

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.

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.

In his reply President Chissano pointed out the importance of the ICRC's impartiality in its work on behalf of victims of conflicts. He also emphasized the excellent co-operation that existed between the ICRC and the Mozambique Red Cross Society.

ICRC President in the Middle East

ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga, accompanied by Mr. Angelo Gnaedinger, the Delegate General for the Middle East, was in the Middle East from 3 to 7 September 1990 for high-level talks with the Jordanian, Iraqi and Iranian authorities concerning the Gulf crisis. To quote President Sommaruga, the purpose of this mission was to achieve a "comprehensive humanitarian mobilization". The mission itself was in keeping with the ICRC's mandate to act in the event of international armed conflict on the basis of the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the institution's statutory right of initiative. It had four main objectives:

- to provide protection and assistance, in both Iraq and Kuwait, to the various categories of civilians affected by the events;
- to improve co-ordination and step up the ICRC's operation in Jordan in behalf of foreigners transiting through the country;
- to examine possibilities of assisting foreign nationals crossing other borders (particularly into Iran);
- to review the current situation with regard to the repatriation of Iraqi and Iranian prisoners of war.

In Baghdad, President Sommaruga had three meetings with the Iraqi Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Tariq Aziz, during which they discussed the terms of a possible agreement defining the ICRC's operating procedures.

However, the ICRC did not succeed in obtaining the Iraqi Government's authorization to launch an operation in Iraq and Kuwait for the victims of the crisis.

It had requested permission to visit foreign civilians who had the financial means to leave Kuwait or Iraq but who had not been authorized to do so, and to help them stay in touch with their families by means of Red Cross messages. As for foreign nationals — especially