

COLLECTION

COMMUNICATIONS A LA PRESSE

COMITE INTERNATIONAL DE LA
CROIX-ROUGE

1989

anglais

COMMUNICATION TO THE PRESS

3 FEBRUARY 1989 N'EXISTE PAS

Communication to the press No. 89/2/MGB
May 1st, 1989

PRESS CONFERENCE

Geneva (ICRC - League) - You are kindly requested to reserve the following date:

Monday May 8, 1989 at 2:30 p.m.

On the occasion of World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day 1989, Mr. Cornelio Sommaruga, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, will give a press conference - with the participation of Mr. Mario Villarroel Lander and Mr. Par Stenback, President and Secretary General of the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Speaking on behalf of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, Mr. Sommaruga will present the goals and results of the "Humanitarian Gesture", the initiative calling for a worldwide series of humanitarian gestures, to honour the 125th Anniversary of the Movement. A significant number of Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies have therefore invited their respective governments to make a special humanitarian gesture on 8 May 1989, to mark 125 years of solidarity with the victims of conflicts and disasters, 125 years of fidelity to our fundamental principles and unity transcending frontiers and differences.

The list of humanitarian gestures announced by governments will be communicated during the press conference.

We look forward to welcome you at the ICRC headquarters (19, Avenue de la Paix).

Sincerely yours,

Carlos Bauverd
Head of the Press Division - ICRC

Ann Naef
Newseditor - League

Press release No. 89/3
3 May 1989

DISTURBANCES IN SENEGAL AND MAURITANIA: ICRC TAKES ACTION

Geneva (ICRC) - In connection with the recent disturbances in Senegal and Mauritania, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) sent one of its delegates to Dakar and another to Nouakchott on 30 April. The delegates' task is to assess the situation and take emergency measures to help the Senegalese Red Cross and Mauritanian Red Crescent Societies, which have already begun assisting vulnerable groups.

On the basis of initial reports from the field and in consultation with the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, on 3 May the ICRC sent extra staff to the scene: a second delegate to Dakar and two more, including a doctor, to Nouakchott.

The purpose of the operation is to protect and assist people awaiting repatriation to Senegal or Mauritania, provide assistance to those who have already returned to their countries of origin and arrange for the exchange of family messages and the tracing of missing persons.

The ICRC will co-ordinate the work of the two National Societies in their respective countries, with the full backing of the League which for its part will assemble and despatch relief supplies.

COMMUNICATION TO THE PRESS

5 MAY 1989 N'EXISTE PAS

Communication to the press No. 89/5/FBy
13 May 1989

REPATRIATION OF INJURED BETWEEN SENEGAL AND MAURITANIA

Geneva (ICRC) - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) carried out a twin operation during the night of 12-13 May 1989 to repatriate injured and sick people by plane between Senegal and Mauritania.

On the flight from Dakar to Nouakchott, 11 injured and seven sick Mauritians were taken back to their country with 14 members of their families, including several children. In the opposite direction, the operation enabled 23 wounded Senegalese, accompanied by three other people, to return to Senegal.

The flights were made possible thanks to logistic support from the French government, which provided the ICRC with a medical aircraft, and the efficient support of the Senegalese Red Cross and the Mauritanian Red Crescent, which contributed to the smooth running of the operation.

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Communication to the press no. 89/6
24 June 1989

VISIT OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED
CROSS TO ISRAEL AND TO THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES OF THE WEST BANK
AND GAZA.

Tel Aviv (ICRC) - The President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Mr. Cornelio Sommaruga, has left Israel today after an official visit lasting 3 days during which he had meetings with the President of the State, the Prime Minister, the Vice Premier, the Ministers of Defense and Justice as well as with senior civil servants and general staff officers of the Israeli Armed Forces. The main purpose of the visit was the humanitarian problems prevailing in the territories occupied by Israel in the West Bank and the Gaza strip.

The President conveyed to his interlocutors the ICRC's assessment of the situation in the occupied territories, with regard to rules of international law in general and of the IVth Geneva Convention relative to the protection of civilians in time of war in particular.

In this respect Mr. Sommaruga regretted Israel's refusal to accept the principle of the formal applicability of the Geneva Convention to these territories. He nevertheless noted the intention reiterated by members of the Government to implement and respect all the dispositions of this body of law.

