

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

ICRC ACTION IN JORDAN

FOR THE HOSTAGES

Two aircraft were diverted by the PFLP to Zarka on 6 September 1970 and a third on 9 September. The ICRC intervened on behalf of the passengers and crews with a view to providing protection and assistance. We describe below the events up to the end of September.

I.

At a meeting in Berne, the government representatives of the Federal Republic of Germany, the United States, Great Britain and Switzerland, of which countries there were nationals among the persons detained, entrusted the International Committee with an assignment which it accepted on 7 September, namely to act as a neutral intermediary. Its function was to be non-discriminatory and limited to informing each party of the attitude adopted by the other.

On the same day a special ICRC mission flew to Amman. This was announced as follows:

The International Committee of the Red Cross, on 7 September, held an extraordinary plenary meeting and decided to strengthen its delegation at Amman by sending a special mission that is to leave tonight for Jordan. Its instructions are to extend its assistance, without distinction of nationality, to the passengers and crews of the two aircraft hijacked on 6 September. It is to get in touch with the

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE

Jordanian Government and the Palestine organizations and, if necessary, may act as intermediary between the latter and the governments involved.

The ICRC points out that its role is purely humanitarian. It goes without saying that any decisions to be taken with regard to the conditions laid down for the release of the passengers and crews and for the return of the two aircraft must fall within the sole competency of the governments concerned.

The ICRC underlines, too, that it is incumbent upon the authorities or persons holding the passengers and crews to treat them in conformity with humanitarian rules.

Immediately on arrival, the special ICRC mission contacted the Jordan Government and the two Palestinian organizations, the OLP and the PFLP.¹ Its mission in the first place was to endeavour to protect the hostages and, if necessary, ask for and supervise the improvement of conditions of detention. The mission also had to negotiate evacuation of the hostages without discrimination.

On 8 September the Governments of the Federal Republic of Germany, Great Britain and Switzerland informed the ICRC of their intention to release the Palestinians detained in their countries and they asked the International Committee to convey their decision to the Palestinian movements. However, on 11 September, the Palestinian leaders decided to remove some hostages from Zarka, where they were held in the grounded aircraft, to Amman.

Mr. J. Freymond, ICRC Vice-President, went that day to Amman to contact the ICRC mission and review the situation. On his return to Geneva, the ICRC published the following press release on 15 September:

The International Committee of the Red Cross held an extraordinary plenary meeting on 14 September 1970. It welcomed the members of the special mission, headed by Mr. A. Rochat, who had

¹ Organization for the Liberation of Palestine; Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

intervened on behalf of the passengers and crews of the three aircraft in Jordan, and expressed its warm appreciation of all they had done and of the results they had obtained.

The International Committee also took note of the reports submitted by the President, Mr. Naville, and the Vice-President, Mr. Freymond, on the work of the special mission in Amman, and on their meetings in Berne with representatives of the governments concerned.

After having examined these reports, the ICRC reiterated its determination to continue its action for the protection without distinction of all persons detained in Jordan, and to keep in touch with all governments and parties concerned. To this end, it granted to its delegation in Amman facilities to accomplish this task.

In conclusion, the ICRC urgently appeals to all parties to the conflict to refrain from carrying out any reprisal action.

With the aim of ensuring the continuity of its action on behalf of those still detained in Jordan following the hijacking of three aircraft, the International Committee has asked Mr. P. Boissier, Director of the Henry-Dunant Institute, and Mr. M. Boisard, at present Head of the ICRC delegation in the United Arab Republic, to leave for Amman immediately.

Mr. Boissier will fly from Geneva on 16 September, while Mr. Boisard, who is still in Cairo, is expected any moment at ICRC headquarters before proceeding to the Jordanian capital.

The two special delegates of the ICRC will be assisted on the spot by the ICRC permanent delegation in Jordan, headed by Mr. G. Winteler, which will, at the same time, carry on its customary activities on behalf of the victims of hostilities.

After the release of most of the hostages, the ICRC continued its efforts to visit and arrange release of the remaining 54. On the 25 September it was authorized by the Jordanian authorities to visit immediately 16 hostages found by the Jordan army, and who shortly afterwards left the country. Next day a further 32 hostages were released and confided to the care of the ICRC delegation in Amman by the embassy of the United Arab Republic. On 27 September they were repatriated by the ICRC. The remaining six

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE

were also handed over to the ICRC delegation in the Jordanian capital.

