

*EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES**January-February 1990***Africa****Angola**

As reported in the previous issue of the *Review*, surveys carried out regularly by ICRC teams to monitor the civilian population's nutritional status showed that the food situation in several districts of southern Huambo and Benguela provinces was worse than at the same season in previous years. During the period under review, the ICRC therefore stepped up its programme of food assistance to civilian victims of the combined effects of drought and conflict. A fifth Twin Otter aircraft was sent to reinforce the system established to transport food from the Atlantic coast to towns in the provinces of Benguela, Bie and Huambo. The nutritional status of the people in Ganda (Benguela province) made it necessary to set up a therapeutic feeding centre, in addition to the large-scale food distributions carried out in the area. The centre was opened on 7 February. The ICRC also provided support to Caritas, which was organizing "soup kitchens" for particularly needy groups. In all, the ICRC distributed 2,270 tonnes of food to some 100,000 people between 1 January and 28 February.

On 17 January, the Angolan authorities released two Namibian prisoners and handed them over to the ICRC. Both had been visited by ICRC delegates on three occasions during their captivity. On the day of their release, a delegate accompanied them on the flight back to Windhoek.

**South-eastern Angola**

Owing to intense fighting in south-eastern Angola between government forces and combatants of UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola), there was a massive influx of wounded people at the Luangundu hospital, where an ICRC medical team is working. In order to help local surgical staff deal with the growing number of admissions, the ICRC sent a surgeon to Luangundu to give training in war surgery. The hospital also receives regular consignments of medicines and medical supplies from the ICRC.

In early January, an ICRC team made a visit in accordance with the institution's customary criteria to 205 Angolan government soldiers in UNITA hands. During the visit, the prisoners received material aid.

## **Uganda**

After a large number of wounded people from Sudan arrived in Moyo, in north-western Uganda, the ICRC sent a surgical team to the hospital there. The team, which is normally based at the ICRC hospital set up in Lokichokio (Kenya) to treat victims of the Sudanese conflict, went to work in one of the Moyo hospital's two operating theatres. Meanwhile, ICRC technicians were transforming a former prison three kilometres from Moyo into an infirmary, in order to relieve overcrowding at the hospital. The unit received patients after surgery performed by the ICRC team. Those requiring intensive post-operative care were flown to Lokichokio while the others were taken back to Sudan with sufficient medical supplies and medicines to continue their treatment.

## **Liberia**

In January, the ICRC set up an assistance programme in Liberia following the outbreak of fighting in late December in the north-eastern county of Nimba. Several hundred people were killed in the fighting and tens of thousands of others were forced to flee to Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea.

Two members of the ICRC's regional delegation in Lagos arrived in the Liberian capital Monrovia in early January to assess the situation. One delegate and two members of the Liberian Red Cross Society received permission to go to Nimba. Although the medical needs of the victims were being met by the county's hospitals, some 5,000 displaced persons lacked food and hygiene necessities and were thus threatened by malnutrition and epidemics. The ICRC immediately provided rice, cooking oil and soap, which were distributed by National Society staff.

At the same time, the ICRC's regional delegate based in Lomé went to Côte d'Ivoire where she and representatives of the Red Cross Society of Côte d'Ivoire assessed the situation of the Liberian refugees. The ICRC provided the National Society with initial assistance in the form of logistic support and first-aid kits and helped to set up an aid programme. The League, which assumed responsibility for organizing relief, launched an appeal for 820,000 Swiss francs to

enable the National Society to furnish material and food assistance to the most destitute of the refugees over a period of three months.

### **Senegal/Mauritania**

In January, the ICRC repatriated 23 Senegalese fishermen whom the Mauritanian authorities had just released. The men had been caught fishing in Mauritanian territorial waters last August at a time when inter-ethnic clashes had created serious tension between Mauritania and Senegal, with the two countries breaking off diplomatic relations. The fishermen were handed over to the ICRC in the Mauritanian capital on 14 January. A delegate accompanied them to the border, where they were received by representatives of the Senegalese authorities.

### **Somalia**

Many people fell victim to the fighting which affected north-western Somalia. The growing number of wounded people arriving at the ICRC hospital in Berbera made it necessary to send a second surgical team there in early February.

### **Sudan**

In the period under review, the ICRC stepped up its representations to the Sudanese authorities for permission to resume its relief flights into southern Sudan, which has been inaccessible by air since Khartoum closed Sudanese air space on 3 November to all the humanitarian organizations working in the south of the country. On 3 and 4 February, the ICRC was allowed to organize flights to Wau and Malakal to relieve its delegates there. Apart from those two flights, the ICRC has not been able to resume regular activities in southern Sudan.

