COLLECTION

COMMUNICATIONS A LA PRESSE

COMITE INTERNATIONAL DE LA CROIX-ROUGE

1993

anglais
Communication to the press No. 93/1
25 January 1993

RWANDA: FOOD AID URGENTLY NEEDED

Geneva (ICRC) - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is planning to dispatch 7,000 tonnes of food per month to Rwanda. This assistance programme must be carried out as a matter of urgency to ensure the survival of some 350,000 people in the north of the country who have fled their homes because of the conflict.

To date the ICRC has been able to send only two convoys, both from Uganda. The first, carrying 360 tonnes of supplies, reached the displaced people on 22 December last, via Kagitumba, while the second left Uganda with 570 tonnes on 8 January, taking the Gatuna road.

The ICRC hopes that it will be able to continue this operation from Uganda, where several thousand tonnes of food are ready to go.

The ICRC has informed both parties to the conflict that it proposes to use these two routes regularly. The Rwanda government has given its agreement in principle, while a full reply is still awaited from the Rwanda Patriotic Front. The latter has so far agreed to allow convoys only on the Gatuna road.

For logistic reasons it is indispensable to use both routes. The poor condition of the surface in some sections would make it difficult to transport 7,000 tonnes per month over the same road.

++++
ICRC CONDEMNS INDISCRIMINATE USE OF MINES

Geneva (ICRC) - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is deeply concerned by the widespread and indiscriminate use of land mines in various parts of the world, and condemns this practice in the strongest terms.

In the last few days, there have been three incidents in which staff of humanitarian organizations working in Africa have been killed or wounded by mines.

On 25 January, seven first-aid workers of the Senegalese Red Cross were killed and four others injured when their vehicle hit a mine in Casamance.

On 5 February in Zambezia province, Mozambique, a mine blast killed two Mozambicans, one of whom was an OXFAM employee, during a mission in which the ICRC was taking part. Three other people were wounded.

On the same day in Lasanod in north-western Somalia, a third mine incident cost five people their lives, three of them local ICRC staff. Three other Somali employees were injured and taken to hospital in Lasanod and Garoe.

The ICRC is profoundly distressed by these tragic incidents and wishes to convey its heartfelt sympathy to the victims' families.
Communication to the press No. 93/3
24 March 1993

THE ICRC IN RWANDA:

WORKING TO HELP ONE MILLION DISPLACED GO HOME

Geneva (ICRC) - One million displaced in Rwanda are threatened by famine. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) expressed its alarm to both parties to the conflict in a memorandum submitted this week. In the memorandum the ICRC solemnly requests that the concerned do all in their power to prevent a major disaster. The only solution is to allow the displaced people to return home immediately and in adequate security conditions.

In spite of the sustained efforts of the ICRC, and other humanitarian organizations working on the spot, the needs of the displaced remain enormous: at least 13,000 tonnes of food are required each month, and their health is seriously threatened by the conditions in which they live (poor hygiene, overcrowding, undernourishment).

The ICRC conducts a nutritional emergency programme with the cooperation of the Rwandese Red Cross and the support of the World Food Programme (WFP). A non-food action is carried out with the support of the Belgian Red Cross. Nevertheless, it is unrealistic to expect that the ICRC or the other organizations can provide decent living conditions for one million displaced people in the long term. The conflict has severely disrupted local economic and social structures - it is extremely difficult to bring in aid. The displaced must be allowed to return to their homes: the lives of one million people are hanging in the balance.

++++
ARMENIA/azerbaijan

ICRC aid for displaced in Kalbajar area

Geneva (ICRC) - A team of delegates of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is conducting an emergency mission in the Kalbajar region of Azerbaijan to bring help to civilians fleeing the fighting. The route taken by the displaced people goes over a snowbound mountain pass 3,400 metres above sea-level, and delegates have distributed food, medical supplies and several thousand blankets.

Fierce fighting is now raging in the Kalbajar region, which is situated between Armenia and north-western Nagorny-Karabakh.

++++
CONFLICT IN BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA
SEVENTEEN DETAINES FROM BATKOVIC CAMP KILLED NEAR THE FRONT

Geneva (ICRC) - During a visit on 31 March to Batkovic camp, which is controlled by Bosnian Serb forces, delegates of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) were informed that 17 detainees might have lost their lives on 26 March when the vehicle transporting them for work at the front was ambushed. Three surviving detainees were able to speak in private with the ICRC delegates.

The ICRC has observed in the past that detainees were being forced to work at the front line and has already repeatedly called on all parties to the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina to put an end to such practices. To send detainees into a combat zone where they might come under fire is a violation, whatever the circumstances, of the provisions of the Third and Fourth Geneva Conventions, which the parties have undertaken to respect. The ICRC moreover reminds the parties to the conflict that they are responsible at all times for the detainees' safety, and that it is prohibited to compel detainees to do work of a military nature or destined to serve a military purpose.

+++++
Communication to the press No. 93/6
7 April 1993

ARMENIA/AZERBAIJAN
KALBAJAR: ICRC STEPS UP AID TO VICTIMS OF RECENT FIGHTING

Geneva (ICRC) - On 1 April, teams from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) were dispatched from Barda, Baku and Tbilisi to the Kalbajar region of western Azerbaijan to assist tens of thousands of people fleeing intense fighting in the area. The delegates worked round the clock to distribute over 4,000 blankets to civilians crossing on foot the snowbound Mourovdar pass, 3,400 metres above sea level. They also used their all-terrain vehicles to transport to safety hundreds of women and children weakened by the journey and trapped by a snowstorm.

In addition, over 4,500 blankets and hundreds of pairs of shoes were distributed in Dashkesan and Khanlar, two towns where the displaced gather before being sent on to different reception centres by the authorities.

On 5 April, another ICRC team travelled to southern Azerbaijan to assess medical needs in the Fizuli area, which has been the scene of heavy fighting in the past week.

In Nagorny-Karabakh, delegates based in Stepanakert have begun visiting some fifty Azerbaijani civilians and combatants held by the local authorities, providing the detainees with food and material assistance.

Finally, delegates have approached all the parties to the conflict, urging them to spare the civilian population and grant the ICRC access to all persons held in connection with the fighting.

