

*EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES***International Committee Action in Lebanon¹**

The ICRC has been represented in Lebanon since June 1967. Its six-member delegation has worked continuously ever since, mainly on humanitarian problems resulting from the Israelo-Arab conflict. On the occasion of events taking place in the region, the delegation has served as a field headquarters for the major relief activities of the International Red Cross—such as those connected with the events in Jordan in September 1970, the conflict in October 1973 and in Cyprus in the summer of 1974. Moreover, the ICRC maintains a depot for relief supplies in Beirut, with a permanent stock of emergency medical material, vehicles and equipment for a field hospital designed to meet without delay the most imperative relief requirements.

The ICRC delegation has also intervened, in co-operation with the Lebanese Red Cross and the "Palestinian Red Crescent", in sporadic confrontations which have broken out in recent years between rival groups in Lebanon itself. In these cases, its assistance has been directed towards saving the lives of victims of the conflicts, regardless of what groups they belong to. This has entailed the arrangement of cease-fires, if the fighting has not already stopped, to permit the evacuation of the wounded, organization of ambulance convoys, estimation of hospital needs and the delivery and distribution of emergency relief.

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During 1975, the situation has gradually worsened, due to the successive outbreaks of fighting in Beirut and to the events this autumn, which also affected the northern part of the country. The Red Cross met with enormous difficulty earlier in the year; in October it was faced with an alarming situation.

¹ *Plate.*

Its tasks were extremely dangerous due to the nature of the confrontations, in which the combatants are often completely unaware of the traditional values which govern conflicts of every kind. In addition, the firing was so intense that most of the city was at a standstill for several weeks and little could be done to provide emergency aid.

The whole time the fighting was going on in Beirut, the ICRC in Geneva maintained contact with its Lebanon delegation, mainly by radio. The delegation kept in touch as far as possible with the Lebanese Red Cross, the "Palestinian Red Crescent" and various city hospitals.

These contacts enabled the ICRC, in co-operation with several National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, to send blood plasma, antibiotics, dressings, surgical equipment and so forth. The first consignment, to a value of 165,000 Swiss francs, was despatched in mid-October. A second worth 50,000 Swiss francs followed a few days later.

At the beginning of November the ICRC reinforced its Beirut delegation by two delegates, a doctor, a relief-logistics experts, and a radio operator.

An ad hoc relief committee was formed in Beirut, comprising representatives of the Ministry of Health, the ICRC, the Lebanese Red Cross, the "Palestinian Red Crescent", the medical association, the federation of pharmacists, and the association of private hospitals. Its purpose was to co-ordinate relief operations, and it decided that the Lebanese Red Cross and the "Palestinian Red Crescent" would distribute relief in the districts to which they had access.

The ICRC doctor and several members of the ad hoc committee immediately set about surveying medical needs.

A third consignment of emergency medical supplies, despatched to Beirut on 8 November, consisted of 16 tons of plasma, antibiotics and dressings to a value of half a million Swiss francs—for immediate distribution by the National Lebanese Society and the "Palestinian Red Crescent".

Due to the persistence of the fighting in Lebanon, the International Committee of the Red Cross, on 21 November, launched an appeal for US \$2,000,000 to maintain its emergency relief action. The appeal was directed to all Governments and to all Red Cross, Red Crescent and Red Lion and Sun Societies.