Where the ICRC had staff in the field (Wau, Juba, Malakal), relief work continued throughout the period as far as food stocks permitted. Everywhere else, however, activities were brought to a standstill. To remedy this, delegates attempted to travel to southern Sudan by road from Lokichokio, Kenya. In late January, two convoys reached Bor where a logistics base was set up to facilitate access to other areas.

## **Latin America**

### **El Salvador**

During the first two months of the year, the ICRC delegation in El Salvador continued to focus its activities on protection and assistance for civilians and detainees. Indeed, although the general situation was calmer than at the end of 1989, there were repeated outbursts of sporadic fighting between members of the armed opposition (FMLN) and the Salvadoran army, and the state of emergency was maintained.

In this context, the delegates were nevertheless able to evacuate wounded from both sides and to resume routine medical activities and tracing work. They also evacuated 32 FMLN war disabled, who had been granted an amnesty, to another country.

Detention activities took up much of the delegation's time. While many of the detainees arrested in November and December 1989 were released, those who were still in jail and people more recently imprisoned were closely followed by the delegates.

In all, ICRC delegates made 496 visits to about 100 places of detention in January and February 1990. They registered detainees, had interviews with them in private and provided daily medical assistance, especially in San Miguel prison.

The delegates also wrote two memoranda on the events of November and December 1989, one for the Salvadoran authorities, the other for the FMLN. The subjects covered were protection of the civilian population, respect for the neutrality of hospitals and evacuation of the wounded.

The importance of dissemination was again emphasized and the delegates redoubled their contacts with the local authorities. The ICRC was also able to broadcast programmes explaining its role and its activities over local radio stations.

### **Panama**

On 20 February, the ICRC sent two delegates, one of them a doctor, to Florida to visit General Manuel Noriega and three other prisoners, by virtue of the mandate conferred on the institution by the

Geneva Conventions. The delegates spoke with all four prisoners at the Metropolitan Correctional Centre in Miami, where they had been held since late December 1989.

Following several visits to Empire Range and Fort Clayton camps in the canal zone, ICRC delegates registered 149 prisoners. The American authorities had already released most of the detainees. The camps were closed in February and all remaining prisoners were transferred to Panamanian places of detention, where the delegates started visits to them on 26 February. The delegates also collected and distributed many family messages.

## Nicaragua

As the presidential elections of 25 February 1990 drew near, President Ortega announced the release of persons being held for security reasons. An amnesty for 1,190 prisoners was approved by the National Assembly on 7 February. Most of them were members of opposition movements, but 39 were former members of the national guard under the Somoza regime.

The delegates visited the detainees at Tipitapa Prison near Managua on the eve of their release, which took place on 9 February, and gave them civilian clothing. The ICRC also provided transport for 138 of the amnestied detainees, the authorities taking charge of the others. The delegation also gave food parcels to branches of the Nicaraguan Red Cross for distribution to released prisoners.

The ICRC was aware that about 100 security detainees had not benefited from the amnesty, and so the delegation decided to make another round of all the places of detention it visited; this series of visits was to take place in March.

As in El Salvador, protection of the civilian population is an important aspect of ICRC work in Nicaragua. In the course of numerous field missions, the delegates organized information meetings, called *charlas*, in villages, distributed non-food relief supplies and treated and evacuated wounded civilians. In addition, the delegation in Managua handled 1,030 Red Cross messages.

Furthermore, a number of delegates stationed in Nicaragua went to assist the teams in El Salvador and were sent to Panama in connection with the recent events there.

## Asia

### Afghan conflict

ICRC activities for the victims of the Afghan conflict remained intense at the beginning of 1990. An escalation in the fighting around the Afghan town of Khost, south of Kabul, resulted in a influx of wounded at the ICRC surgical hospital in Peshawar, where a fourth surgical team was called in to provide temporary assistance. The ICRC hospital in Kabul was also very active during the reporting period, particularly in late February when the Afghan capital came under rocket attacks.

Meanwhile the delegates based in Pakistan and in Afghanistan pursued all their usual activities. From Pakistan, they conducted many missions to Afghan provinces and continued visits to persons being held by the opposition. At the same time, the delegates based in Afghanistan, in the ICRC sub-delegations opened in Herat and Mazar-i-Sharif in August 1989, also made frequent visits to the provinces. The main purpose of these missions was to carry out tracing work and make contacts which would enable the ICRC to expand its activities in provinces to which it has only recently had access. As regards detention work, on 8 January a team of delegates finished a third complete series of visits to sentenced prisoners being held in Pul-i-Charki prison in Kabul. Detainees in the prison also received material assistance, consisting of warm clothes and blankets, in January. In the same month a team of delegates conducted a second series of visits to sentenced prisoners held in the provincial prison of Farah, who had been seen for the first time in June 1989.

