

*EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES**March-April 1988***Africa****Ethiopia**

During the period under review no solution had yet been found to the difficulties encountered by the ICRC in carrying out its relief operations for the civilian victims of the conflict and drought. The circulation of convoys became increasingly difficult, most of them being held up for reasons that could not be justified by the military situation alone. In March relief distributions had to be suspended because the regional warehouses were empty.

On 7 April the Ethiopian authorities informed the ICRC that its delegates were to leave Eritrea and Tigray. In view of its humanitarian responsibility *vis-à-vis* the population of both provinces, the ICRC requested the Ethiopian Government that same day to reconsider its decision and to enable it to continue its assistance programmes for the civilians most affected by the drought and conflict. The ICRC's efforts were to no avail, however, and in mid-April all the delegates based in Eritrea and Tigray withdrew to Addis Ababa.

**Uganda**

Several teams of ICRC delegates travelled to the north of the country to assess the situation of the civilian population there. They went to Soroti, Gulu, Lira and Kitgum, and to Kotido and Kaabong in Karamoja Province.

ICRC delegates also continued visiting places of detention both in the capital (Luzira Upper, Luzira Remand, Murchison Bay) and outside Kampala (Kiburara camp).

## **Benin**

From 11 to 29 April, a team of ICRC delegates went to all the places of detention in the country, where they visited some 150 security detainees, in accordance with the ICRC's customary criteria.

## **Angola**

ICRC activities on the Planalto, which had resumed on 22 February, continued during the period under review. In Huambo Province, food distributions were carried out and three nutritional rehabilitation centres remained open around Huambo to care for some 750 mal-nourished children. The ICRC delegates also made a number of surveys in the provinces of Bié and Cuando Cubango.

## **Mozambique**

Once the ICRC's plans of action had been approved by all parties concerned, the delegates were able to resume their activities for the civilian population, starting in Sofala Province. Flights to the province began on 23 April. After an initial series of surveys, convoys of food and other relief items were organized to various locations in the province and distributed to the population in need.

## **Asia**

### **Afghan Conflict**

#### *Afghanistan*

In March and April, a team of ICRC delegates continued their visit to the section of the Pul-I-Charki prison administered by the Ministry of the Interior. Some of the prisoners visited wrote Red Cross messages for their families.

The activities of the orthopaedic centre in Kabul have grown since early 1988 to meet large-scale needs. By the end of April, 300 patients had been registered for treatment. Since January, a total of 422 pairs of crutches have been distributed and in April the first patients were fitted with prostheses.

Finally, the ICRC continued preparatory work on the surgical hospital in Kabul; renovation of the building chosen (the Kabul war-surgery hospital) began at the end of March.

### *Pakistan*

ICRC delegates made three visits to three groups of people detained by Afghan opposition movements on the Afghan-Pakistan border. At the same time, it intensified negotiations with opposition groups to gain access to all their prisoners.

The ICRC hospitals in Peshawar and Quetta had a high occupancy rate in March and April (80% and 90% respectively) with a total of 584 wounded people being admitted.

### **Kampuchean Conflict**

The ICRC continued its work to improve protection and security for the approximately 300,000 displaced Khmer and Vietnamese civilians on the Khmer-Thai border and its efforts to gain access to all persons detained in connection with the conflict. In March and April, the three surgical teams at the ICRC's Khao-I-Dang hospital operated on 361 Khmer and Vietnamese patients. ICRC tracing services handled 1,600 enquiries from Khmer and Vietnamese seeking relatives on the border and abroad. The ICRC also forwarded over 3,400 letters between the camps.

### **Indonesia**

In April, the ICRC made a fresh visit to people detained in connection with the situation in East Timor. Delegates had access, in accordance with the institution's criteria, to 46 detainees at three places in Jakarta and Dili.

### **Philippines**

During March and April, the ICRC continued its traditional activities. In Metro Manila and in the provinces, delegates visited people detained in connection with insurgency-related incidents or following attempted coups. The ICRC also continued its relief and medical assistance programme for persons displaced on account of the events (about 33,800 people were assisted, most of them on the island of Mindanao) and continued spreading knowledge of international humanitarian law and the Movement's Fundamental Principles.

## **Europe and North America**

### **United Kingdom**

In March, ICRC delegates, including two doctors, carried out a fresh series of visits to places of detention in Northern Ireland. They spent three weeks at the Maze, Magilligan, Belfast and Maghaberry prisons which hold some 1,800 detainees.

