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**COMMUNICATION TO THE PRESS**

Communication to the press No. 96/22
Geneva, 5 July 1996

ICRC APPEAL FOR 9 MILLION SWISS FRANCS

Geneva (ICRC) - On 5 July the ICRC launched an appeal for more than 9 million Swiss francs to cover the growing needs of the victims of the conflict in Tajikistan. This sum reflects the magnitude of the tragedy affecting tens of thousands of people caught up in the hostilities between government troops and opposition forces, which resumed with growing intensity in early 1996.

Opposition forces have now succeeded in extending their control over the area which separates the semi-autonomous province of Gorno-Badakhshan from the rest of the country (Tavildara, the Mionadu valley and part of the Garm valley), thereby cutting off many villages from the outside. As a result, close to 15,000 destitute people seeking food and safety have fled this region since the beginning of the year. Some 5,000 additional people have left the Mionadu valley across the mountains in the past few weeks. According to the displaced people, the situation in the Mionadu valley, which used to have a population of some 25,000 inhabitants, is rapidly deteriorating.

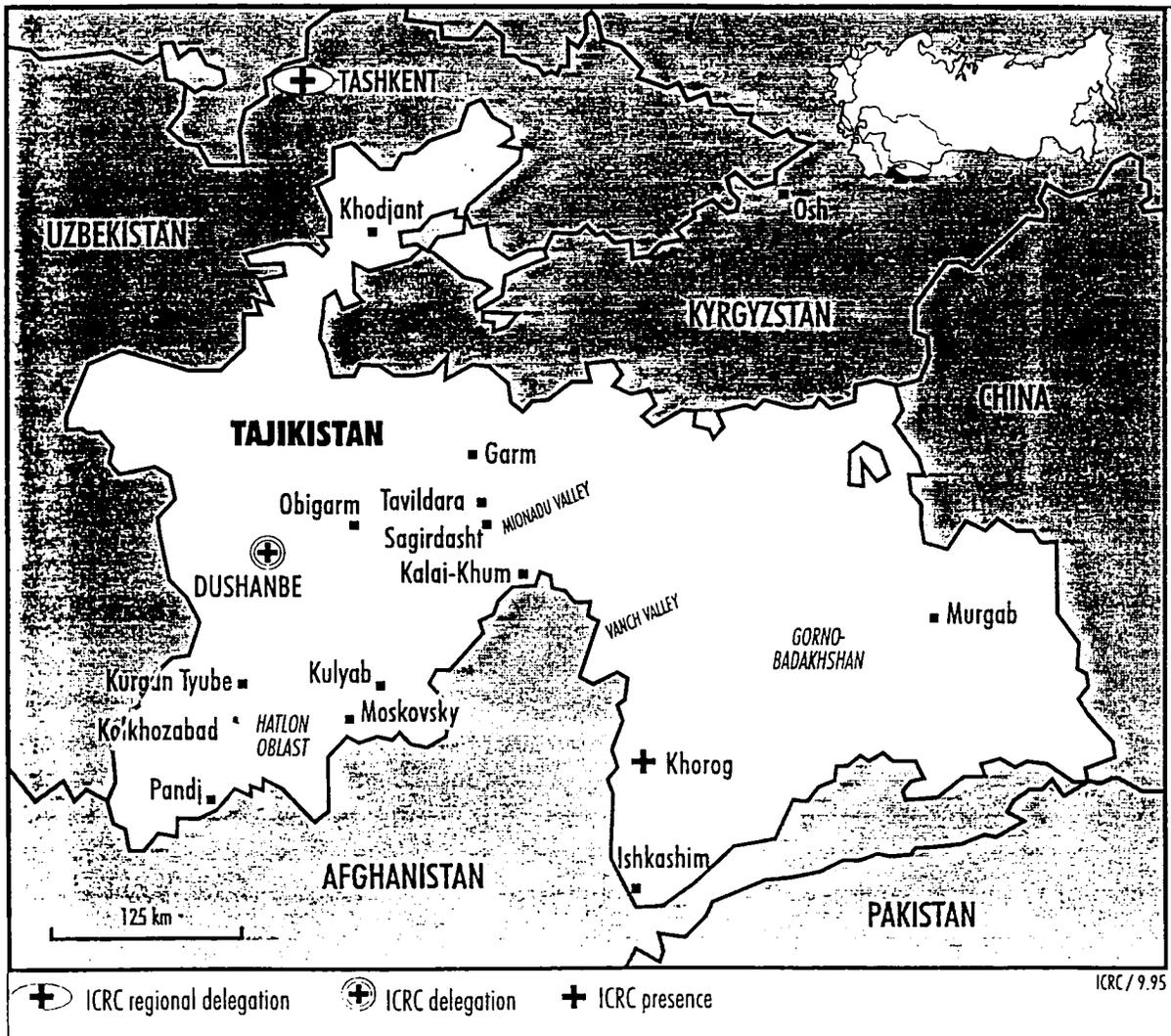
As a first step, the ICRC intends to bring in relief supplies for about 40,000 people. This will enable it to pursue its assistance programme for newly displaced people and to help, as soon as possible, those who are trapped in areas to which ICRC delegates have not yet had access despite repeated representations to the Tajik authorities. In anticipation of any worsening of the situation, enough emergency rations to feed 50,000 more people for two months will be stocked in Dushanbe. Additional surgical supplies and medicines will also be distributed to meet the growing health needs brought on by a collapsing economy and four years of conflict which have severely weakened the country's medical facilities. Since the fighting resumed, claiming hundreds of casualties, the ICRC has distributed in two months the amount of medical supplies it had expected to last for the entire year.