In this context he stated his disagreement with the resorting to house destructions and expulsions of residents of these territories as means of repression. He also mentioned the severe humanitarian consequences caused by extensive use of firearms.

The President noted the commitment of senior military commanders to protect the wounded, ambulances and medical services. He furthermore proposed to intensify the ICRC's direct contribution to the functioning of medical services and hospitals in the territories.

Members of the Government also confirmed that Israeli civilians should not interfere with the maintenance of order.

Matters related to security detainees in the occupied territories were also approached, among which treatment of detainees under interrogation, access by the ICRC to certain new detention areas, and implementation of essential rights of detainees such as family visits. The President registered a promising response on such important topics.

Discussions also turned to humanitarian concerns of the local population in the area under control of Israel's Armed Forces in Southern Lebanon. Mr. Sommaruga furthermore met the families of Israeli soldiers missing in action. He stressed that the ICRC will continue its efforts to clarify their fate.

Communication to the press no. 89/7
30 June 1989

OCCUPIED TERRITORIES: FURTHER EXPULSIONS

Geneva (ICRC) - On 29 June 1989, the State of Israel expelled eight residents from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to Lebanon, who arrived at the ICRC office in Ksara (Lebanon) on 30 June 1989. These new expulsions bring to 56 the number of residents banished from the occupied territories since the Intifada began.

Such expulsions are in violation of Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which stipulates that individual or mass forcible transfers from occupied territories are prohibited, regardless of their motive.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has notified the Israeli Government in the past of its disapproval whenever residents have been expelled from the occupied territories, because of the serious humanitarian consequences such expulsions entail. During his recent mission to Israel, the ICRC President, Mr. Cornelio Sommaruga, again explained to the country's highest authorities the position of the ICRC towards this practice which is contrary to the provisions of the Geneva Conventions. The ICRC cannot but express its disappointment and speak out firmly against these latest expulsions.

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COMMUNICATION TO THE PRESS NO. 89/8
28 JULY 1989

THE FOLLOWING IS THE TEXT OF THE APPEAL ISSUED BY THE ICRCUT
DELEGATION IN LEBANON TODAY:

ICRC APPEAL AGAINST SHELLING IN LEBANON

BEIRUT (ICRC) - PROFOUNDLY CONCERNED AT THE SHARP INCREASE IN
INDISCRIMINATE SHELLING THAT HAS DEVASTATED MANY PARTS OF THE
COUNTRY AND PARTICULARLY EAST AND WEST BEIRUT, THE DELEGATION OF THE
INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS IN LEBANON DEPLORES THIS
ESCALATION OF VIOLENCE WHICH HAS CAUSED THE DEATH OF SO MANY
CIVILIANS AND WIDESPREAD DESTRUCTION OF THEIR HOMES AND PROPERTY.

HOSPITALS HAVE ONCE AGAIN BEEN HIT, AS HAVE BUILDINGS OF THE
LEBANESE RED CROSS AND THE PREMISES OF THE ICRC DELEGATION IN
BEIRUT. THIS INDISCRIMINATE DESTRUCTION HAS BROUGHT ABOUT A RENEWED
EXODUS OF CIVILIANS TO SAFER AREAS, ADDING ECONOMIC HARDSHIP TO
INSECURITY AND THE GRIEF OF BEREAVEMENT.

THE ICRC ONCE AGAIN EARNESTLY APPEALS TO THE PARTIES CONCERNED TO
END IMMEDIATELY THE INDISCRIMINATE SHELLING OF CIVILIANS AND
CIVILIAN PROPERTY, WHICH IS AN UNACCEPTABLE VIOLATION OF THE MOST
ELEMENTARY HUMANITARIAN RULES, AND URGES THEM TO DO EVERYTHING IN
THEIR POWER TO ENSURE THAT THESE RULES ARE HENCEFORTH DULY
RESPECTED.

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Communication to the press No. 89/9
22 September 1989

FEDERAL COUNCILLOR FLAVIO COTTI VISITS ICRC

Geneva (ICRC) - On 22 September 1989 Mr. Flavio Cotti, Head of the Federal Department of the Interior, visited the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), where he was received by the institution's President, Cornelio Sommaruga. Mr. Cotti also met members of the Committee and senior ICRC staff.