The ICRC Delegate General for Asia and the Pacific went on a mission to the Afghan and Pakistan capitals in February. In the course of his meetings, in particular with the President of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, Mr. Najibullah, the Pakistan Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Yaqub Khan, and the President of the interim government of the Afghan opposition based in Pakistan, Mr. Mojaddedi, he reviewed ICRC activities in the framework of the Afghan conflict and discussed ICRC concerns in detail, in particular with respect to protection.

### Sri Lanka

ICRC activities in Sri Lanka, which date from October 1989, remained intense. The delegates continued their series of visits to the country's many places of detention (army camps, prisons and police

stations), visiting almost 2,500 detainees in January and February. At the same time, tracing work was maintained at a steady pace, the delegation's offices in Colombo receiving an average of 20 enquiries daily about people missing as a result of the fighting. In order to facilitate its activities in the country, the ICRC based a team in Kandy in the centre, and another in Matara in the south, to cover the central and southern provinces. Teams of delegates also continued to conduct surveys in various parts of the country, in particular the north and the east as yet unvisited by the ICRC, to assess the situation and especially medical needs. Finally, the delegation carried on with a major programme, launched in December 1989, to disseminate international humanitarian law. A delegate specialized in dissemination to the armed forces gave theoretical courses at several army bases, including those in Jaffna, Trincomalee and Vavuniya. The courses focused on respect for basic humanitarian rules and sometimes included practical exercises.

### **Cambodian conflict**

The ICRC continued its activities for the victims of the conflict in Cambodia, seeking in particular to expand medical activities and tracing work within the country in parallel with its operations on the Thai border. In January, a team of delegates spent a week in Battambang, where the ICRC was authorized to start work in October 1989. The ICRC was nevertheless not yet able to base a permanent team in the town.

On the Thai side of the border, the ICRC remained deeply concerned about the plight of displaced Khmer civilians, particularly those in camps administered by the Democratic Kampuchea faction. In January, the 4,400 civilians in Borai camp, located in the southern sector of the border and administered by Democratic Kampuchea, were transferred, without the ICRC being able to ensure that they were going of their own free will. They were taken to places close to the border, in an area to which humanitarian organizations do not have access. The ICRC expressed its anxiety about the location of the new sites, situated in a mine-strewn and malaria-infested area, and made repeated representations—but in vain—to the camp officials and the Thai authorities to have the entire population of Borai transferred to Site K. The latter, which was opened in May 1989 at the request of the ICRC and various international organizations, is intended to hold civilians administered in the southern sector of the border by Demo-

cratic Kampuchea, in a place some distance from the conflict zones and accessible to humanitarian services.

### **China/Viet Nam**

On 19 January, 17 Vietnamese prisoners of war and five Chinese prisoners of war, all visited by the ICRC in the past, were released simultaneously. An ICRC delegate was present when the prisoners were handed over to their respective authorities.

### **Philippines**

For the ICRC delegation in the Philippines, the year began with a tragedy. On 19 January, an ICRC delegate and a member of the Philippine National Red Cross were killed in an ambush on the island of Mindanao.

The team to which the two victims belonged was coming back from a survey and travelling in two vehicles—distinctly marked with red crosses—when the attack took place north of Cotabato City. Four young men in civilian clothes stopped the vehicles, demanded money and stole equipment. Shots were suddenly fired at the second vehicle, fatally wounding two of its occupants.

Walter Berweger, an ICRC delegate, and Juanito Patong from the Philippine National Red Cross died while being taken to hospital in Cotabato. A local ICRC employee, Roberto Mira, was slightly wounded.

Walter Berweger had been the head of the ICRC sub-delegation in Mindanao for eight months. He had previously been an ICRC administrator in Lebanon and Pakistan and subsequently a delegate in El Salvador, before working at ICRC headquarters in Geneva and then leaving for the Philippines.

In a public statement, the ICRC expressed its profound sympathy for the families of all three Red Cross workers, referring to the attack as an “outrageous act”. It emphasized that this tragic event further confirmed the imperative need to respect the red cross and crescent emblems at all times, failing which its delegates could not fulfil their neutral, humanitarian and impartial mission.