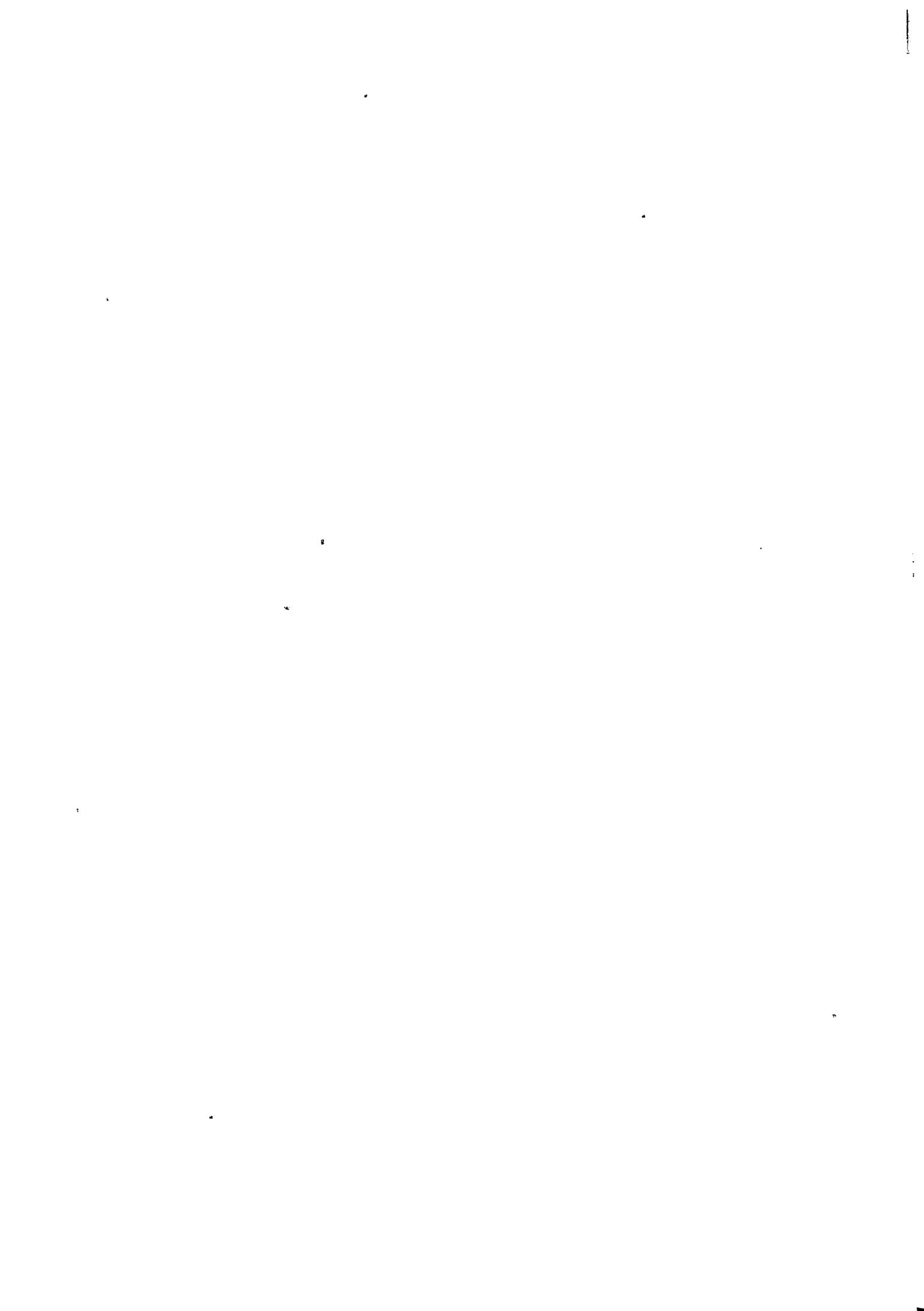


INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

Although the Tajik government continues to deny the ICRC access, in accordance with the organization's customary procedures, to persons held in connection with the conflict, it has agreed to allow relief supplies to be delivered to the country's prisons following alarming allegations of malnutrition. Pending the final results of an ICRC survey, flour and family parcels have already been distributed to 2,000 of the estimated more than 5,000 prisoners. Medical assistance has also been provided to the main prison hospital.

Further information: Suzanne Berger, ICRC Geneva, tel: ++4122 730 2307





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Communication to the press No. 96/23
Geneva, 10 July 1996

**RUSSIAN FEDERATION/NORTHERN CAUCASUS
ICRC APPEALS TO THE WARRING PARTIES IN CHECHNYA**

Geneva (ICRC) - Following the renewed outbreak of fierce fighting in southern Chechnya, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is extremely concerned about the plight of the civilian population, which is once again bearing the brunt of the hostilities.