The President took this opportunity to thank the Federal Council once again for the substantial support given by the Swiss Confederation to the ICRC. He and Mr. Cotti went on to review the whole range of the ICRC's humanitarian activities. The Federal Councillor, accompanied by Mrs. Cotti, then visited the ICRC Central Tracing Agency.

Mr. and Mrs. Cotti later toured the International Museum of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

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COMMUNICATION TO THE PRESS

13 NOVEMBER 1989 N'EXISTE PAS

COMMUNICATION TO THE PRESS

17 NOVEMBER 1989 N'EXISTE PAS

Communication to the press No. 89/11/MMA
6 December 1989

KIDNAPPED ICRC DELEGATES: TWO MONTHS WITHOUT NEWS

Geneva (ICRC) - Emanuel Christen and Elio Erriquez, both orthopaedic technicians working for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), were abducted in Sidon, southern Lebanon, on 6 October last.

Two months have now gone by without any word from their captors, despite the representations made by the ICRC in many quarters. The abduction has been unanimously condemned and all the parties involved in the Lebanese conflict have assured the ICRC of their support.

The ICRC can therefore only repeat its appeal for the immediate and unconditional release of its two delegates.

In Switzerland, action groups have been set up to give the Christen and Erriquez families moral support and there have been various demonstrations of solidarity. A campaign to collect signatures was taken up by two Swiss dailies, Le Matin and La Tribune de Genève, which have gathered 25,000 signatures to date. These countless messages from friends, former colleagues, individual sympathizers and whole communities are being taken to Lebanon today, to show that here in Switzerland the public still feels as strongly as ever about Elio and Emanuel's abduction. Until they are released, the signatures, tokens of solidarity and protests will be kept at their workplace, the Sidon orthopaedic centre, which has been closed ever since they were taken hostage.

Before the plane leaves for Lebanon, the ICRC is holding a press conference at Geneva's Cointrin airport on

Wednesday 6 December, 1989

at 10 a.m.

(Press Room)

in presence of the Christen and Erriquez families, and the support groups.

Communication to the press No. 89/12
22 December 1989

TWO ICRC PLANES READY TO TAKE OFF FOR ROMANIA

Geneva (ICRC) - Two aircrafts chartered by the ICRC and carrying four tonnes of emergency supplies and an eight-man team (delegates and medical personnel) are ready to take off for Bucharest.

National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, especially in countries bordering Romania, are in close contact with the ICRC and are also standing by to take action.

The ICRC, deeply concerned by the grave news from Romania, earnestly appeals for respect to be shown for the basic rules of humanitarian law protecting the civilian population, the wounded and medical establishments.

Communication to the press No. 89/13
23 December 1989

ROMANIA: URGENT APPEAL BY THE RED CROSS

Geneva (ICRC) - In view of the dramatic events taking place in several parts of Romania and in the capital, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) urgently requests all those in charge to take immediate measures so that aid can be brought to the wounded.

Two ICRC planes landed in Bucharest on Friday, 22 December, at 9.30 p.m. The 8-member ICRC team on board immediately set to work in the airport area, providing medical care to about 300 wounded civilians and soldiers. It has not, however, been able to go into Bucharest itself.

Moreover, the relief supplies being sent by a number of National Red Cross Societies (Czechoslovakia, Finland, Denmark, Hungary, Bulgaria, Italy, France, Austria, the Federal Republic of Germany) have not arrived at their destination because of the confusion at the Romanian border. The same holds true for the flights and convoys organized by other aid organizations.

These relief supplies and the personnel accompanying them are indispensable in the current situation, and it is vital that they be able to reach the victims of the fighting.

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Communication to the press No. 89/14
23 December 1989

**ROMANIA: INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT
MOBILIZES**

Geneva (ICRC) - The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement has mobilized to bring assistance to the victims of the alarming situation in Romania.

The Hungarian Red Cross and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have set up a logistics base in Budapest. Permanent contact has also been established with the Bulgarian Red Cross, which has organized relief convoys.

The National Red Cross Societies of Canada, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and Yugoslavia have also responded to requests for emergency aid.

The ICRC, which is co-ordinating the Movement's relief activities, recommends that in the prevailing situation of difficult access supply channels not be overloaded. Priority needs are medical in nature. Assistance of any other kind - for example blankets and warm clothes - is less urgently required.

