from 4 to 6 October, ICRC delegates carried out a comprehensive visit to security detainees imprisoned in Beirut and delivered Red Cross messages and parcels from their families.

In addition, ICRC delegates continued to make regular visits to the Palestinian camps situated in the vicinity of Saida and Tyr, where the arrival of families from northern Lebanon has been recorded.