+++
RWANDA:

ICRC WARNS AGAINST MAJOR CATASTROPHE, LAUNCHES URGENT APPEAL

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on Tuesday warned that 900,000 displaced people in Rwanda face a major humanitarian catastrophe and launched an extended appeal for that country.

The appeal was launched as the ICRC revised its 1993 Rwanda budget from CHF 15.7 million to a total of CHF 127.5 million. The current budget is centred on the 900,000 displaced people who represent one seventh of the tiny landlocked nation's population and remain housed in camps, dependent on outside food aid for their survival.

The ICRC's relief operation will be carried out in cooperation with the Rwandan Red Cross, the Belgian Red Cross and the World Food Programme.

The terrorized civilian population in the northern part of the country, who were caught in intense fighting between the Rwandan armed forces and the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), have had to flee their homes and abandon their farms in the most fertile parts of the country.

Although the two sides agreed to a cease-fire last month and resumed negotiations, the fear of renewed hostilities makes Rwanda's 900,000 war-displaced reluctant to return home.

Famine is imminent in a country only half the size of Switzerland but whose population density is second only to that of Bangladesh. Severe levels of malnutrition have already been detected in children under five. Recent dysentery outbreaks in the camps north of the capital, Kigali, underscore the camp-dwellers' acute need for clean water and medicine.

The ICRC is present in Rwanda with 20 expatriates and 53 local employees. It distributed 2,300 tonnes of cereals, beans and oil last week, but estimates that a minimum of 13,000 tonnes of food aid a month are needed to ensure that a daily food ration of 2,400 calories reaches the needy.

The Rwanda operation is the ICRC's biggest relief action in Africa after Somalia, and accounts for almost 30 per cent of the organization's total expenditure on the African continent this year.
ICRC STAYS IN SOMALIA, BUT REPLACES KITCHENS WITH DRY FOOD

Geneva (ICRC) - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has decided to reduce its extensive community kitchens programme in Somalia, which has provided hot cooked meals for over a million people every day. The process of replacing the kitchens by dry food distribution began last week.

This decision was taken after the recent influx of other international agencies providing assistance in Somalia as well as the overall improvement in the nutritional status of the population. Switching back to dry food rations enables people to return to their homes with a stock of food and gradually regain their self-sufficiency.

The ICRC has already withdrawn from Bardera and is gradually closing down the hundreds of kitchens in Mogadishu. Some of the kitchens will, however, carry on as before in order to provide for vulnerable groups without any other means of survival.

Besides food aid, agricultural and veterinary programmes are essential parts of the ICRC's emergency plan for Somalia and its largely rural society. The agricultural programme currently under way is providing farmers with more than 1,600 tonnes of seed and 130,000 tools.

Eighteen Somali veterinary teams are working throughout the country vaccinating livestock, on which the population has traditionally relied for survival, against major diseases. Over four million sheep, goats and camels have so far been treated for parasites.

Last year's relief operation in Somalia was the ICRC's biggest ever - it remains so also in 1993. Over 230,000 tonnes of food have been brought in from 1 January 1992 to the present day, substantially more than any other organization. In the future the organization also intends to focus on activities stemming directly from its mandate, such as tracing family members separated by the conflict, exchanging messages between them, and providing protection and medical care.

+++
Communication to the press No. 93/9
Geneva, 18 april 1993

EASTERN BOSNIA
ICRC IN SREBRENICA

Geneva (ICRC) - A team of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) arrived in Srebrenica this afternoon at 15.30 following the agreement signed on 17 april 1993 in Sarajevo by Lt. Gen. Mladic and Gen. Halilovic in the presence of Lt. Gen. Wahlgren representing UNPROFOR.

The ICRC team, consisting in a medical doctor and a delegate, are presently participating in the triage of the sick and war-wounded persons and their evacuation from Srebrenica.

Another ICRC team, composed of 9 staff including 1 medical doctor and 3 nurses with 4 Land Cruisers and 5 trucks loaded with medical supplies, blankets and food, has been in Mali Zvornik since today noon awaiting instructions to proceed to Srebrenica.

An additional 2 nurses, 11 trucks and 2 land-cruisers with medical material are expected to arrive in Belgrade from Zagreb tonight and will proceed to Srebrenica when required.

++++
ANTIPERSONNEL LANDMINES

WHO BEARS RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES?

Geneva (ICRC) - Between 21 and 24 April 1993 over 60 international experts met in Montreux, Switzerland, under the auspices of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to examine the extent of the damage done by the indiscriminate and persistent use of antipersonnel landmines.

After three days of discussions, the participants - military officers, diplomats, doctors, lawyers, weapons specialists, representatives of humanitarian organizations, mine clearance experts and specialized journalists - concluded that the human and social cost of antipersonnel landmines, on the one hand, and the military cost-effectiveness of mines and the possibility of finding some substitute, on the other, should be assessed as matter of urgency.

They noted that those who manufacture antipersonnel landmines and those who actually lay them assume no responsibility for clearance operations and do not help care for people disabled by these devices.

They also concluded that in most modern conflicts antipersonnel mines are not usually laid for military purposes. They have been and continue to be used to spread terror among civilians or to destroy the social and economic fabric of the countries where they are laid.

It is clear from the participants' reports that antipersonnel landmines are widely used by irregular forces who do not consider themselves subject to the international rules governing the use of such weapons.

In spite of the fact that the full magnitude of the problem is not known, the experts agreed that landmines have exceptionally devastating effects on individuals, societies, the international community and the environment. They also stressed that the damage and suffering are increasing as the number of mines laid every day by far exceeds present possibilities for removing them.

The experts therefore urged that immediate diplomatic, government and legal measures be taken to limit and control the production, availability and use of antipersonnel landmines.
This recommendation tops a list of proposals relating to the fields in which drastic action is required to reduce the suffering caused by landmines. The proposals relate to the following matters: determining who is responsible for providing direct aid to mine victims; what resources are required to clear the hundreds of millions of active mines that infest so many countries; increasing public awareness in affected areas; and lastly, implementing, strengthening and developing the existing rules of international humanitarian law on the use of weapons, and possible control measures relating to the commerce in and stockpiling of mines.

The participants proposed to coordinate research and other efforts deployed to achieve these objectives, each in his or her specific field of activity.