Because of the continued violent fighting, it remains dangerous to reach the wounded. The delegates and medical material which arrived in Bucharest on the evening of 22 December are blocked in the immediate vicinity of the airport, where they have been able to provide medical care to about 300 wounded.

Communication to the press No. 89/15
23 December 1989

APPEAL BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

The International Committee of the Red Cross is deeply concerned by the fact that thousands of people are killed in the violent fighting in Romania.

The innocent are fired at indiscriminately, others are summarily executed; the wounded are not respected in hospitals and those so generously assisting them are shot at.

To make sure that this indiscriminate violence does not lead to even more atrocious acts, the International Committee of the Red Cross, a neutral and independent institution, urgently requests all the combatants to do everything possible to protect civilians, to respect the wounded and sick and all those assisting them, to stop all summary executions, to treat prisoners humanely and to respect the protective emblem of the Red Cross. To fulfil its humanitarian mandate, the International Committee of the Red Cross asks all the combatants to facilitate its access to hospitals and places in which there are wounded people. The ICRC also requests immediate access to prisoners so that it can afford them its protection.

With the backing of all the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies which are ready to make medical teams and emergency relief supplies immediately available, the International Committee of the Red Cross is ready to support medical facilities in the country, which are currently overloaded, and will do all in its power to protect and assist the victims of the conflict.

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Communication to the press No 89/16
24 December 1989

ICRC STARTS OPERATIONS IN ROMANIA

Geneva (ICRC) - Two delegates from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) based in Budapest have been able to enter Romania. One reached Oradea, in the northwest, on 23 December, the other reached Timisoara, further south, on 24 December. They will be setting up logistics bases to facilitate ICRC activities on the spot and will be joined on 25 December by two more delegates.

A team of 11 ICRC expatriates (six delegates, two sanitary engineers and a medical team from the Danish Red Cross made up of one surgeon, one anaesthetist and one nurse) left Geneva for Varna (Bulgaria) on 24 December. One half of the team will go immediately to Constanta, on the coast of the Black Sea in Romania, the other to Craiova, west of the capital.

The ICRC team which has been at Bucharest airport since the evening of 22 December is providing medical care, in extremely difficult and dangerous conditions, to hundreds of people wounded in the continued violent fighting in the area. The team consists of four delegates, one surgeon and three nurses (one of them a pharmacist).

The ICRC is co-ordinating the arrival of relief supplies from National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in two logistics bases, one in Budapest (Hungary), the other in Varna (Bulgaria). In both places the ICRC's delegates are working in close co-operation with the National Red Cross Societies. The logistics base in Budapest is essentially organizing overland convoys. The base in Varna will organize the shipment of relief supplies by air, as soon as the situation allows. However, during the afternoon of 24 December confirmation was received that the airports of Constanta and Craiova, respectively east and west of Bucharest, would be opened for humanitarian flights.

Communication to the press No. 89/17
25 December 1989

Romania: Developments in ICRC operation and co-operation with National Societies

Geneva (ICRC) - The two delegates of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Timisoara and Oradea (Romania) were joined by a team of ICRC delegates and doctors arriving from Budapest. These teams will carry out the ICRC's activities under the Geneva Conventions, in particular protection and medical assistance.

The ICRC team blocked at Bucharest airport since 22 December left for Bucharest itself in the afternoon of 24 December. One delegate stayed at the airport.

The 11 expatriates - including one medical team - who left Geneva on 24 December arrived in Varna (Bulgaria). The team left Varna on 25 December at dawn with three trucks and four vehicles transporting 30 tonnes of medical material for Bucharest, Craiova and Constanta. One ICRC delegate remained behind in Varna for logistical purposes.

To date, four medical teams have been seconded to the ICRC by National Red Cross Societies. One ICRC delegate is accompanying each team.

The National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies have shown great solidarity with Romania and have responded quickly and generously to the situation.

The ICRC is co-ordinating the relief supplies sent by the National Societies from Geneva and in two logistics bases: Budapest (Hungary) and Varna (Bulgaria).

