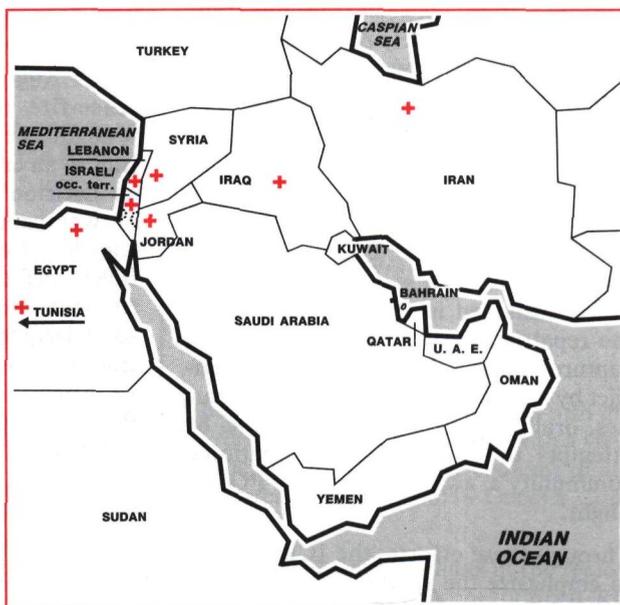


MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

Tensions ran high in the Middle East in 1990. The year was marked by strained relations between several countries and armed conflict on the regional and international levels. While the intensity of the conflict in Lebanon diminished in the latter part of 1990, the disturbances in the territories occupied by Israel continued and, following the entry of Iraqi troops into Kuwait on 2 August and the deployment of multinational military forces in the region, the critical situation in the Middle East became a major concern. The returnees in Jordan were given



assistance and emergency medical care in transit camps managed by the ICRC and the Jordan National Red Crescent Society while awaiting transport to their countries of origin in the Middle East or Asia.

1990 also saw the repatriation of more than 75,000 prisoners of war captured during the Iran/Iraq conflict.

Throughout the year the ICRC maintained seven delegations in the Middle East (Amman, Baghdad, Beirut, Damascus, Cairo, Tehran and Tel Aviv) and two regional delegations, one in Tunis covering North Africa, the other in Geneva for the countries of the Arabian peninsula.

In December 1990, the number of ICRC personnel present in the Middle East and North Africa was 350, of whom 83 were expatriate personnel (National Society and ICRC), and 267 were local employees.

The budget for this zone for 1990 was set at 73,422,900 Swiss francs. In the same year, the total income (transfers, cash, kind and services) was 54,384,100 francs and the expenditure totalled 57,229,200 francs.

CONFLICT BETWEEN IRAN AND IRAQ

On 20 August 1988, following Iran's acceptance of UN Resolution 598 (it will be recalled that Iraq had accepted this resolution the previous year), a cease-fire went into effect between Iran and Iraq. The ICRC immediately proposed a comprehensive repatriation procedure to both parties, based on the applicability of Article 118 of the Third Geneva Convention, which is mentioned in Point 3 of Resolution 598. However, this repatriation was still not under way at the end of 1989.

Throughout the first part of 1990 the ICRC sustained its efforts to carry out the repatriation of all prisoners of war captured during the eight years of conflict by repeatedly approaching both parties, orally and in writing, as well as by attempts to heighten the international community's awareness of the POWs' plight.

Through these efforts, the ICRC aimed to emphasize the validity of Article 118 in order to remind both parties involved of their conventional obligations regarding global repatriation of prisoners of war after the cessation of hostilities.

While the ICRC delegation in Iran focused on these negotiations as well as tracing activities, the delegation in Baghdad carried out the traditional ICRC activities, including protection, tracing, medical and relief for the Iranian prisoners of war to whom they had access and for displaced or interned Iranian civilians in Iraq.