II

Concomitantly with this action in favour of the hostages, the ICRC gave them material assistance. On 6 September the ICRC delegation in Amman visited the 285 passengers detained in the aircraft at Zarka. A medical team also went there, followed by a second two days later with food supplies.

When a third aircraft was diverted to Zarka, with 150 people aboard, including 25 children without their parents, the ICRC delegates immediately took the necessary steps to provide the same assistance as they had for the passengers of the first two aircraft. The medical team stayed on the spot and was very active. In addition, the ICRC continued to supply cereals, milk, vegetables and farinaceous food.

An aircraft chartered by the ICRC took off from Geneva for Amman on 10 September. It had aboard two doctors, several female nurses and a consignment of medical material, tents, blankets and toilet requisites, as conditions were worsening for the prisoners in the three aircraft.

Some hours later it was learnt in Geneva that an ICRC relief convoy on its way from Amman to the aircraft had been stopped and the medical team had been ordered away from the aircraft.

FOR THE VICTIMS OF THE CIVIL WAR

A few days later civil war broke out in Jordan and ICRC intervention was again required. On 18 September the Committee published the following press release:

To help victims of the fighting at present raging in Jordan, the ICRC has decided to despatch immediately a medical team to Amman. It comprises Mr. Glinz, a surgeon, and six male and female nurses. It will join Dr. Spirgi who has been in the Jordan capital for the last week.

In addition, Dr Frascani, now with the ICRC delegation in the Lebanon, has been directed to proceed without delay to Amman. He will be accompanied by a male nurse.

The DC-6 chartered by the ICRC specially for this operation, will take off from Geneva on 18 September. It will attempt a landing in Jordan, after touching down at Nicosia. Apart from the team, it will have aboard seven tons of medicaments, surgical instruments, tents, blankets and other relief supplies.

The ICRC special delegates in Jordan, Mr. Boissier and Mr. Boisard have been directed to do everything possible to assist the victims of the hostilities.

To enable the aircraft it had chartered to fly from Beirut to Amman with two delegates and a medical team of two doctors and three nurses, the ICRC obtained the agreement of the Jordanian Government and of the Palestinian representatives. On 20 September the aircraft, bearing the sign of the Red Cross, was the first to land in Amman since the beginning of the fighting which was increasing in intensity. As soon as the aircraft was unloaded it returned to Beirut. The next day, with the agreement of both parties, it took off for Amman with four tons of various medical supplies provided by the Kuwait Red Crescent and 600 bottles of blood plasma, given by the Lebanese Red Cross, escorted by an ICRC delegate. It returned to Beirut on 21 September with 8 civilian casualties, five of them serious, who were taken to hospital by the Lebanese Red Cross.

The fighting in Jordan however increased in violence. According to ICRC delegates on the spot, the requirements in medical supplies and food were enormous. Unfortunately it was so difficult to move in the capital that there was very little chance of providing relief.

The supply problem was extremely acute. On 22 September, a further ICRC flight took into Amman some 6½ tons of bread, tinned food and cheese provided, like the consignments flown in next day, from the UNRWA and UNICEF stocks in Beirut. On 23 September the ICRC issued the following press release:

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE

In order to cope with the situation arising from the tragic events occurring in Jordan, the ICRC has set up within its Operations Division, in Geneva, directed by Mr. R. Courvoisier, a relief co-ordinating group led by Mr. K. Warras, Secretary-General of the Finnish Red Cross and Vice-Chairman of the League of Red Cross Societies.

The group's first emergency measure was the immediate despatch to the Jordanian capital of a four-member mission comprising Dr. R. Marti, ICRC medical consultant, Mr. O. Burckhard, former ICRC delegate to Amman, Mr. A. Beaud, head of ICRC Relief Section, and Mr. H. Mathiessen, Norwegian Red Cross relief expert.

The objective of the mission, which left Geneva on 23 September, will be to determine from each party to the conflict the scope for ICRC action and to step up the relief work already started by the International Committee.