The ICRC is also co-ordinating Red Cross convoys from abroad through its teams which are now on the spot in Romania. The convoys are transporting essentially medical supplies and miscellaneous material such as warm clothes, blankets and family food parcels. A Finnish aircraft left Geneva in the afternoon of 25 December for Varna, with a 3-member medical team from the Finnish Red Cross, one ICRC doctor and one ICRC radio co-ordinator and two radio technicians from the German Red Cross (FRG).

An aircraft from the Belgian and Netherlands Red Cross Societies arrived in Varna on 25 December. The same day a Boeing 707 chartered by the British Red Cross also arrived in Varna. An Airbus from the Netherlands Red Cross landed on 25 December in Burgas (Bulgaria). A plane from the German Red Cross (FRG) landed at dawn at Bucharest airport. All these planes were carrying medical material.

Press Release No. 89/18
26 December 1989

ROMANIA: ARRIVAL OF ICRC TEAMS AND CALL FOR RESPECT OF HUMANITARIAN RULES.

Fifteen expatriates, including two medical teams from the Swedish and Norwegian National Societies, left Geneva today on an ICRC-chartered flight to Budapest.

So far, the ICRC, together with various National Societies, has established a presence in Bucharest, Craiova, Constanta, Timisoara, Arad and Oradea. The ICRC has also sent ten high-frequency radio stations to be used by Red Cross teams within Romania. These stations will be linked with a radio station provided by the German Red Cross (Federal Republic) and set up in Mako, a Hungarian border town. Furthermore, a REGA aircraft has been made available to the ICRC by the Swiss Disaster Relief Corps team which recently arrived in Varna. Beginning today, this plane started providing shuttle transport for ICRC teams within Romania, thus enhancing the ICRC's ability to reach new areas of the country.

The ICRC currently has some 54 expatriates working in Romania, including 22 from the National Societies of Denmark, Finland, Germany (Federal Republic), the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden. The transport of relief goods to Romania is coordinated from its logistic bases in Bulgaria and Hungary.

The National Societies in neighbouring countries responded very quickly to the appeal for Romania. The Soviet Red Cross and Red Crescent Alliance provided several railroad carloads of relief material for Romania, mainly through the Moldavian Red Cross and Ukrainian Red Cross. Over and above the logistic support afforded by them to the ICRC, the Bulgarian and Hungarian National Societies have sent several relief convoys into the country. Teams sent by the Red Cross of Yugoslavia and the Czechoslovak Red Cross brought medicine and first-aid material to the interior, and the German Red Cross (Democratic Republic) also offered to send relief supplies.

Today an information and coordination session was held at ICRC headquarters for the following organizations and voluntary agencies: the WHO, UNDRO, the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the World Lutheran Federation, the World Council of Churches and Catholic Relief Services.

To ensure that the humanitarian work of the ICRC and the various National Societies can be carried out, it is imperative that the Red Cross emblem be respected. This protective emblem is strictly

reserved for the personnel, materials and premises of the various Red Cross bodies. Many abuses of the emblem have been noted over the past few days in Romania. The ICRC therefore urgently calls for complete respect for the Red Cross emblem.

Furthermore, the ICRC hereby also launches a formal appeal for the immediate halt of indiscriminate shooting and the violation of the most basic humanitarian rules. The civilian population and any person hors combat must not be attacked. The ICRC also calls on all those involved in the fighting to show restraint.

As a neutral intermediary, the ICRC always endeavours to ensure the protection of military and civilian victims of conflict. The gaining of access to people detained in relation to conflicts is therefore of great importance.

The ICRC's Central Tracing Agency plays an extremely important role in the obtention and registering of information regarding people on whose behalf the ICRC intervenes. This makes it possible to receive information on missing persons and to exchange correspondence between members of families separated because of a conflict. A tracing specialist from the Central Tracing Agency left today for Romania to organize a tracing network at the national level there.

HOT LINE

The ICRC delegation currently working in Romania would like to remind you of its 'HOT LINE' for the protection of journalists carrying out their duties.

In the event of the disappearance or capture of a journalist in connection with internal disturbances and tension, the ICRC makes available the services of its Central Tracing Agency.