### **Canada**

Cornelio Sommaruga, the ICRC's President, visited the Canadian cities of Ottawa and Montreal from 20 to 24 March. There he had talks with the authorities, including Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, with leading members of the National Society and with officials of the Canadian International Development Agency. Among the topics under discussion were various ICRC operations, the ICRC's financial needs and how the question of Canadian ratification of the 1977 Additional Protocols was proceeding.

## **Latin America**

### **Guatemala**

The ICRC delegation in Guatemala, which was opened in January, conducted several surveys to determine the situation of the civilian population in the departments of El Quiche, Alta Verapaz and Huehuetenango. In some places, initial distributions of blankets and basic medical supplies were made.

The delegate-general for Latin America went to Guatemala from 18 to 22 April where he discussed the situation in the country with government authorities.

### **Panama**

A delegate based in San José, Costa Rica, made three trips to Panama to monitor the situation there. He had talks with government representatives and the President of the National Society. His missions to the country made it possible to take steps to strengthen the operational capacity of the Red Cross Society of Panama, institute a programme to spread knowledge of international humanitarian law and

convey to the authorities the ICRC's availability should the situation deteriorate.

### **Cuba/Haiti**

On 23 March, 67 Haitian nationals wishing to return to Haiti were repatriated from Cuba under the auspices of the ICRC with the co-operation of the Cuban and Haitian National Societies.

### **Other activities**

The ICRC visited security detainees in *Chile*, *Colombia* (ending the series of visits begun in December to 21 prisons in Bogotá and other regions of the country), *Nicaragua* (six regional prisons and the Tipitapa prison in Managua), *Paraguay* (five prisons and police-administered centres in Asunción), *Peru* (prisons in Lima and elsewhere, including Ayacucho which had not been visited for over a year) and *El Salvador*.

Programmes were continued to assist the civilian population of *Nicaragua* and *El Salvador*. In addition to its medical and sanitation programmes in El Salvador, the ICRC once again conducted *ad hoc* distributions of beans and cooking oil to compensate for poor harvests due to the drought at the end of 1987. It also launched a new agricultural programme (maize seed, fertilizer and insecticides) in April which is intended to benefit some 1,000 families.

Visits were made to *Mexico*, *the Dominican Republic* and *Uruguay* to foster relations between the regional delegations and the authorities and National Societies for those countries.

## **Middle East**

### **Iran/Iraq Conflict**

The "war of the cities" resumed on 28 February and the ICRC, after making vigorous representations to the governments of the two countries involved, put out a press release on 10 March in which it denounced the bombing of civilian areas as a "very grave violation of the essential rules of international humanitarian law". An attack with chemical weapons in the Iraqi province of Sulaymaniyeh prompted the ICRC to issue a second press release on 23 March entitled "The ICRC condemns the use of chemical weapons".

On 8 April, following a survey to assess needs in Iranian camps for displaced Iraqi civilians, the ICRC made a special appeal to 24 National Societies in order to be able to bring the necessary assistance to the civilian victims both of the war of the cities and of chemical attacks.

A visit to the Mossul camps carried out from 5 to 10 March completed the first series of visits to Iranian prisoners of war interned in Iraq; the second series began on 2 April and ended on 5 May.

### **Israel and the occupied territories**

The events which since 9 December 1987 have been affecting the territories occupied by Israel continued. The ICRC delegation in Israel was therefore restructured and its staff increased in order to improve its capacity to discharge its protection and assistance mandate.

The delegates visited more than 5,200 residents of the occupied territories arrested in connection with the events. The delegation was particularly concerned about the conditions of detention of the some 1,700 administrative detainees. The ICRC also pursued its traditional activities in the area of detention, making a total of 26 visits in March and April to Israeli prisons and two police stations.

The ICRC doctor and two nurses continued their visits to hospitals in which the injured are treated. Support in the form of ambulances and first-aid courses for ambulance attendants was given to local branches of the Red Crescent. The delegates also continued their regular visits to towns, villages and camps in the occupied territories, especially in places under curfew. Thanks to these visits a number of pressing human problems could be solved.

The ICRC has on several occasions expressed its concern to the authorities about the measures taken to put down the disturbances in the occupied territories. In many cases, these measures constitute grave violations of the Fourth Convention: expulsion of residents of the occupied territories, destruction of houses and other collective punishments, disproportionate use of firearms and the use of tear gas inside dwellings. In order to lend force to these approaches and to discuss the ICRC's viewpoint at the highest level, Mr. André Pasquier, the ICRC Director of Operations, went to Israel from 26 to 29 April.

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