Alerted to the situation by its delegates in Amman, the ICRC released the following statement on 24 September:

The International Committee is seriously alarmed by the tragic situation prevailing in the Jordan capital where many military and civilian wounded are uncared for and in grave danger.

The ICRC therefore appeals to the governments and all forces operating in Jordan to apply in all circumstances the universally recognized humanitarian rules which demand that in every conflict, whatever its form, all wounded be collected and cared for.

The ICRC urges the parties involved to conclude a 24 hour truce within Amman and a radius of 20 kms around the town, starting at 5 a.m. GMT on 25 September, to permit the removal and treatment of the wounded.

Such truces are provided for in the Geneva Conventions in the following terms: "Whenever circumstances permit, an armistice or a suspension of fire shall be arranged, or local arrangements made, to permit the removal, exchange and transport of the wounded left on the battlefield."

The ICRC also asks the fighting forces to grant its delegates the necessary protection and facilities to enable them to discharge their mission. Its delegates are ready to be of service to the authorities concerned in implementing the truce and relief operations.

On 24 September, the ICRC made the following announcement:

On 24 September 1970, the ICRC invited representatives of several National Red Crescent Societies from Arab countries to meet at its headquarters, within the framework of its relief action in Jordan. Delegates from the Red Crescent Societies of Algeria, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and the United Arab Republic attended the meeting. A representative from the "Palestinian Red Crescent" was also present.

Measures to be taken to co-ordinate the large quantities of relief supplies provided by Arab countries and to forward them to Jordan through ICRC channels were discussed at the meeting. Those present also nominated a Tunisian Red Crescent delegate to represent Arab National Societies on the relief co-ordinating group set up by the ICRC.

On the same day, the ICRC appealed as follows to National Societies:

On 19 September, a nine-member medical team left Switzerland for Amman to work at the Mu'sher Hospital. However, the military operations in Amman giving rise to great confusion, the ICRC delegates have been unable to move about in the areas where fighting is going on. The problem of the removal and surgical treatment of the wounded becomes more alarming every day.

In Geneva, the ICRC has set up, within the Operations Division directed by Mr. R. Courvoisier, a relief co-ordinating group led by Mr. Kai Warras, Secretary-General of the Finnish Red Cross Society and Vice-Chairman of the League of Red Cross Societies.

The group's first emergency measure was the immediate despatch to the theatre of operations of a four-member relief co-ordinating mission. Its objective will be to determine from each party to the conflict the scope for ICRC action and to step up the relief work already started under ICRC auspices. Its findings will be made known as soon as possible to National Societies. In the meantime, a preliminary estimate of requirements has been made based on such information as is available. Priority must be given to:

ambulances, vehicles, stretchers and dressing material; plasma or blood substitutes in large quantities (fresh blood is excluded); 2,000 empty bottles for blood; sterile equipment (dressings, rubber gloves for operating, syringes, etc) expendable after a single use in view of the

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE

water shortage; plaster bandages; infusions and perfusions of all kinds; antibiotics; serum test; medical supplies; Pentothal, EMO anaesthetic appliance with Fluotec, Fluothane, Cellocurine or Succinylcholine, ether, morphine, Valium injections, surgical silk of all sizes and especially large bandages for operations, catgut 0001, surgical lamps, petrol-driven electricity generators. Medicaments for injection rather than for swallowing should be sent.

In agreement with the League of Red Cross Societies, the ICRC launches an urgent appeal in favour of the victims of the events. National Societies which desire to support International Red Cross action are requested to announce their contributions to the ICRC, Jordan Relief Co-ordinating Group, Geneva. They will receive as soon as possible directives for forwarding donations in kind.

Contributions in cash may be remitted to the Union Bank of Switzerland or the Banque Populaire Suisse in Geneva for credit to the account of the ICRC, with the stipulation "Secours Jordanie". The ICRC earnestly requests National Red Cross, Red Crescent and Red Lion and Sun Societies not to send medical personnel for the moment; this would be premature so long as negotiations for the protection and assignment of foreign medical personnel have not been completed. Nevertheless, we request National Societies to inform the ICRC of the surgical teams, equipment and material they would have available and at what notice. To avoid unnecessary freight charges, some relief supplies will be bought in neighbouring countries.

The ICRC will be grateful for any donations in cash. Food requirements are still being investigated.