The ICRC calls on the warring parties and all other entities and persons involved to respect international humanitarian law. It urges them in particular to respect and protect civilians by refraining from launching indiscriminate attacks, spreading terror among the population or using it for military purposes. It further enjoins them to ensure that persons captured and detained are treated humanely, to care for the wounded and the sick, to protect hospitals and medical personnel and to respect the red cross and red crescent emblem.

The ICRC earnestly requests the parties to facilitate access for its delegates to all the victims and other people affected by the conflict and to enable them to assist and protect all those in need.

Further information: Tony Burgener, ICRC Geneva, tel.: ++4122 730 2317

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COMMUNICATION TO THE PRESS

Communication to the press No. 96/24
22 July 1996

**LEBANON/ISRAEL: MORTAL REMAINS REPATRIATED AND PRISONERS
RELEASED**

Geneva (ICRC) - In its capacity as a neutral intermediary, and at the request of the parties concerned, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) participated on 21 July 1996 in the repatriation of mortal remains and the release of prisoners in the hands of the State of Israel, the South Lebanon Army and Hezbollah. The operation was conducted further to an agreement negotiated under the auspices of the government of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Hezbollah handed over the mortal remains of two Israeli servicemen to the ICRC in the Lebanese capital Beirut on Sunday morning. The remains were transferred to the airport and then flown to Israel aboard an aircraft supplied by the government of the Federal Republic of Germany.

For their part the Israeli authorities, in coordination with the South Lebanon Army, handed over the mortal remains of 123 persons, including Hezbollah combatants, to the ICRC. The bodies were taken from northern Israel and from Marjayoun in southern Lebanon to the village of Kfar Tibnit, where they were given into the care of Hezbollah.

During the same operation Hezbollah freed 17 prisoners, while 45 persons were released from the Khiam detention centre.

All the prisoners released were interviewed by ICRC delegates without witnesses and given the opportunity to state the destination of their choice.

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COMMUNICATION TO THE PRESS

Communication to the press No. 96/25
10 August 1996

**RUSSIAN FEDERATION/CHECHNYA:
ICRC CALLS ON ALL PARTIES TO OBSERVE A TRUCE**

Geneva (ICRC) - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is deeply concerned about the suffering endured by the civilian population in Grozny. It therefore appeals to all the parties involved in the fighting to provide the security guarantees needed by its delegates to evacuate the wounded and bring in humanitarian assistance.

Eleven delegates are still present in the city after five days of hostilities. The ICRC's office has given refuge to 120 civilians - including 36 children - fleeing the fighting. So far the red cross emblem marking the compound has been respected by the parties. The ICRC has also organized a distribution of water in front of the compound to enable civilians in that part of the town to replenish their supplies.

According to information received by delegates on the spot, many of the wounded are deprived of medical care because medicines have run out and access to the hospitals is extremely difficult. More than one hundred casualties in Hospital No. 9 are reported to be in urgent need of attention, and at this time Hospital No. 4 may no longer be in operation.

The ICRC is seeking to provide humanitarian aid (medical supplies, food and water) for the hospitals and the civilian population, either from its office in Grozny or from outside.

The security guarantees required for safe access to these hospitals are:

- a truce, which could be confined to certain areas;
- an assurance that there are no mines along the route;
- respect for the red cross emblem and all those protected by it.

On 9 August an ICRC team travelling from Khasavyurt in Daghestan managed to reach the town of Gudermes. The delegates provided medical supplies for the wounded being treated in the town's Hospital No. 2 and transported three serious cases to the central hospital in Khasavyurt.

Further information: Victoria Catliff, ICRC Moscow, tel. ++7095 926 54 26 , or Peter Iseli, ICRC Geneva, tel. (mobile) ++41 79 202 4200++++



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COMMUNICATION TO THE PRESS

Communication to the press No. 96/26
13 August 1996

RUSSIAN FEDERATION/CHECHNYA: STILL NO TRUCE

Geneva (ICRC) - Eight days after the resumption of hostilities in Grozny, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) once again appeals to the parties to declare a cease-fire so that its convoys can reach the city. This would enable its delegates to evacuate the wounded and bring aid to the trapped inhabitants. The ICRC also calls on the parties to facilitate the departure of civilians from combat zones.

The 11 delegates still present in Grozny yesterday evacuated to the outskirts of the city 30 casualties and 200 of the 450 civilians who had taken refuge in the ICRC compound. Security conditions are too hazardous, however, for them to come to the aid of countless other victims.

The ICRC remains deeply concerned about the extremely precarious situation of the city's medical facilities and urges the parties to respect both the premises and the staff working there. According to information received by delegates on the spot, practically none of the hospitals are now able to care for the wounded owing to the shortage of personnel, medical supplies and water, or because facilities have been partly destroyed. A section of the ICRC office building has been turned into a makeshift hospital, where three doctors who had to leave Hospital No. 9 are giving first aid and operating on the most serious cases.