As concerns international law, several experts considered that the total and unconditional prohibition of all types of mines was the best means of dealing with the problem. Others viewed this solution with scepticism and favoured the prohibition of certain types of mines, for example those without self-destruct and detection mechanisms.

At the invitation of the Symposium, the ICRC agreed to start discussions with the armed forces on the military necessity of antipersonnel landmines, in particular of devices that are non-detectable and have no self-destruct mechanism, at present the greatest scourge.

The ICRC also agreed to redouble its efforts to promote implementation of the rules of international humanitarian law, the training of war surgeons and the provision of medical care and rehabilitation for people wounded by mine explosions.

In preparation for the Review Conference on the 1980 Convention on prohibitions or restrictions on the use of certain conventional weapons, due to be held in 1994 or 1995, the ICRC also stated that it was willing to convene a meeting of experts to gather information, objectively and systematically, on the problems to be dealt with in that context.

Together with the experts concerned, the ICRC will seek practical, realistic and lasting solutions to the humanitarian issues arising from the excessive and indiscriminate use of antipersonnel landmines.

***
Communication to the press No. 93/11
7 May 1993

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA: MINORITIES IN BANJA LUKA IN DANGER

ICRC (Geneva) - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is extremely concerned about the situation of minorities in the Banja Luka area.

The civilian population is under constant pressure by armed groups who repeatedly beat, rob and threaten persons belonging to minorities. The houses of such persons in Banja Luka and nearby villages are regularly attacked and burned down by uncontrolled elements.

On 2 May, a local Red Cross office in Banja Luka itself was completely destroyed by fire.

On 6 May, three mosques in Banja Luka were severely damaged by explosives. The ICRC reminds all concerned that under international humanitarian law, it is prohibited to commit any act of hostility directed against places of worship.

The ICRC once again appeals to the authorities concerned to ensure respect for the civilian population and to take all necessary steps immediately to stop such acts and prevent any recurrence.

++++
RESUMPTION OF ICRC ACTIVITIES IN SOUTH SUDAN

Geneva (ICRC) - After an interruption of more than a year, aircraft of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) are again flying to destinations in southern Sudan. The resumption is the result of the signature of a "MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING" signed on 21 March 1993 between the ICRC and the Sudanese Government, which defines the scope of the institution's activities in southern Sudan.

On Monday 10 May, an ICRC plane took two ICRC delegates from Khartoum to Juba, and the next day two ICRC doctors flew to Juba from Lokichokio in northern Kenya. The ICRC team immediately started assessing the situation in and around Juba, mainly in camps for displaced people and in the town's hospitals and dispensaries, where medical supplies brought in on the two flights will be distributed.

During the next few weeks the ICRC will carry out a detailed survey of 14 different localities in Upper Nile and Equatoria provinces, controlled either by the Sudanese Government or by the Sudanese People's Liberation Army factions.

++++
IRAN-IRAQ: PRISONERS OF WAR REPATRIATED

Geneva (ICRC) - One hundred Iraqi prisoners of war were repatriated today under the auspices of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The operation took place at noon local time at the border crossing known as Khosravi-Mundharieh.

All the prisoners concerned had been captured during the 1980-88 war between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Iraq. In accordance with a procedure accepted by both States, ICRC delegates held individual interviews with all the prisoners of war before they crossed the border to check that they wished to be repatriated.

The ICRC welcomes this latest repatriation, but nevertheless points out that to its knowledge almost 20,000 Iraqi prisoners of war have still not been offered the opportunity to return to their homes. Moreover, the ICRC is still without news of several hundred Iranian prisoners of war whose existence has been reported by people captured or detained with them. The Third Geneva Convention stipulates that prisoners of war must be released and repatriated without delay after the end of active hostilities.
BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA: WATER SHORTAGES IN SREBRENICA, MOSTAR AND DONJI VAKUF

Geneva (ICRC) - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is deeply concerned about the water shortages affecting the besieged inhabitants of Srebrenica and the civilian population of Mostar and Donji Vakuf.

ICRC delegates have been working in Srebrenica for the last few weeks. Their main tasks are collecting Red Cross messages and delivering them to members of families split up by the conflict, and trying to improve sanitary conditions in the town. This involves repairing the water supply system and treating drinking water so as to avoid the outbreak of epidemics.

Despite repeated attempts by the ICRC and other humanitarian organizations, it has not been possible to repair Srebrenica's water treatment plant, which is near the front line in an area controlled by Bosnian Serb forces. As a result, the town's population of 20,000 is suffering from an acute shortage of water.

The situation is similar on the left bank of the river Neretva in Mostar, where supplies are extremely scarce owing to action by Bosnian Croat forces. The inhabitants are forced to risk their lives by crossing the front lines after dark in search of water.

In Donji Vakuf the main source of water, which is controlled by Bosnian government forces, no longer supplies the town. To make matters worse, the sewage system is partially blocked. The ICRC has approached the parties with a view to solving this problem.

The ICRC reminds the parties to the conflict that the destruction of installations indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, such as water treatment plants, and preventing essential supplies from getting through is strictly prohibited by international humanitarian law, which the parties have agreed to respect.

The ICRC appeals once again to the authorities concerned to take all necessary steps to allow the ICRC to bring assistance to the civilian population and protect it from the effects of the hostilities, in accordance with the institution's humanitarian mandate.

+++
ICRC PROVIDES EMERGENCY AID TO BOSNIAN CROATS FLEEING TRAVNIK

Geneva (ICRC) - About 3,000 Bosnian Croat civilians are trapped in the no man's land between Bosnian government forces and the Bosnian Serb lines at Mount Vlasic in central Bosnia. A group of 500 others left the area today, accompanied by delegates of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

A team of ICRC delegates based in Banja Luka arrived on the spot yesterday, 8 June, to assess the situation and bring in emergency supplies.

Thirteen ICRC trucks left Zagreb this morning for Mount Vlasic via Banja Luka. They are loaded with 50 tonnes of relief supplies, including food parcels, wheat flour and blankets. Another convoy of 14 trucks is on its way from Banja Luka with blankets, tents, clothes and other emergency supplies. The weather in this mountainous area can be very harsh, and many of the people fled their homes without any personal belongings.