## Middle East

### Lebanon

While the ICRC was doing all in its power to help the victims of the Lebanese conflict, the two delegates abducted in October 1989 in Sidon, Emanuel Christen and Elio Erriquez, started their fifth month of captivity.

On 6 February, four months to the day after the kidnapping of the delegates, the ICRC released a statement calling on all the parties in Lebanon, and all the governments that had assured it of their support, to increase their efforts to obtain the release of the two hostages. The institution said that the abduction was especially intolerable at a time when the ICRC was striving to bring about a truce in the fighting in Lebanon so that it could come to the aid of the victims. Once again, the ICRC appealed for the release of the two men, saying that their detention was a grave violation of the respect its delegates needed to carry out their humanitarian mission.

In Geneva, action committees for the hostages organized a gathering at the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum on 6 February to demonstrate their solidarity.

In the meantime ICRC representatives were continuing their approaches to countries and groups that might help bring about the delegates' unconditional release. At the end of February, however, there was still no news of Emanuel Christen and Elio Erriquez.

Fierce fighting between rival Christian forces in and around Lebanon's East Beirut left thousands of dead and wounded in February. Tank, artillery and rocket fire caused massive destruction and forced civilians into shelters for days on end.

Hospitals flooded with casualties and sometimes hit by shells ran short of essential supplies. The wounded lay in corridors, morgues were full, and the hospitals soon launched urgent appeals for medical supplies, oxygen and food. Water was also running short and a lack of electricity forced the hospitals to rely on emergency power 24 hours a day.

The ICRC repeatedly called for a humanitarian truce to allow its delegates to provide assistance, describing the plight of the civilian population as desperate. It was able to help hospitals to the north of the city during the first few days, but in East Beirut intense fighting continued and negotiated ceasefires collapsed one after the other.

One week after the fighting broke out, the ICRC and the Lebanese Red Cross entered East Beirut with a convoy of relief supplies. Medicines, medical equipment, oxygen tanks, food and petrol for generators were distributed to several hospitals and further deliveries were made in the following days. A number of wounded people and the mortal remains of the dead were taken to West Beirut.

The Tracing Agency had to deal with thousands of requests for news following the breakdown of normal means of communication (postal and telephone services). Finally, the delegation visited over 900 prisoners captured by both sides in the course of the fighting.

### **Western Sahara**

The ICRC Director of Operations went to Morocco in mid-January for a meeting with the Minister for Foreign Affairs about the fate of prisoners held, some of them for as long as twelve years, in the context of the Western Sahara conflict. He drew attention in particular to the 200 Moroccan prisoners of war held by the Polisario Front, whom the latter had said could be freed in May 1989. He emphasized that the ICRC was available to finalize the terms under which the prisoners would be released and returned to their country.

### **Iran-Iraq**

In January, the ICRC repatriated 70 Iraqi and Iranian wounded or sick prisoners of war, following unilateral decisions made by both Iran and Iraq.

Thus, on 17 January, 50 prisoners were handed over to ICRC delegates in Tehran. Accompanied by a team made up of two delegates, a doctor and two nurses, they were taken to Baghdad on board an aircraft chartered by the ICRC and were received on arrival by representatives of the Iraqi authorities.

The following day, 20 Iranian prisoners boarded the same aircraft with the ICRC team for their flight to Tehran, where they were received by the Iranian authorities.

The ICRC delegates and doctors spoke to all the prisoners individually and without witnesses before the repatriation, to ensure that they were fit to travel and wished to return to their respective countries.

## Europe

### Romania

On 22 December, the day Mr. Ceaucescu's government fell, a team of ICRC delegates was already on the spot in Bucharest. The events prompted a large-scale humanitarian mobilization for Romania. During the emergency phase, the ICRC co-ordinated the material and medical assistance sent by many National Societies.

At a meeting in Bucharest on 20 and 21 January the representatives of 21 National Societies, the League and the ICRC decided on a clear distribution of tasks. On the basis of very detailed surveys in five test areas, three major groups of victims were accorded priority: abandoned children under three years of age, the disabled and the elderly. General responsibility for co-ordination of assistance programmes for these groups fell to the League, in accordance with an *ad hoc* agreement signed by the League and the ICRC. The ICRC nevertheless continued to be involved in a programme to distribute surgical equipment and medicines. The first of the four distributions planned started at the end of February.

From the outset the ICRC had attempted to visit persons arrested as a result of the events and was able to see some detainees in early January. On 6 February, the delegates started a series of visits to detainees, first at the Law Courts in Bucharest, then in Sibiu, Aiud, Timisoara, Arad, Cluj, Alba Julia and some other places.