The inhabitants of the city's north-western districts are still fleeing the fighting, making their way towards Ingushetia. Some 20,000 to 25,000 people are reported to have already left and ICRC delegates are supplying them with food, water and blankets as they pass through Pobedinskoye, 15 kilometres from the centre of Grozny. Delegates based in Nazran are following the situation and standing by to come to the aid of the displaced people on their arrival in Ingushetia.

On 12 August another ICRC team travelled from Daghestan to Gudermes and Argun to assess the medical situation there and provide local facilities with whatever assistance was needed.

The ICRC has been active in the northern Caucasus since 1992, and particularly since the outbreak of the conflict in Chechnya in December 1994. At the present time it has 42 delegates and 240 local staff covering the region from its offices in Nalchik (Kabardino-Balkaria), Grozny (Chechnya), Vladikavkaz (North Ossetia), Nazran (Ingushetia) and Khasavyurt (Daghestan).

**Further information: Victoria Catliff, ICRC Moscow, tel. ++7095 926 54 26 , or
Corinne Adam, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++41 22 730 2608**

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**COMMUNICATION TO THE PRESS**

Communication to the press No. 96/27
21 August 1996

**RUSSIAN FEDERATION/CHECHNYA
ICRC CALLS ON FEDERAL AUTHORITIES TO EXTEND ULTIMATUM**

Geneva (ICRC) - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) strongly urges the authorities of the Russian Federation to extend the deadline imposed on Grozny's civilian population, which has been instructed to leave the city by 22 August, when fighting may intensify. The ICRC is extremely concerned about the tragic turn of events in Grozny and the plight of civilians who will remain trapped as the 48-hour deadline is too short to allow them to leave.

The ICRC further calls on the parties to create humanitarian corridors so that civilians can be evacuated rapidly and their safety guaranteed. It estimates that after the flight of almost 60,000 inhabitants between 14 and 18 August, another 70,000 left the city on 20 August. On 21 August about 120,000 people still remained there.

In view of the critical situation of Grozny's inhabitants, the ICRC earnestly appeals to the parties in conflict to abide by the rules of international humanitarian law and in particular to spare the civilian population, which must be protected from the dangers arising from military operations. It also reminds the parties of their obligation to respect medical personnel and medical facilities.

Further information: Suzanne Berger, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++41 22 730 2307

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COMMUNICATION TO THE PRESS

Communication to the press No. 96/28
12 September 1996

RUSSIAN FEDERATION/NORTHERN CAUCASUS: ICRC LAUNCHES APPEAL FOR 18 MILLION SWISS FRANCS

Geneva (ICRC) - On 12 September the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) launched an appeal for nearly 18 million Swiss francs to cover the increase in its activities for victims of the conflict in the republic of Chechnya (Russian Federation). The size of the sum reflects the gravity of the situation for the population which, despite the signing on 31 August of a peace agreement between Russian federal forces and Chechen separatist fighters, is facing the rigours of winter under extremely difficult conditions.

The mass exodus from Grozny between 14 and 22 August has swelled the ranks of people already uprooted since the start of the conflict. It has generated fresh needs in many villages in northern and southern Chechnya, and in the neighbouring republics of Ingushetia and Dagestan. Of those recently displaced, tens of thousands have now returned to Grozny - which has an estimated total population of 80,000 - and are trying to survive amid the ruins of the city.

The ICRC responded immediately to recent developments by setting up an emergency relief programme intended to cover 200,000 people. Some 80,000 have already received food parcels, blankets, jerricans, soap and heavy-duty plastic sheeting over the last three weeks. In addition, the ICRC plans to bring assistance by the end of the year to 25,000 of the most vulnerable inhabitants of Grozny, Gudermes and Argun, providing warm clothing for 10,000 of them and also for 50,000 children.

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The city of Grozny, which was particularly hard hit by the fighting in August, is currently without essential services. The water and electricity distribution networks have been destroyed. The hospitals are no longer functioning, and the ICRC proposes to help bring surgical hospital No. 9 and maternity hospital No. 4 back into service. Given the large number of people wounded during the latest hostilities, on 2 September the ICRC opened a field surgical hospital at Novi Atagi, 20 km south of Grozny. Operations have already been performed on more than 130 war casualties.

Water and public health programmes remain one of the ICRC's top priorities in the region. Over the next few weeks, with an eye to the gradual return of the city's inhabitants, the ICRC plans to double its distributions of water by tanker truck in Grozny to 500,000 litres per day. Similar programmes are under way in Gudermes, where 200,000 litres are distributed every day. In Khasavyurt in Daghestan, ICRC sanitary engineers are working to restore the city's main pumping station to working order.

Although the fighting came to an end on 22 August, needs are still acute among the victims of the last clashes.

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COMMUNICATION TO THE PRESS

Press release No. 96/29
Geneva, 26 September 1996

AFGHANISTAN: CIVILIAN POPULATION TRAPPED IN FIGHTING

Geneva (ICRC) - With winter approaching and food scarce, the plight of Kabul's civilian population has been a source of concern in recent weeks. Now, to make matters worse, the war itself has been brought to the heart of the city. After capturing Jalalabad on 11 September and the strategic town of Sarobi on 24 September, the Taliban have set their sights on the Afghan capital.