The Bosnian Serb authorities and the Republic of Croatia have reached an agreement in principle on the transfer of these people to Croatia under ICRC protection. About 500 people have already left, accompanied by the ICRC, and are at this moment on their way to the republic.

Most of the trapped civilians are women and children. Another group of about 750 men has been taken to Manjaca detention camp, in the Banja Luka area. The ICRC is presently doing everything necessary to obtain immediate access to Manjaca to register and visit these detainees.

++++
Geneva (ICRC) - According to current reports, the fighting of the last few days in Gorazde, in eastern Bosnia, has already claimed many victims. In the southern town of Mostar the civilian population has been subjected to harassment for over a month, and last week more than 3,000 civilians were brutally driven out of Travnik, in central Bosnia. Delegates of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) are once more witnessing blatant violations of the basic principles of international humanitarian law.

For example:
- the civilian population is targeted during the fighting;
- civilian property, particularly houses, is destroyed and burned by the combatants;
- adverse discrimination is practised in the medical care given to sick and wounded civilians and combatants;
- prisoners are not treated humanely.

For several days, ICRC delegates have been unable to reach the Gornji Vakuf, Novi Travnik, Jablanica and Konjic areas owing to the fighting. The roads in the region are infested with snipers and bandits.

ICRC delegates on the spot have noted repeated allegations of civilians and prisoners being summarily executed during and after the fighting. They have seen many villages where houses belonging to minorities have been systematically destroyed.

The ICRC once again reminds all the parties to the conflict that they bear full responsibility for all abuses committed by the forces on the territory under their control.

In view of this further deterioration in the humanitarian situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the ICRC appeals to the leaders of all parties to put an immediate end to the prevailing devastation and chaos. All parties must ensure as a matter of urgency that every combatant respects the civilian population, the wounded and detainees in all circumstances.
SOMALIA: ICRC APPEALS FOR COMPLIANCE WITH INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

Geneva (ICRC) - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is deeply concerned by the latest events in Mogadishu and therefore appeals to all forces involved to respect international humanitarian law and to ensure respect for its rules by all of their members. It enjoins them in particular:

- neither to attack civilians or facilities used by the civilian population nor to misuse civilians for military operations;
- not to launch indiscriminate attacks;
- not to launch military operations that may cause incidental civilian casualties or damage to civilian objects disproportionate to the direct military advantage anticipated;
- to take all feasible precautions to avoid civilian casualties or damage to civilian objects;
- to respect and protect all those not or no longer participating in hostilities, such as prisoners, wounded, sick and civilians;
- to collect and care for wounded and sick;
- to treat all prisoners humanely;
- to facilitate relief operations for and medical assistance to the civilian population, the wounded and sick and the prisoners and to respect the personnel, vehicles and premises involved;
- to respect the red cross or red crescent emblem and not to abuse it, so as to guarantee the safety of the victims it is meant to protect and of all those engaged in humanitarian activities under this emblem.

The ICRC present in Mogadishu with 13 delegates (including 7 medical staff) is ready to fulfill its primary function which is to protect and assist military and civilian victims of the armed conflict. In particular it offers its services to visit persons detained in relation with the conflict.

++++
EAST TIMOR: ICRC VISITS TO DETAINES AGAIN SUSPENDED

Geneva (ICRC) - In response to guarantees received by its President from the highest authorities of the Republic of Indonesia in early May in Jakarta, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has tried to resume its visits to all persons detained in connection with the situation in East Timor. The visits were suspended in January 1993.

The ICRC’s first attempt to resume the visits on 25 May had to be interrupted two days later owing to restrictions placed on its customary visiting procedure. A further attempt on 17 June was cut short the next day because of failure to obtain access to all the detainees despite prior assurances to the contrary by the relevant authorities.

The ICRC deplores these continuing difficulties and appeals to the Indonesian authorities to take all necessary steps to resolve them and enable the visits to be carried out smoothly.

++++
ICRC PRESIDENT CALLS FOR RULE OF LAW TO STEM THE TIDE OF BARBARITY

Vienna/Geneva (ICRC) - The President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Mr. Cornelio Sommaruga, has called on governments to take their obligation to respect and ensure respect for international humanitarian law more seriously. "Experience has shown that when humanitarian law is properly implemented in the heat of battle, the vicious circle of excessive violence, reprisals and counter-reprisals can be avoided", he told delegates at the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna.

Mr. Sommaruga said that the time had come to stand firm and see to it that duly signed treaties prevailed over violent passions. Asking whether moral authority was enough to hold barbarity in check, the ICRC President said: "It should be possible to answer this question with an unqualified 'Yes'. But history goes on repeating itself. The terrible sequence of war, massacres, torture and rape by no means belongs to the past; it is going on at this very moment, practically before our eyes".

The ICRC President expressed support for moves to set up an independent, permanent and universal mechanism to punish violations of humanitarian law. Allowing barbaric acts to be committed with impunity, he said, would only encourage further lawlessness.

He also welcomed the Swiss government’s decision to convene an international conference for the protection of war victims at the end of August in Geneva. The governments of all States party to the Geneva Conventions have been invited to attend. The conference must, he said, serve as an opportunity for all States to confirm that they intend to honour their commitment to respect and ensure respect for international humanitarian law.

Note to news editors: Mr. Sommaruga will hold a press conference at the Austria Center, Vienna, on 24 June at 11.30 a.m.
DETERIORATION OF SITUATION IN ABKHAZIA: ICRC RESPONSE

Geneva (ICRC) - An aircraft chartered by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) will be leaving Geneva on 15 July bound for Georgia. On board will be an ICRC nurse and doctor and eight tonnes of medicines and medical and surgical supplies destined for hospitals receiving war casualties. This consignment will supplement the medical assistance that the ICRC has been distributing in Tbilisi and Sukhumi, and in Gudauta on the Abkhazian side, since the clashes began.

Intense artillery fire is claiming many victims, both civilian and military. In this context the priorities of the ICRC, which has been working in Sukhumi and Gudauta since August 1992, are:

- promoting respect for the universal rules governing the conduct of hostilities, by maintaining a dialogue with both parties;
- providing medical assistance, especially to surgical units in hospitals;
- visiting prisoners captured in connection with the conflict.