Support from the Red Cross movement as a whole is essential and urgent: it will make manifest the neutrality and universality of our activities and reflect the profound concern which the human suffering engendered by this conflict causes us.

R. Courvoisier
Special Assistant to the President
Director of Operations

The response was immediate. By 28 September the National Societies of the following countries had sent or promised relief in the form of medical supplies, foodstuffs, vehicles, blood plasma, dressing material, surgical instruments, blankets, clothing and cash: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Finland, France, German Federal Republic, Great Britain, Italy, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, New Zealand, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and Yugoslavia. Several governments and charitable organizations also announced contributions.

By the end of September the ICRC had received assistance to a value of some 6,480,000 Swiss francs, namely 5,692,000 Swiss francs in the form of medical supplies and equipment, foodstuffs, blankets and so forth, and 788,000 Swiss francs in cash.

Before hostilities ceased, the ICRC was arranging for the forwarding, towards the regions devastated by the fighting and where needs were immense, of the relief supplies already received or awaited. This operation was developed in several sectors.

a) *In Amman*, where the Red Cross aircraft continually flew food and medical supplies from Beirut. By 27 September, 8½ tons of foodstuffs and 16 tons of medical supplies had been flown in three flights to the Jordan capital. The aircraft took back with them 32 hostages handed over to the ICRC and some casualties.

b) *From Israel to Jordan*, for, already on 24 September, a relief convoy led by the head of the ICRC delegation in Israel had crossed the Allenby bridge. In the days following, several convoys escorted by ICRC delegates conveyed almost 1,000 tons of relief, mainly foodstuffs and blankets, which was distributed by two ICRC delegates on the spot.

c) *From Syria to Jordan*. The ICRC endeavoured to send relief to the north of Jordan from Damascus. A delegate and three doctors went to the Irbid area on 30 September.

At the same time, and in order to send greater quantities of relief supplies, the ICRC considered the possibility of forwarding to Amman and southern Jordan via Aqaba.

Simultaneously, the ICRC provided medical assistance. Doctors working under the sign of the red cross soon went to various parts of Jordan. By the end of September, for instance, the ICRC medical team in Amman, to mention but one example, consisted of a doctor, an anaesthetist and six nurses.

At the ICRC's request a number of National Societies sent or promised medical teams for Jordan to work under the flag of the International Committee and in accordance with its plan of action. Those National Societies included the Red Crescent of Kuwait (20 persons, including 6 doctors), Saudi Arabia, Abu Dhabi (2 doctors and two nurses), Lybia and Algeria, and the

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE

Swiss Red Cross (2 doctors, 1 anaesthetist, 4 nurses, 1 administrator and 1 technician). There arrived in Beirut, at the same time, an 11-member team (including 4 doctors) sent by the Sudan Red Crescent.

In addition, the French government sent a field hospital manned by a staff of 48. The ICRC accepted the British and American governments' offers to send surgical and medical teams to Jordan to work under the sign of the red cross in combination with the assistance programme already started by the ICRC.

By 30 September medical teams from 7 countries, totalling 380 persons sent by governments and National Societies, were in action in Jordan.

Such a large scale programme required the services of many ICRC delegates whose assignment, it must be made clear, does not include only liaison, management and distribution of relief supplies. Several of them undertake the so-called conventional missions, that is to say visits to prisoners, with the authorization of the Jordan government, the protection of victims of war, the tracing of the missing and so forth; three delegates in Amman are responsible for these operations.

The ICRC delegations' strengths in Beirut, Amman and Damascus on 29 September were as follows:

Beirut: 1 head of delegation, 2 assistant-delegates, 1 medical team co-ordinator, 1 relief operations co-ordinator, 1 press officer, 1 administrator, 1 radio technician.

Amman: a) "Conventional" missions: 1 head of delegation, 5 assistant-delegates, 1 delegate for tracing operations; b) Relief: 1 head of relief action, 1 medical adviser, 1 medical co-ordinator, 1 relief materials co-ordinator, 1 assistant co-ordinator, 1 radio technician.

Damascus: 1 head of delegation, 1 delegate, 2 doctors.

We shall have more to say next month on this large-scale relief operation, the development of which, as the foregoing shows, was in full swing by the end of September.