Repatriation of prisoners of war

On 17 and 18 January, the ICRC repatriated 70 sick or wounded prisoners of war (50 Iraqis and 20 Iranians) whom

the governments of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Iraq decided unilaterally to release for humanitarian reasons. The ICRC reminded the international community that over 100,000 POWs were still being held in both countries, and that under the terms of the Third Geneva Convention, they should have been repatriated after the cease-fire, 17 months earlier.

On 15 August 1990, two years after the cease-fire of 20 August 1988 which brought the conflict between Iran and Iraq to an end, Iraq announced *inter alia* its decision to repatriate all prisoners of war captured during the Iran/Iraq conflict. Following this decision, the ICRC acted quickly to reinforce the four-member delegation in Iran with 25 delegates. The ICRC delegation in Iraq was increased from 21 to 41. On 17 August, the first group of Iranian POWs crossed the Iran/Iraq border under ICRC supervision. At this point in the operation, the majority of the prisoners of war were repatriated by land routes through the border post at Khanaqine/Qasr-e-Shirine. Sick and wounded POWs were airlifted.

The repatriation operation was temporarily interrupted in mid-September. At that time, a technical commission was set up by the governments of Iran and Iraq and the ICRC to organize the repatriation of the remaining prisoners of war and to settle a number of individual and special cases. Negotiations continued throughout the month of October and into November. On 21 November 1990, the repatriation process resumed on a regular basis.

The most active phase of the repatriation operation was between 17 August and 5 October 1990, when 37,861 Iranian prisoners of war and 40,960 Iraqi prisoners of war returned home. The operation was still continuing at the end of the period covered by this report.

In accordance with the Fourth Geneva Convention, the ICRC pursued efforts to negotiate a long-term solution for the civilians displaced or interned during the Iran/Iraq conflict. The ICRC delegation in Baghdad continued regular visits to Iranian civilians interned in Iraq and provided them with tracing services as well as medical and relief assistance.

Activities for prisoners of war

Before the major repatriation operation began, the ICRC carried out the following activities for prisoners of war:

In Iraq: Regular visits were made in 1990 by ICRC delegates and doctors to 18,000 Iranian POWs in Iraq and relief items were distributed (clothing, personal hygiene products, books and sports equipment).

After the severe earthquake in Iran, ICRC delegates made a special visit to Iranian POWs in camps in Iraq to distribute forms enabling prisoners to request news of their families. Over 1,700 "Anxious for News" messages from prisoners to family members living in the stricken areas of Gilan and Zanjan were collected in the Mosul, Salaheddine and Ramadi camps.

In Iran: The ICRC reminded the Iranian authorities of the ICRC's mandate vis-à-vis prisoners of war and worked to resume visits to Iraqis held in Iran as provided for by the Geneva Conventions.

Settlement of cases of POWs who refused repatriation

Following the major repatriation operation, ICRC delegates held interviews without witnesses with Iraqi POWs in Iran who had expressed to Iranian authorities their unwillingness to be repatriated.

In Iraq, ICRC delegates held second interviews with the Iranian POWs who had refused repatriation. Some of the POWs in question changed their minds and opted to return home.

A final settlement was sought for all POWs who remained firm in their refusal to be repatriated.

Tracing Agency

The ICRC reaffirmed its readiness to assist the two parties in resolving the cases of those missing in action.

The Central Tracing Agency of the ICRC handled a total of 848,220 Red Cross messages for POWs and their families in 1990.

Activities for civilians

The ICRC continued negotiations with the governments of Iran and Iraq with a view to the settlement of these civilians in accordance with the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Access to detained civilians in the region has been a source of concern for the ICRC for a number of years. However, in Iraq, regular visits were made to Iranian civilians interned in the Al Tash and Shomeli camps and to displaced families from Khuzestan. Medical, nutritional and sanitation surveys were carried out regularly and supplies were provided as needed.

EGYPT

Tracing activities continued for families separated because of the different conflicts in the Middle East, past and present. In 1990, 120 Red Cross messages were exchanged.