The ICRC has had access to a limited number of combatants captured by both parties. It is continuing its approaches requesting authorization to visit prisoners on both sides, who should have been transferred out of the combat zone.

Insofar as the hazardous security conditions allow, the ICRC is also forwarding messages between separated family members and between prisoners and their relatives.

++++
Communication to the press No. 93/21
15 July 1993

PRINCESS SIRINDHORN OF THAILAND VISITS THE ICRC

Geneva (ICRC) - H.R.H. Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn today visited the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in her capacity as Executive Vice-President of the Thai Red Cross Society, in response to an invitation by Mr. Cornelio Sommaruga, President of the ICRC. During her visit to the ICRC's headquarters Princess Sirindhorn, accompanied by the Permanent Representative of Thailand to the United Nations in Geneva, discussed with President Sommaruga and went to see the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum.

++++
LIBERIA: ICRC CONCERNED ABOUT 110,000 PEOPLE FACING STARVATION

Geneva (ICRC) - Over 110,000 people living in the area between Kakata and Totota, in central Liberia, are threatened by starvation. The population at risk includes both residents and displaced persons. A survey just carried out by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has revealed that nearly 20% of children are suffering from kwashiorkor. Their undernourished state makes them vulnerable to epidemics that have already taken an extremely heavy toll.

According to the ICRC nutritionist who took part in the survey, the situation is deteriorating. A large-scale assistance operation is now urgently required.

The announcement made during the peace negotiations in Geneva that the parties agreed to let humanitarian aid reach all those in need is encouraging for the ICRC, which insists on immediate implementation of the agreement.

++++
ICRC FUND-RAISING APPEAL FOR SOUTHERN SUDAN

Geneva (ICRC) - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is launching an appeal for 16,704,239 Swiss francs for its relief operation for conflict victims in southern Sudan, following a survey of needs in 20 towns. This brings the total budget for the operation up to 27,740,645 Swiss francs.

Southern Sudan, which is controlled in part by the government and in part by various factions of the Sudan People's Liberation Army, has been devastated by the war. Most of the crops have been destroyed, innumerable people have been displaced and the lives of entire communities are threatened by the lack of food and medical care.

The ICRC intends to cover the basic needs of 400,000 people affected by this disastrous situation. Its plan of action includes the distribution of seed, tools, and fishing-tackle as elementary means of survival, and the provision of medical supplies. Some food will also be brought in to supplement that already being provided by other relief agencies on the spot. In addition the ICRC will engage in its traditional activities, such as tracing members of dispersed families, protecting civilians and evacuating war casualties for emergency treatment.

To date the ICRC has assisted some 40,000 conflict victims in southern Sudan, in the towns of Kongor and Olang.

*****
CONFLICT IN ANGOLA: ICRC APPEALS FOR RESPECT FOR CIVILIANS - ITS HUAMBO DELEGATION DESTROYED

Geneva (ICRC) - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), deeply concerned about indiscriminate attacks against civilians in Huambo, Kuito and Menongue, appeals to the government of the Republic of Angola and to the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) to spare the civilian population.

Huambo has been under heavy air attack by government armed forces since 2 August, causing an unknown number of casualties. Several areas of the town, including those inhabited by civilians, continue to be bombarded.

At 10 a.m. local time on 4 August the ICRC delegation in Huambo was hit by bombs and completely destroyed. By miracle the delegate and local employees escaped injury. The building was duly marked with the Red Cross emblem.

The ICRC urgently appeals to the belligerents to comply with the rules of international humanitarian law concerning the civilian population, the wounded, detainees and the Red Cross emblem.

In view of the fact that it has been impossible for several months to carry out any humanitarian activities in Angola, the ICRC also urges the parties to the conflict to do everything possible to facilitate emergency operations for the entire population without discrimination, on political or any other grounds.

****
Communication to the press No. 93/25
19 August 1993

NAGORNY-KARABAKH CONFLICT: 60,000 CIVILIANS FLEE FIGHTING IN SOUTH-WESTERN AZERBAIJAN

Geneva (ICRC) - A team of delegates from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is currently working in the Fizuli and Dzebrail areas south of Nagorny-Karabakh. According to their estimates some 60,000 people are fleeing eastwards from Fizuli and Dzebrail to seek refuge in regions unaffected by the fighting. The hospitals in the two towns have been evacuated and patients and medical staff moved to safer places. The clashes continue to claim many civilian and military victims. Casualties are being treated in makeshift conditions. There have reportedly been about 150 wounded during the last few days in this part of the front alone.

The ICRC has installed a 5,000 litre water tank to improve hygiene conditions at the temporary hospital set up outside Fizuli. It has also distributed emergency medical and surgical supplies to the hospitals of Fizuli, Dzebrail and Goradiz, a town near the Iranian border, and is dispatching extra staff and equipment to the region. The ICRC delegation in Azerbaijan comprises eight delegates and 24 local employees.

The plight of the civilian population of the Zanguilan and Gubatli areas remains a source of particular concern for the ICRC. Only one road along the river Araks, which forms the border with Iran, is still open. Should this route be cut off, more than 100,000 people would be caught between the Armenian and Iranian borders and the conflict zone south of Nagorny-Karabakh.

The ICRC appeals to all the parties involved in the conflict to comply with the basic rules of international humanitarian law, especially those relating to the protection of civilians and non-combatants. The ICRC urges them in particular:

- to protect and respect the wounded, the sick, prisoners and civilians in all circumstances;
- to refrain from taking hostages;
- to distinguish at all times between combatants and military objectives on the one hand and civilians and civilian property on the other;
- to refrain from attacking civilians and civilian property;
- to refrain from indiscriminate attacks.

The ICRC reminds the parties that acts of violence intended to spread terror among the civilian population are also prohibited.
ARMENIA: ICRC CONVOY UNDER FIRE NEAR AZERBAIJANI BORDER

Geneva (ICRC) - On 23 August two trucks belonging to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), travelling in the Republic of Armenia, came under shell fire from Azerbaijani territory. The incident occurred on the road that runs along the border with Azerbaijan, between the towns of Krasnoselsk and Berd (north-east of the country). A passenger aboard one of the vehicles was killed.

The ICRC deplores the loss of a human life and condemns in the strongest terms this deliberate attack on vehicles displaying the red cross emblem.