According to information received by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the last two days have seen bitter fighting between the Taliban militia and government forces. There have been hundreds of casualties on both sides, some of them victims of mines. In Kabul, where it has stocks of medical supplies sufficient to last six months, the ICRC is furnishing medicines and other items to the city's main hospitals, some of which are already inundated with casualties. Many of those wounded on the Kabul front have been taken to Jalalabad, and the ICRC organized a convoy on 25 September to bring medical supplies to that city's main hospital from Peshawar, across the border in Pakistan.

In view of the extreme ferocity of the current fighting and the vulnerability of the Afghan capital's one million inhabitants, the ICRC is particularly anxious to see the warring parties take steps to spare the civilian population, which has become hostage to the present situation. It also calls on the parties to avoid damage to any structure sheltering wounded or displaced people and to ensure that routes into Kabul remain open to medical and food supplies.

The ICRC is maintaining all of its activities in Kabul. It has redeployed its operational staff so as to deal with any problem from a humanitarian or logistical point of view that may arise in this new situation. On 25 and 26 September the ICRC managed to fly out to Peshawar from Kabul 46 staff members of diplomatic missions and non-governmental organizations.

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ICRC

COMMUNICATION TO THE PRESS

Communication to the press No. 96/30
27 September 1996

**ISRAEL, THE OCCUPIED AND THE AUTONOMOUS TERRITORIES:
ICRC CALLS FOR RESTRAINT**

Geneva (ICRC) - The tragic events of the past two days in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank have prompted the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to make a formal approach to the parties involved, reminding them, in its capacity as promoter and custodian of international humanitarian law, of the fundamental rules and principles to be observed in all circumstances. During military operations aimed at restoring order, every precaution must be taken to avoid injury, loss or damage to civilians and civilian property. All measures taken must respect the principle of proportionality, regardless of the circumstances.

The ICRC pointed out that all those taking part in the hostilities must respect medical facilities and ambulances marked with emblem of the Red Cross, the Palestinian Red Crescent or the Israeli "Red Shield of David" (by analogy, although the latter is not recognized at the international level). In particular, ambulances should not be targeted or used for cover or as a firing position. On 26 September, 23 ambulances were hit by projectiles and five medical workers were wounded, three of them seriously.

ICRC delegates have started distributing emergency medical supplies to hospitals in the Autonomous Territories. Dressing sets, bandages, perfusion kits and disinfectants for surgery and post-operative treatment have already been delivered to El Bireh, Ramallah and Gaza hospitals. The delegates are in permanent contact with medical facilities to assess needs and provide further assistance should the situation further deteriorate.

The ICRC has 12 expatriate delegates in Jerusalem, seven in Gaza, six in Tel Aviv and more than 70 locally hired staff.

Further information: Rolin Wavre, ICRC Geneva, tel. (+41) 79 357 15 24

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COMMUNICATION TO THE PRESS

Communication to the press No. 96/31
6 October 1996

OTTAWA MINE CONFERENCE: THE BEGINNING OF THE END

Geneva (ICRC) - "The results of this conference signal the beginning of the end of the global epidemic of anti-personnel landmines." That was how the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Cornelio Sommaruga described the outcome of the three day international strategy conference "Towards a Global Ban on Anti-personnel Mines" which involved States from all regions of the globe and concluded on Saturday in Ottawa Canada.

Mr. Sommaruga said the ICRC and the entire International Movement of the Red Cross and Red Crescent warmly welcome the historic political commitments undertaken by fifty countries in the Ottawa declaration and the impressive list of concrete engagements outlines in the plan of action.

The president of the ICRC said he was particularly happy to hear the invitation by Canada's Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy to foreign Ministers to come to Canada in December of 1997 to sign a treaty banning anti-personnel mines. That treaty conference he said, "will situate the issue in the framework of international humanitarian law and place all of the efforts of the Ottawa action plan in their proper context. That context is the rapid achievement of a legally binding total ban on the production, use, export and stock-piling of anti-personnel mines."

Mr. Sommaruga said the invitation by Canada to other Foreign Ministers is a very strong signal that landmines will be banned. The specific date set by Canada, he noted, "highlights the importance and urgency of each of the elements of the action plan resulting from the three days of discussion in Ottawa this week."

That action plan includes promotion of a resolution being prepared for the United Nations General Assembly calling on all States to end the use of anti-personnel mines and to begin negotiations to outlaw them, regional and national initiatives to prohibit and eliminate landmines and ten follow up meetings to deal with various aspects of the problem. It also emphasizes the role of regional seminars being organized during the coming year by the ICRC. These seminars will involve political and national security experts from various countries in Asia and southern Africa to continue a dialogue on the military effectiveness of anti-personnel mines.

The ICRC was also encouraged that the Ottawa action plan integrates efforts for a ban with a commitment to increase resources for assistance to mine victims, mine awareness and mine clearance operations.

