

**17 December 1996: six Red Cross staff assassinated
in Chechnya**

The unprecedented tragedy that befell the ICRC in Chechnya has underscored the vital importance of security in ensuring the success of any humanitarian operation and has prompted the adoption of measures aimed at affording better protection for ICRC personnel.

In its November-December 1996 issue, the Review briefly informed its readers of the murder of six ICRC delegates, shot dead in cold blood by unidentified gunmen in their quarters at the Novye Atagi hospital near Grozny, in the Republic of Chechnya (Russian Federation).

This issue of the Review looks back on the tragedy in four articles written by ICRC staff members. In the first two, the Delegate General and the Deputy Delegate General for Eastern Europe and Central Asia remind readers of the facts and describe the anguish felt by the colleagues of the deceased. Two other articles by seasoned delegates discuss the dangerous implications of such attacks for humanitarian aid workers and present the initial conclusions of a debate held on the issue within the ICRC. Indeed, after the Novye Atagi tragedy the ICRC convened a special meeting, which brought together all its heads of delegation, regional delegates and senior operational staff to discuss practical measures aimed at affording better protection for humanitarian personnel, at a time when the hazards faced by its staff in the field are giving increasing cause for concern. The Review is especially grateful to Philippe Comtesse and Frank Schmidt for sharing the conclusions that they themselves drew from the discussions. The views expressed in their articles are not necessarily those of the ICRC.

In spite of these tragic events, ICRC delegates are continuing their work in the field. And they will continue carrying out their tasks for as long as victims of war or other forms of violence are in need of their help.

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