++++
AZERBAIJAN: 29 DETAINEES RELEASED INTO ICRC CARE

Geneva (ICRC) - Twenty-nine prisoners of Armenian origin, who had been taken during the conflict in Nagorny-Karabakh, were released by the Azerbaijani authorities into the care of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on 26 August.

The detainees were grouped in Gobustan, 60 kilometers from the Azerbaijani capital Baku. The ICRC will carry out their transfer to Armenia and Georgia.

On 24 August, 38 Azerbaijanis were freed by the Armenian authorities in Nagorny-Karabakh and transferred to Barda in Azerbaijan. The ICRC was not involved in that release but has provided medical assistance to the hospital in Barda where eight of the detainees released have been taken, four of them in critical condition.

++++
SIERRA LEONE: ICRC DRIVERS ALIVE AND WELL

Geneva (ICRC) - The two drivers of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) missing in Sierra Leone since 27 August have turned up safe and sound and are back at the ICRC’s sub-delegation in Kenema. The two men, an Ivorian and a Guinean, had gone missing after last Friday’s attack on a humanitarian convoy, in which two ICRC nurses died.

The ICRC once again expresses its deepest sympathy to the families of the nurses killed in the attack.

++++
CONFLICT IN BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA:
ICRC VISITS 4,200 MUSLIM DETAINNEES HELD BY CROATS

Geneva (ICRC) - On Monday 6 September the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) gained access to the camp of Dretelj (south of Mostar), which is run by Bosnian Croat forces. ICRC delegates registered some 1,200 Muslim detainees at the camp. During the month of August the ICRC had visited 1,100 and 1,900 detainees respectively in the Gabela and Rodoc camps, also under Bosnian Croat control. Relief supplies were distributed to the detainees at all three camps.

The ICRC finally gained access to the three places of detention following long and arduous negotiations begun in late June. There have been consistent reports of other places of detention in the area, and the ICRC must be allowed to visit them as a matter of urgency.

++++
BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA, MOSTAR: ICRC DELEGATES VISIT DETAINNEES ON LEFT BANK

Geneva (ICRC) - On Wednesday 8 September, for the first time in over two months, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) gained access to Bosnian Croat detainees on the left bank of the Neretva river in Mostar. The delegates registered over 100 detainees held by the Bosnian Muslim authorities. They distributed many Red Cross messages (RCMs) from the detainees' families and collected messages written in reply.

On the same day, ICRC medical delegates made a survey of the hospital on the left bank. Medical assistance will be provided in the coming days.

Furthermore, an ICRC convoy carrying 100 tonnes of relief supplies (food and blankets) reached Jablanica by late afternoon. This aid is being distributed to people displaced from the Mostar area.

++++
GEORGIA: ICRC ACTIVITIES IN ABKHAZIA

Geneva (ICRC) - Delegates of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) are working in Sukhumi, Tkvarcheli and Gudauta, where a new upsurge in the fighting between Abkhazian and Georgian forces has claimed many victims. Clashes are also taking place in the Mingrelia region of western Georgia between Georgian forces and troops loyal to former President Zviad Gamsakhurdia.

The ICRC is deeply concerned about the plight of the civilian population in the conflict areas. ICRC teams distribute medical supplies regularly to hospitals receiving war casualties. They also protect minorities, make official approaches with a view to gaining access to prisoners captured by all sides, and arrange for the exchange of messages between members of families split up by the events.

On 18 September the ICRC delivered emergency medical materials to six hospitals in Sukhumi which had admitted 200 wounded in two days. A consignment of several tonnes of medical and surgical supplies is expected to arrive in Tbilisi this week.

The ICRC calls on all parties involved in the conflict to respect the basic rules of international humanitarian law, especially those relating to the protection of civilians and non-combatants. It enjoins them in particular:

- to protect and respect the wounded, the sick, prisoners and civilians in all circumstances;
- to distinguish at all times between combatants and military objectives on the one hand, and civilians and civilian objects on the other;
- to refrain from attacking civilians and civilian property.

The ICRC opened a delegation in Georgia in February 1992, and has been working in Abkhazia since July of the same year. Its staff in Georgia comprises 18 expatriate delegates and some 40 local employees.

+++
CONFLICT IN GEORGIA: ICRC ACTION

Geneva (ICRC) - Fighting between Georgian and Abkhazian forces in and around Sukhumi has escalated during the last few days and there have been many casualties on both sides. Delegates of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) contacted yesterday gave the following details.

- In Sukhumi itself, where the fighting is approaching the city centre, the movements of humanitarian aid teams are being kept to a minimum because of the dangerous situation.

- The only hospitals still functioning are the Aguzera, Railway and No. 2 hospitals. The ICRC provided them with emergency medical and surgical supplies on 18 and 19 September.

- The Republica hospital, the neurology centre and the No. 1 hospital had to be evacuated yesterday.

- Several thousand people have gathered at Sukhumi airport in an attempt to escape the fighting.

- The hospitals in Tkvarcheli and Ochamchira will soon be running short of supplies, especially dressings and analgesics.

Four days after the latest outbreak of hostilities it is estimated that over 1,500 people have been wounded; the number of dead is unknown.

The ICRC has made representations to all the parties concerned, reminding them in particular of the protection to which the civilian population is entitled and of the right of all victims to receive assistance, without discrimination.

The ICRC appeals to the belligerents to respect hospitals and medical personnel in all circumstances and to guarantee safe passage for humanitarian aid.

++++
Communication to the press No. 93/33
23 September 1993

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA: ICRC TRANSFERS 516 MUSLIM DETAINEES FROM DRETTELJ CAMP TO CROATIA

Geneva (ICRC) - A total of 516 Muslims held by the Bosnian Croat authorities in Dretelj camp, south of Mostar, were today released for medical reasons under the auspices of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). They were transferred to the island of Korcula, south of Split (Croatia), and handed over to representatives of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Croatian Office for Displaced Persons and Refugees.

All the released detainees are suffering from malnutrition. ICRC doctors had decided on the necessity of the transfer in agreement with the Bosnian Croat authorities.

