

In coordination with other Middle East delegations, the delegation in Cairo worked on dissemination projects designed especially for the Arab world. The ICRC continued its dissemination activities in universities, military and police academies, and with the Egyptian Red Crescent Society.

IRAQ/KUWAIT

Kuwait became the focus of worldwide attention when Iraqi troops entered the country on 2 August 1990. The ICRC responded the same day by stating the applicability of the Geneva Conventions and by reminding both countries of their obligations in armed conflict as States party to the Geneva Conventions. In accordance with the mandate entrusted to it by the international community, the ICRC requested authorization to take action to protect and assist all those in need.

The ICRC's objective was to carry out protection and assistance activities in behalf of Kuwaiti civilians. Foreign nationals in Iraq and Kuwait, Kuwaiti prisoners, and Iraqi civilians were also offered protection and assistance. To this end, the ICRC sent a note verbale to the Iraqi Foreign Ministry on 23 August requesting permission to carry out its mandate in Iraq and Kuwait. The institution offered its services to secure authorization to transport food and medicine into Kuwait and Iraq despite the embargo, to help transfer foreign nationals from Iraq or Kuwait to other countries, and to provide communications between foreigners still in Iraq or Kuwait and their families.

During the period August-December 1990, the ICRC maintained regular contact with representatives of the international community as well as government representatives in Baghdad and Kuwaiti

government representatives in exile in Taif (Saudi Arabia). As a last resort, the ICRC President visited Amman, Baghdad and Tehran in September, but no agreement permitting the ICRC to fulfil its mandate in connection with the conflict in Kuwait could be reached with the Iraqi authorities.

As the coalition forces were deployed in the region in November, the ICRC intensified contacts with all of the parties concerned in order to ensure compliance with the four Geneva Conventions.

Among the 12 resolutions adopted by the UN Security Council between August and December 1990, resolution 666 of 13 September stipulated the conditions of humanitarian aid to the civilian population in Iraq and Kuwait, as well as a supply of essential foodstuffs, which would be sent to the region and distributed under ICRC supervision, or the supervision of other appropriate humanitarian organizations.

On 14 December, the ICRC sent a note verbale to the 164 States party to the Geneva Conventions reminding them of their obligation to respect the provisions of international humanitarian law regarding the protection of the sick, wounded and shipwrecked, of medical units and establishments, prisoners of war and civilians. The same day, the ICRC President addressed ambassadors and representatives of the States party to the Geneva Conventions at the institution's headquarters in Geneva. The President once again reminded the States of their obligations in the event of armed conflict between States. He informed representatives of the measures taken by the ICRC to fulfil its mandate in Kuwait.

Despite the ICRC's sustained efforts to carry out its humanitarian mandate in Iraq and Kuwait, no agreement was

reached with Iraqi authorities for such action by the end of 1990.

Beginning in October, the ICRC increased the number of its staff in the region, and on 27 December a Task Force was organized at ICRC headquarters to deal with the crisis. Delegates already present in the Middle East prepared for possible intervention and more than 50 delegates remained ready in Geneva for departure to the region on short notice. With the cooperation of various National Societies, equipment and material assistance was mobilized and stored in Europe. The ICRC prepared for the rapid construction of refugee camps which would each hold 30,000 persons and transit camps, each with a capacity of 5,000 in any area in the region. (See also *Jordan below*).

The Central Tracing Agency contacted the parties with armed forces in the region and their National Information Bureaux in order to facilitate the tracing of missing persons using technical procedures developed by the Central Tracing Agency.

ISRAEL AND THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

In the conflict between Israel and the Arab states, the ICRC considers that the conditions for the application of the Fourth Convention, which prohibits an occupying power from settling its civilians in the occupied territory, destroying the homes of the people living there or expelling them from it, are fulfilled in all of the occupied territories (the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, Golan and East Jerusalem). The principles that the rights of persons who are in occupied territory are inviolable is expressed in Article 47 of the Fourth Convention.

The Israeli authorities consider that in view of the *sui generis* status of the occupied territories, the *de jure* applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention to these areas is doubtful. Israel prefers to leave aside the legal question of the status of these areas and has decided, since 1967, to act *de facto* in accordance with the humanitarian provisions of that Convention.

The disturbances in the territories occupied by Israel which began in December 1987 had a serious impact on the civilian population there. Many homes were walled up or demolished by the army. A marked decline in economic activity in the occupied territories over the year was accentuated in the second half by the conflict in the Middle East. The inter-Palestinian killings of alleged collaborators remained a source of concern for the ICRC in 1990.

In the period 1987-1990, the yearly total of persons detained by the Israeli forces increased from 4,000 to more than 16,000. Through the sustained presence of its delegates in the field, the ICRC endeavoured to carry out its protection and assistance mandate in behalf of protected persons in the territories that have been occupied since 1967.

From December 1987 through 1990, the number of ICRC expatriate staff in the area tripled. In 1990 there were more than 40 ICRC delegates in Israel and the occupied territories.

Protection activities increased as the number of persons detained went up. Tracing services were extended to keep track of the arrests, transfers and release of detainees in more than 40 places of detention. Medical assistance increased for detainees and for civilians wounded in the clashes. Relief assistance to detainees and their families was also stepped up.