"We leave this Ottawa conference," said Mr. Sommaruga, "with the confidence that the unspeakable suffering of mine victims has finally touched the conscience of leaders of governments. We now have a firm message of hope for the victims of antipersonnel mines and for their children and grandchildren that the suffering from this plague will be eased"

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COMMUNICATION TO THE PRESS

Communication to the press No 96/32
Geneva, 18 October 1996

SOUTH KIVU: ICRC CALLS FOR RESTRAINT

Geneva (ICRC) - South Kivu and the border areas of Zaire are the scene of growing violence, and the current escalation in warlike rhetoric is fuelling hatred, intolerance and a trend towards exclusion. Unruly behaviour on the part of those bearing weapons, excesses and abuses, including an incident involving a medical facility, are creating a climate of fear and dangerously increasing tension in this troubled area, rife with unresolved and highly explosive political issues.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is concerned to note that this radical turn of events is linked to the question of ethnic identity, which has already caused large-scale disaster in the Great Lakes region. The ICRC consequently calls on all the parties concerned to ensure that moderation and restraint prevail.

The ICRC moreover wants to remind all those bearing arms and military and political leaders of the basic and universally recognized rules that demand respect for civilians, the wounded and captured combatants, as well as for the staff of humanitarian organizations and of the ICRC in particular.

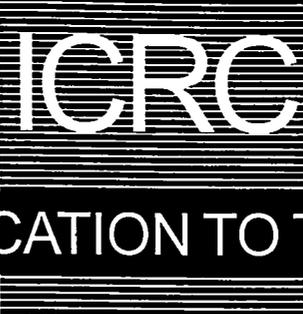
The ICRC is currently sending medical personnel and the equipment required to set up a surgical unit at the Uvira hospital. It also plans to extend its activities in aid of all the victims, in accordance with its principles of neutrality and impartiality, and needs the support of all involved if its staff are to be able to work and travel throughout the area in safety.

**ICRC Head of Delegation, Vincent Nicod, can be reached today in Goma, between 3:30 and 5:00 p.m.
Geneva time. Tel. Sat. : 00 871 682 284 230**

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INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS



Communication to the press No. 96/33
28 October 1996

KIVU: A MAJOR HUMAN TRAGEDY IN THE MAKING

Geneva (ICRC) - The situation in the Kivu province of Zaire has deteriorated even further. Apart from the actual fighting, excesses resulting from undisciplined behaviour on the part of those bearing weapons, intolerance and terror are giving rise to the worst fears for the Zairian civilian population and the hundreds of thousands of refugees in the area. Now that the humanitarian organizations have withdrawn from South Kivu, there is no way of knowing what is happening to the Zairian civilians and the refugees, who are left without any humanitarian presence.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which was forced to suspend its activities in Uvira on 22 October, today withdrew its last two delegates from Bukavu, where they were trying to bring medical aid to the wounded. Security conditions in the town have degenerated to the point where any movement is extremely dangerous. In the last few days several hospitals have been attacked and looted, Red Cross vehicles have been stolen and humanitarian workers harassed.

Near Goma (North Kivu), where seven delegates are still working, the ICRC has managed to distribute emergency aid to some 12,000 Zairians who fled their villages to escape the recent days' fighting. Hospitals in Goma which are treating casualties received medicines and other medical supplies on 27 October. The ICRC also delivered assistance to the dispensary in Mugunga, where more than 150,000 refugees from the Kibumba camp have now arrived.

The ICRC calls once again on all political and military leaders to respect and ensure respect for the basic and universally recognized rules which protect civilians, the wounded and captured combatants, as well as the staff of humanitarian organizations, the ICRC in particular.

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COMMUNICATION TO THE PRESS

Communication to the press No. 96/34
1 November 1996

BREAKING THE HUMANITARIAN DEADLOCK IN KIVU

Geneva (ICRC) - Hundreds of thousands of victims - both Zairians and refugees - of the wanton violence raging in Kivu are now left without any form of protection or assistance. It has become impossible to help them, not only because of the fighting but also because in the prevailing anarchy facilities have been looted, and vehicles and relief supplies have been stolen. The number of casualties among the civilian population is already running high, and there is growing fear that the current violence may escalate into a massacre.

In view of the grave humanitarian implications of the present situation, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) appeals to the belligerents to ensure that the rules of international humanitarian law are applied, the civilian population is respected, the wounded are cared for and prisoners are spared.

The ICRC has taken all necessary measures with a view to resuming its activities in Kivu, on the basis of its mandate under the Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocol I, so that the victims can receive the protection and assistance to which they are entitled. To that end, the international community must take urgent diplomatic steps to create the conditions required for ICRC operations and for humanitarian action in general.

The ICRC solemnly appeals to the belligerents to facilitate its humanitarian mission so that it can come to the aid of the victims of the conflict without delay.

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**COMMUNICATION TO THE PRESS**

Communication to the press No. 96/35
6 November 1996

SUDAN: ICRC CALLS FOR RELEASE OF STAFF AND PATIENTS

Geneva (ICRC) - An aircraft of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has been held on the ground since 1 November in Wunruk, near Gogrial in the south-western Sudanese region of Bahr-al-Ghazal. The forces of local commander Kerubino (a dissident officer of the Sudan People's Liberation Army) are holding the aircraft's pilot, his co-pilot, an ICRC nurse and five Sudanese nationals.