The release is one result of the ICRC's constant efforts to have the parties to the conflict free all detained civilians and close all places of detention. With this end in view, the ICRC is continuing its negotiations to gain access to all persons detained in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

+++++
MOSCOW: DEPARTURE OF ICRC MEDICAL AID IMMINENT

Geneva (ICRC) - Extremely concerned about the latest developments in Moscow, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) immediately contacted the Russian Ministry of Health to check on medical needs. An ICRC nurse is assessing the situation in the hospitals to which the injured are being taken, in particular Sklifassovski central emergency hospital which has already received hundreds of casualties since 3 October.

In Geneva, the ICRC is organizing an emergency consignment of surgical supplies (analgesics, bandages, sutures, catheters and other disposable items) which should reach Moscow on 5 October.

In view of the gravity of the situation, the ICRC calls for all due respect to be shown for civilians, the casualties and people under arrest.

The ICRC delegation in Moscow, which opened in June 1992, currently has a staff of six expatriates and ten local employees.

+ + + +
GEORGIA: ICRC DISTRIBUTES RELIEF SUPPLIES TO CIVILIANS FLEEING ABKHAZIA

Geneva (ICRC) - On 4 October the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) began distributing 30 tonnes of relief supplies in Georgia to tens of thousands of civilians who have fled the fighting in Abkhazia.

The ICRC convoy arrived yesterday in Zugdidi (Mingrelia) and will continue today towards Chuberi (Svanetia) in north-western Georgia. With thousands of displaced people arriving on foot, exhausted after days of trudging through snowbound passes over 6,500 feet high, humanitarian needs are becoming acute.

Besides distributing food, blankets, warm clothing and shoes, the ICRC has also delivered medical aid to two hospitals in Zugdidi treating large numbers of displaced people and war casualties.

A second ICRC convoy is due to arrive in the area tomorrow, 6 October.

++++
COMMUNICATION TO THE PRESS

14 OCTOBER 1993 N'EXISTE PAS
Communication to the press No. 93/37
19 October 1993

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA: GENERAL RELEASE OF CROAT AND MUSLIM DETAINTEES BEGINS UNDER ICRC AUSPICES

Geneva (ICRC) - Three hundred and nine Bosnian Croats detained in Konjic by the Bosnian government authorities and 554 Muslims held by Bosnian Croat forces in Gabela camp were released today under the auspices of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

This was the first stage of a comprehensive plan submitted by the ICRC to the parties concerned on 7 October and providing for the release of all persons held by the two sides in Herzegovina and central Bosnia. The operation is part of the follow-up to the agreement reached in Geneva on 14 September last between Mr. Franjo Tudjman, President of the Republic of Croatia, and Mr. Alija Izetbegovic, President of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina. On the ICRC's initiative, a series of high-level meetings were held in Zagreb and Sarajevo to work out practical means of implementing the Geneva accord. At these meetings the parties undertook to abide by the following conditions:

- all detainees in their hands would be released on an "all for all" basis;
- the detainees' wishes would be respected in regard to their destination;
- a cease-fire would be observed to ensure the safety of convoys carrying freed detainees.

In accordance with UN Security Council resolution 776, the ICRC has requested the assistance of the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) for the operation.

The general release operation which began today should proceed by stages over the next ten days or so, and will cover more than 5,500 detainees held by both sides.

++++
PRINCE TALAL VISITS ICRC HEADQUARTERS

Geneva (ICRC) - Prince Talal Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud of Saudi Arabia today paid an official visit to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). In his capacity as president of the Arab Gulf programme for United Nations Development Organizations (AGFUND), Prince Talal signed a cooperation agreement with ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga.

The agreement formalizes the existing cooperation between the two institutions, which mainly concerns assistance to victims of conflict. This was the first time that AGFUND signed such an agreement with an organization outside the United Nations System.

Before this agreement was signed, AGFUND had already provided financial support for ICRC aid programmes in Bosnia-Herzegovina and in Lebanon.

+++
Communication to the press No. 93/39
21 October 1993

GEORGIA: ICRC SENDS ANOTHER CONVOY OF EMERGENCY SUPPLIES FOR DISPLACED PEOPLE IN MINGRELLIA

Geneva (ICRC) - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) today sent a seventh convoy, carrying 27 tonnes of emergency supplies, from the Georgian capital Tbilisi to Mingrelia in the west of the country. The aid, comprising 1,200 family food parcels and medical and surgical supplies, is intended for civilians who have fled the fighting in Abkhazia and found shelter in public buildings in and around Zugdidi and Senaki.

Since 4 October the ICRC has already sent six previous convoys of emergency assistance to Mingrelia, where some 80,000 displaced persons from Abkhazia have sought refuge. The convoys had to cross areas affected by fighting between Georgian government forces and troops loyal to former President Zviad Gamsakhurdia. Thus far the ICRC has distributed 7,700 food parcels, 15,000 blankets, kitchen utensils, warm clothing and shoes to the victims. ICRC medical teams have made regular visits to the hospitals in Zugdidi, Senaki, Samtredia and Kutaisi, which are receiving large numbers of casualties, in order to deliver emergency surgical materials.

The ICRC currently has 20 delegates and 34 local employees in Georgia, working out of Tbilisi, Sukhumi and Zugdidi.

++++
ICRC ORGANIZES ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN MEETING ON HUMANITARIAN ISSUES

Geneva (ICRC) - On the occasion of the statutory meetings of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement currently being held in Birmingham, United Kingdom, the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Mr. Cornelio Sommaruga, organized a meeting between Mr. David Barzilai, President of the "Red Shield of David" (Magen David Adom) of Israel, and Mr. Fathi Arafat, President of the "Palestinian Red Crescent Society".

The meeting, held earlier today, was marked by an atmosphere of mutual trust and understanding. Mr. Barzilai and Mr. Arafat stated their firm intent to develop relations between their two institutions in a number of areas, including joint programmes to be undertaken in the near future. They also expressed the hope that the ICRC and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies would provide them with advice and guidance in their cooperation efforts.