Professional organizations and/or families who wish to intervene on behalf of a journalist encountering difficulties in carrying out his duties can contact:

International Committee of the Red Cross
Press Division
Hot Line
19, ave de la Paix
CH-1202 Geneva
Telephone 022 - 734.60.01
Telex CICR 22.269
Telefax 022 - 734.82.80

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ROMANIA: NEW SURVEYS TO ASSESS NEEDS - RENEWED CALL FOR RESPECT
FOR THE EMBLEM AND HUMANITARIAN RULES

The latest developments in the ICRC's operation in Romania are as follows:

Protection:

The ICRC was informed today that a Hungarian Red Cross volunteer was killed on 23 December, shot point-blank at Timisoara while bringing in relief supplies in a duly marked lorry. The ICRC protests vigorously against this act of violence and calls upon all parties in Romania to respect the red cross emblem.

In view of the tension gripping the country, it also repeats its appeal for the safety of persons now hors de combat to be ensured and for the basic standards of humanitarian behaviour to be respected.

Assistance

A committee has been set up in Bucharest under the auspices of the ICRC, OMS and UNDR0 to coordinate assistance arriving in the Romanian capital. Outside the capital, an ICRC doctor has been able in the past two days to conduct a survey in the north and north-west of the country, travelling by road to several towns - Arad, Timisoara, Cluj, Tirgumures and Oradea - and visiting hospitals there to assess medical needs. Generally speaking, the survey has shown that it will be possible for the time being to meet the most urgent needs with the logistic resources available and the relief consignments now on their way. The staff at the University Hospital of Tirgamures, a town which the ICRC visited for the first time, immediately offered to help organize relief distributions in the area, using the hospital's existing facilities. In response to this offer, nine ICRC expatriates, i.e., the two medical teams from Sweden and Norway (who left Geneva yesterday, 26 December), plus two ICRC delegates and one doctor, are leaving Budapest for Tirgamures today, 27 December. On arrival they will split up into small groups to call at the villages and cover the north of Romania, from which little news has been received to date.

At the same time, one of the ICRC's mobile teams already in Romania is going to Timisoara again today. Another team will try to get through to Sibiu, a town in central Romania cut off until a few hours ago by the extremely hazardous conditions there and hitherto inaccessible to the ICRC. Lastly, the ICRC is establishing an advance base tomorrow, on 28 December, at Mako (Hungarian border) to channel relief consignments. In Geneva, the ICRC will continue to coordinate the assistance announced by the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies - already more than 500 tonnes. Although the most immediate needs appear to be met, the ICRC is now setting up the necessary infrastructure for continued, medium-term operations to facilitate the country's return to normal.

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Communication to the Press No. 89/20
28 December 1989

PANAMA

Geneva (ICRC) - Following the events in Panama on 20 December, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has sent out two doctors and two delegates; three additional delegates will be joining them there in the next few hours.

In response to needs identified on the spot, two aircraft have flown in four tonnes of medical supplies drawn from the stocks of ICRC delegations in Central America. These supplies are jointly being distributed with the Red Cross Society of Panama in the capital's main hospitals.

The ICRC has also helped to evacuate 350 civilians of foreign nationality to their countries of origin.

Concerned about the situation of many persons held in custody, the ICRC is pressing for access to these prisoners.

As another aspect of its protection work, it is also seeking to trace family members separated by the events and restore contact between them.

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THE ICRC IN ROMANIA: A FIRST MEETING WITH THE AUTHORITIES

The head of the delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and his deputy had a first meeting with the new Romanian authorities on 29 December, 1989. They met the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and explained the medical care, coordination of relief supplies and the protection of civilians (particularly their evacuation) undertaken by the ICRC team following its arrival at Bucharest airport on 22 December. They also explained in detail the ICRC's mandate to provide protection. The authorities expressed their appreciation for the activities of the ICRC. Further talks are to be held on the institution's role in the field of protection.

Concerning assistance, the emergency medical phase is now over and the Red Cross plans to shift its assistance to restocking the country's hospitals on a medium and long-term basis. As of 28 December, the ICRC had sent to Romania and neighbouring countries (Bulgaria, Hungary) 62 delegates, including 28 members of medical teams from six National Societies (Denmark, Finland, Japan, Norway, the Netherlands, Sweden), and two radio technicians from the West German Red Cross.

About 1,000 tonnes of relief supplies have been made available for the operation in Romania. Some of the supplies have already arrived, while others are on their way or have been announced by donor National Societies.

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