Accusations that the plane was carrying weapons and ammunition are without foundation; the ICRC categorically denies them and calls for those held to be released immediately and the aircraft to be allowed to depart.

As part of its work in southern Sudan, the ICRC regularly evacuates wounded and sick civilians and combatants whose condition requires urgent surgical care, flying them out to its hospitals in Juba, southern Sudan, and Lokichokio, in northern Kenya. The aircraft grounded in Wunruk had on board five persons returning home following treatment. Such flights are organized with the consent of the government of the Republic of Sudan as well as of the various southern Sudanese factions and individual military commanders on the ground.

Contacts have been made both in Khartoum and the south of the country with a view to obtaining the release of those held. In the meantime, the ICRC has decided to suspend all movements by its delegates in the field until the affair has been fully resolved.

The ICRC is present throughout southern Sudan, working openly in areas held by all parties to the conflict. With over 60 expatriate and 500 local staff in Sudan and Lokichokio, its activities focus on medical and surgical care, agricultural rehabilitation and protection for civilians and detainees.

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**COMMUNICATION TO THE PRESS**

Communication to the press No. 96/36
15 November 1996

ZAIRE: ICRC OPERATION GETS UNDER WAY

Geneva (ICRC) - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) today launched an appeal for 49 million Swiss francs (38.5 US dollars) to cover the cost of its operation to protect and assist some of the two million people affected by the conflict in eastern Zaire for three months.

The ICRC has just obtained confirmation from the authorities in Kinshasa that it may work throughout the territory of the Republic of Zaire, although certain formalities remain to be completed. An ICRC-chartered Hercules aircraft left Nairobi this morning with 14 tonnes of high-energy biscuits, two tonnes of medical supplies and 2,000 blankets. It landed in Kinshasa at about 10 a.m. local time before going on to Kisangani, where a team is already setting up a logistics base.

The ICRC delegation in Zaire has drawn up a plan of action to bring desperately needed aid to displaced persons. Existing health facilities in the areas affected by the conflict will receive support, and medical teams will be sent to hospitals in Kivu province and in Kisangani. A field hospital available in Nairobi could very quickly be set up in Zaire. Teams of specialists will make sure that drinking water is available in places where large numbers of refugees and displaced persons have gathered. Should reports of epidemics be confirmed, the ICRC would be able to treat 30,000 people.

The ICRC is in a position to provide non-food relief supplies (blankets, plastic sheeting, jerrycans and soap) for 525,000 people, and food for 250,000 people per month. The aim is not to set up new camps, but to distribute survival rations and water to displaced people on the move or making their way home. The ICRC is also planning a resettlement programme for displaced Zairians returning to their homes.

The ICRC has officially reminded the parties to the armed conflict that the rules of international humanitarian law are applicable. It has a mandate to protect and assist conflict victims, and will work in close coordination with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, which is specifically in charge of assistance to refugees. A coordination unit is to be set up, comprising representatives of the main humanitarian organizations and of the multinational force which is about to become operational.

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**COMMUNICATION TO THE PRESS**

Communication to the press 96/37

Geneva, 8 December 1996

SUDAN - ICRC TEAM RELEASED

Geneva (ICRC) - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is relieved to announce the release, on 8 December 1996, of Maree Worthington, an Australian nurse, John Early, an American pilot, and Mohsin Raza, a Kenyan pilot, who had been detained in southern Sudan since 1 November. They were taken captive when their ICRC aircraft landed in Wunroc and were held there by Commander Kerubino, head of the SPLA's Bahr-el-Gazal group.

The ICRC thanks the governments of the United States of America, Australia and Kenya for their constant support throughout this crisis. In particular, it wishes to emphasize the personal involvement of Congressman Bill Richardson of New Mexico who undertook this humanitarian mission in his capacity as a member of the United States House of Representatives. The ICRC also thanks the Sudanese authorities for their active assistance.

The flight was organized to return home five Sudanese patients who had been discharged from the ICRC hospital in Lokichokio. Those former patients are still being detained by Commander Kerubino. The ICRC has visited them on several occasions and will continue to do everything possible to ensure that they are allowed to return to their families, who live in the area.

As soon as the plane was captured, the ICRC engaged in intense negotiations with Commander Kerubino, with the cooperation of the Sudanese government. On 19 November, the negotiations resulted in a commitment by Commander Kerubino to release the three ICRC staff unconditionally in three days time. Unfortunately, this commitment was not honoured. While representations by the ICRC continued in Khartoum, John Early's family appealed to United States Congressman Bill Richardson for help. He agreed to add his efforts to the ICRC's endeavour to obtain the team's release, and travelled to both Khartoum and Gogrial.

These combined efforts eventually led to the freeing of the three. According to initial reports, they were well treated in captivity and are in satisfactory health. The ICRC shares the joy of the team's families, who will shortly be reunited with their loved ones.

The ICRC deeply deplores the fact that this incident has totally paralysed its humanitarian work in behalf of the many Sudanese people needing protection and assistance. It will now have to consider whether the conditions for a resumption of its humanitarian operations in aid of all victims of the conflict can be met.

