

### **Emanuel Christen and Elio Erriquez released**

Emanuel Christen and Elio Erriquez, the two ICRC orthopaedic technicians abducted while on their way to work in Sidon, Lebanon, on 6 October 1989, were released on 8 and 13 August 1990 respectively after 307 and 312 days of captivity.

Both delegates followed the same path to freedom. They were handed over to Syrian forces in Lebanon and then transferred to Damascus where, in the presence of the head of the ICRC's delegation in the Syrian capital, they were entrusted to the care of the Swiss embassy. From Damascus a special aircraft chartered by the ICRC brought them back to Switzerland, where they were welcomed by their families, by Mr. René Felber, head of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, and by ICRC President Mr. Cornelio Sommaruga.

Before each delegate was released, a message signed by a previously unknown organization, the Revolutionary Palestinian Factions, was sent together with a photo of the hostage concerned to the international media in Beirut.

In a statement to the press on 14 August, President Sommaruga first of all expressed the "intense joy" which everyone at the ICRC shared with the families of Elio and Emanuel. He said: "This happy outcome has been made possible thanks to the active support and the good offices of governments from whom we sought assistance. I should like to express the ICRC's gratitude to the Libyan leader, Colonel Muḥammad Khaddāfi, who gave us constant backing through his humanitarian appeals for the release of our two colleagues. I should also like to convey our thanks to the President of Syria, Hafez al-Assad, and the Algerian President, Chadli Benjedid, who, as we know, were active throughout this crisis in seeking a solution. Finally, I wish to thank the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Palestine Liberation Organization, the Lebanese authorities and all the parties in Lebanon whose support bore witness to their solidarity".

Mr. Sommaruga also thanked the Swiss public, the federal, cantonal and municipal authorities in Switzerland, the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies around the world and the media in

general, which had helped to sustain public awareness and concern about the plight of Elio Erriquez and Emanuel Christen. He paid tribute to the delegates and other ICRC staff who had continued their mission in Lebanon throughout the ten months their colleagues were held captive and expressed his gratitude to the ICRC task force which, in co-operation with that of the Swiss Department of Foreign Affairs, had worked tirelessly to bring about the two delegates' release.

Mr. Sommaruga stressed that the ICRC did not know the identity or motives of their captors. "On the basis of the information we have, we do not wish to speculate on who was behind this kidnapping. The ICRC therefore dissociates itself from any theories put forward".

The ICRC President also announced that the institution would be assessing the situation in the next few days and would take whatever steps it considered necessary. (See *External activities* below, p. 446).

He went on to say that, in view of the grave problems facing the world today, particularly in the Gulf, the ICRC's mission to protect and assist the victims of conflict could be fulfilled only if respect were shown for its delegates. President Sommaruga concluded by making a fervent appeal on behalf of the International Committee for the release of all the other hostages still held in captivity.

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## **The President of the People's Republic of Mozambique at the ICRC**

On 13 September 1990, the President of the People's Republic of Mozambique, His Excellency Mr. **Joaquim Alberto Chissano**, visited the headquarters of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), where he was received by the institution's President, Mr. Cornelio Sommaruga, and several members of the Committee. Mr. Chissano was accompanied by Dr. P. Mocumbi, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and by Mozambique's Ambassador in Paris and Geneva.

In his welcoming address the ICRC President thanked Mr. Chissano for supporting the whole range of ICRC activities in Mozambique (visits to detainees and assistance to displaced persons), and for granting the institution all the facilities it needs to discharge its mandate.