

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

RED CROSS RELIEF ACTION IN JORDAN

In the October, November and December 1970 numbers, *International Review* published articles on the assistance provided to victims as soon as civil war had broken out in Jordan. An extensive action, undertaken by the Red Cross, became possible thanks to the generous aid supplied by many National Societies after the ICRC had launched on 24 September an appeal to their sense of solidarity. The action by the Red Cross co-ordination group in Jordan terminated on 10 December 1970.

Care of the remaining patients being treated by the Red Cross medical personnel in the King Hussein Hospital at Amman was taken over by the Jordan Ministry of Health. The casualties who had been evacuated to Beirut during the civil war were all repatriated.

Part of the surgical teams' equipment and stocks of medicines were handed over to local hospitals, except for the equipment of three mobile teams which were sent to Beirut where it was stored in the ICRC depots in reserve for emergency.

Relief food and clothing which had reached Beirut but had not been sent on to Jordan was sent to Amman by road.

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The ICRC delegation in Amman, since the end of the relief action, consists of the Head of the delegation, two delegates and a radio operator. There are still numerous problems to be solved and we would like, in this connexion, to mention some of the commonly

called conventional tasks which the ICRC representatives had to face in September and continued to perform during the months following.

In Jordan, there live many refugees from the West Bank of the Jordan, and nearly all have members of their families residing either in Israel or in the occupied territories. A great number of them have relatives in other Arab countries. Those who were already out of Jordan were therefore worried about what might have happened to their kin when they learnt of the dramatic events taking place in Jordan.

As there are no postal facilities between Jordan and Israel, and no communications could be established between Jordan and the outside world, the ICRC delegation in Amman was flooded, right from the start of the civil war, by messages arriving through the various delegations of the International Committee in the Middle East and through the Central Tracing Agency in Geneva.

The latter at once despatched one of its staff members to Amman. His mission was to organize in the Amman delegation office a bureau that would be, in some sort, a branch of the Agency and where a card index was to be established with the names of all persons, military and civilians, to be traced. The bureau, once set up, was organized on the lines of the Geneva Agency, and a locally-recruited Jordanian was taught the methods employed. He was able, subsequently, to carry on the work begun, under the supervision of the ICRC delegates.

It was necessary first of all to ensure forwarding about 25,000 messages to the addressees. Thanks to the efficient co-operation of the Jordanian Red Crescent, of the Jordan postal authorities (who gave priority to the messages sent in by the delegation), and of numerous volunteers, the messages were distributed and most of them even returned with a reply to the senders, within a period of four weeks.

Some unhappily bore no reply. They had been sent to persons who were "missing": either their homes had been destroyed and they had been obliged to move elsewhere, or they were dead, or else they had left the country as refugees, for some unknown reason, or, again, they had been wounded and taken away to neighbouring countries. In each of these cases, the delegation has

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started enquiries, with the active help of the Jordanian Red Crescent and of the "Palestinian Red Crescent".

In addition, in view of the unstable situation, a number of refugees wished to return to their former homes in Israel-occupied territory, especially where members of their families had remained there. The ICRC delegation in Amman, in such cases, dealt with these operations involving repatriation and the reuniting of families, and still continues to do so.

Finally, ICRC representatives travelled throughout the country in order to inform the inhabitants of distant villages and hamlets that they could apply to the delegation in Amman, which would undertake to forward family messages, trace missing persons and help each one to find a solution for any other problems of a purely humanitarian nature, where only a neutral institution such as the Red Cross can intervene.