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**COMMUNICATION TO THE PRESS**

Communication to the press No. 96/38

17 December 1996

ICRC IN SHOCK: SIX DELEGATES ASSASSINATED IN CHECHNYA

Geneva (ICRC) - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is in shock. Six of its delegates were cold-bloodedly shot dead this morning by unidentified gunmen at their quarters at the hospital in Novye Atagi, near Grozny, at 4 a.m. local time.

Five of the murdered delegates had been seconded to the ICRC by National Red Cross Societies: Hans Elkerbout (construction technician, Netherlands Red Cross), Ingeborg Foss (nurse, Norwegian Red Cross), Nancy Malloy (medical administrator, Canadian Red Cross), Gunnhild Myklebust (nurse, Norwegian Red Cross), and Sheryl Thayer (nurse, New Zealand Red Cross). The sixth, Fernanda Calado, a Spanish nurse, was under contract to the ICRC.

Another delegate, Christophe Hensch, a Swiss national in charge of the ICRC's Novye Atagi office, has gunshot wounds.

The ICRC is withdrawing from Novye Atagi and will evacuate its remaining 14 delegates there to Nalchik (Kabardino-Balkaria) later today. The patients receiving treatment at Novye Atagi hospital will continue to be cared for by local medical staff.

The ICRC expresses its deepest sympathy to the families of the deceased, who gave their lives to help the victims of the Chechen conflict, and to the Netherlands, Norwegian, Canadian and New Zealand Red Cross Societies. The ICRC is profoundly shocked and grieved by this tragedy and vigorously condemns this attack and the violation of the Red Cross emblem.

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COMMUNICATION TO THE PRESS

Communication to the press 96/39
19 December 1996

HOSTAGE CRISIS IN PERU: ICRC TAKES HUMANITARIAN ACTION

Geneva (ICRC) - The head of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) delegation in Peru, Michel Minnig, was among the guests invited to attend the reception held at the Japanese ambassador's residence in Lima when it was taken over by members of the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) on Wednesday.

The ICRC immediately offered its services to help resolve problems of a humanitarian nature arising from this crisis. Michel Minnig quickly succeeded in securing the release of some 250 women and elderly persons and about 50 men, including domestic staff. He later arranged for medical supplies, food and water and toiletries to be brought into the residence to improve conditions for the people inside. ICRC delegates also drew up a list of hostages (some 380 people) and collected messages from them to deliver to their anxious families. The delegates are able to enter and leave the residence freely to carry out their humanitarian work.

The ICRC has been asked by the Peruvian government and the MRTA to act as a neutral intermediary in the negotiations undertaken to resolve the crisis. It has already handed over to the authorities a document written by members of the armed group and signed by the hostages. At present the ICRC is continuing to talk with both sides, but is not taking an active part in the negotiations. In this type of situation the ICRC asks the parties to undertake the firm commitment not to resort to force or take any steps that may harm the hostages or hamper its delegates' freedom of movement during the time in which it is involved. Moreover, the ICRC assumes no responsibility with regard to proposals passed on, decisions made or action taken. It can in no circumstances guarantee that decisions made or conditions set by the parties will be observed.

A crisis unit has been set up at ICRC headquarters in Geneva. It is in constant contact with the delegation in Lima and is closely following developments in the situation.

The ICRC has been working in Peru on a permanent basis since 1984. At present it is visiting over 4,000 security detainees, including imprisoned members of the MRTA, to check on their conditions of detention and treatment. It also takes action in behalf of the civilian population affected by the conflict.

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**COMMUNICATION TO THE PRESS**

Communication to the press No. 96/40

Geneva, 28 December 1996

IRAN-IRAQ CONFLICT: REPATRIATION PROCESS MAY RESUME

Geneva (ICRC) - On 28 December, 722 Iraqi prisoners of war were released by the Iranian authorities and repatriated under the auspices of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Five ICRC delegates, including a nurse, travelled to the Islamic Republic of Iran and talked privately with each of the prisoners to make sure that they were being repatriated of their own free will. The prisoners, accompanied by the delegates, were then taken to the Mundharieh-Khosravi checkpoint, where they were handed over to the authorities of the Republic of Iraq. This was the first such operation carried out since May 1993, although Iran had released small groups of prisoners on several prior occasions.

The ICRC believes that this unilateral repatriation is an important step that should lead to an overall solution to the grievous problem posed by those still being held captive in connection with the conflict. Indeed, thousands of Iraqi prisoners of war in Iranian hands have not yet been reunited with their families. Moreover, the whereabouts of tens of thousands of people unaccounted for on both sides remains unknown.

The ICRC calls on both parties to cooperate in resolving this tragic situation which, eight years after the end of the hostilities, continues to affect tens of thousands of families in Iran and Iraq whose relatives are either in captivity or missing. Under the provisions of international humanitarian law, States party to an international armed conflict must release and repatriate all prisoners of war as soon as active hostilities have ended. Between August 1990 and May 1993 the ICRC repatriated more than 80,000 prisoners held by Iran and Iraq.

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