++++
CONFLICT IN NAGORNO-KARABAKH: ALARMING SITUATION IN SOUTH-WEST AZERBAIJAN

Geneva (ICRC) - Since 23 October, fighting has flared again in south-west Azerbaijan, resulting in a renewed displacement of the Azeri population. Fleeing the clashes between the forces of Nagorno-Karabakh and the Azerbaijani army, 10,000 people from the Goradiz area have already arrived in Imishli via Iran, travelling along the banks of the Araks River. Most of them have found temporary shelter in a camp set up by the Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran. As the camp already houses previously displaced persons and its capacity is limited, the ICRC has sent in a consignment of 300 additional tents and 300 plastic sheets.

The situation of the Azeri civilian population encircled in the Zanguelan district remains extremely critical. The ICRC has not yet been able to travel to the area. It appeals to the parties to the conflict to respect the basic rules of international humanitarian law. In particular, the ICRC reminds them that:

- the wounded, the sick, prisoners and civilians must be protected and respected in all circumstances;
- attacks against the civilian population as such are prohibited, as are orders to displace civilians.

The ICRC calls upon the belligerents to ensure that relief organizations are able to reach and assist all victims of the current conflict.

+++
ICRC TAKES EMERGENCY MEDICAL ACTION IN BURUNDI

Geneva (ICRC) - The civilian population of Burundi is caught in a wave of violence. According to reports from delegates of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the situation is acute and the toll of dead and injured is mounting steadily.

On 27 and 28 October 1993, an ICRC doctor and a delegate visited hospitals in Kayanza, Kiremba, Kirundo and Ngozi. They counted 260 casualties, all in serious condition, and evacuated the most critical cases to the capital Bujumbura. The ICRC doctor has said that what he had observed was only "the tip of the iceberg" as most of the injured were afraid to go to the hospitals.

Extremely concerned about the situation, the ICRC is doing everything possible to reach the victims and to send emergency medical supplies to hospitals in the north and north-east of the country. The ICRC delegation in Burundi has been reinforced and now consists of 11 staff, including a doctor and five nurses. Six tonnes of medicine have already been sent to Burundi and a planeload of further medical supplies will be flown in from Kenya on 30 October.

The ICRC once again appeals to the civilian and military authorities in Burundi to do their utmost to put an end to the hatred and bloodshed tearing the country apart. It also appeals to the population itself not to resort to violence.

Meanwhile, the situation has worsened for the refugees in Rwanda. The ICRC is helping the humanitarian organizations there to provide sanitation; two sanitary engineers have been dispatched from Geneva.

++++
GEORGIA: SECURITY SITUATION WORSENS IN MINGRELLIA

Geneva (ICRC) - A team from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) based in Zugdidi, Mingrelia, was briefly detained by armed men during the night of 26-27 October last. Three of the team's four vehicles, all marked with the Red Cross emblem, were seized. The incident occurred against a background of escalating hostilities in the region.

The two ICRC delegates and five local staff left Zugdidi, on 27 October, in the fourth vehicle, as the deteriorating security situation was making it impossible for them to continue their humanitarian work. They left behind them medical and other relief supplies and three trucks, also marked with the Red Cross emblem.

The ICRC reminds the parties to the conflict that any misuse of the Red Cross emblem for military purposes constitutes a grave violation of international humanitarian law, and enjoins them to take all necessary steps to prevent such misuse.

The ICRC had been in Mingrelia since the beginning of October and had set up a programme to distribute food and other relief supplies to tens of thousands of displaced persons from Abkhazia. The institution also delivered emergency medicines and medical materials to hospitals treating people wounded in the conflict currently raging in the area. The ICRC will resume its activities in Mingrelia as soon as security conditions permit.

++++
AMMAN, JORDAN : ICRC COURSE FOR FUTURE PALESTINIAN POLICE OFFICERS ON THE HUMANITARIAN ASPECTS OF THEIR TASK.

Geneva (ICRC) - Today 50 Palestinian officers, who are being trained in Jordan to command and instruct police units in the future Autonomous Palestinian Territories, concluded a three-day course organized by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on the humanitarian aspects of their future task.

The course started with lectures by ICRC delegates on international humanitarian law, the ICRC, and the latter's role in the Israeli Occupied and future Autonomous Territories. Two days of lectures, case studies and discussions were directed by an outside expert and devoted to specific human rights aspects of police work, such as arrests, detention and the use of force. The ICRC delegates noted how seriously the police officers took the humanitarian aspects of their future task.

The course will be repeated for 50 more future police officers from November 21 to 23 in Amman, and the ICRC has scheduled similar training for future Palestinian police officers currently being trained in Egypt.

Thanks to the agreement of the Palestinian, Jordanian and Egyptian authorities, the ICRC hopes to contribute with this course to enhancing respect for the humanitarian principles in the future Autonomous Territories, in particular in the Gaza Strip and Jericho. It is convinced that greater respect for the individual will be conducive to genuine peace in the region.

++++

Communication to the press No. 93/44
16 November 1993
ICRC PRESIDENT ON BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA:  
DR. CORNELIO SOMMARUGA CALLS FOR AN END TO THE LINKAGE OF HUMANITARIAN ISSUES WITH MILITARY AND POLITICAL ARRANGEMENTS

Geneva (ICRC) - Speaking to a special session of the Humanitarian Issues Working Group of the International Conference on the Former Yougoslavia, held today in Geneva, Cornelio Sommaruga, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) strongly urged the international community and the warring parties in Bosnia-Herzegovina in particular to stop making humanitarian aid conditional on questions of reciprocity on the military and political level.

"Winter is already in your country. The situation of the population is dramatic. You have to make room for humanitarian concerns in your political and military objectives" he said.

Mr. Sommaruga solemnly reaffirmed the absolute right of war victims everywhere to receive humanitarian assistance and to be protected from the effects of indiscriminate warfare.

He specifically enjoined the parties to the conflict:

- to allow the ICRC to all detainees and to implement the agreement of 16 September 1993 providing for the release of 6,000 detainees;

- to guarantee that all civilians in need have access to humanitarian aid;

- to ensure that their respective forces comply with the elementary rules of the law of war and of international humanitarian law.

President Sommaruga leaves for Bosnia-Herzegovina tomorrow, and will also visit the capitals of other States of the former Yugoslavia to press these points with political and military leaders.

In addition to acting as a neutral intermediary with regard to detainees, the ICRC with its 250 expatriates in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia provides a tracing service for families separated by war, forwarding over 100,000 messages a week, and supplies over half a million civilians with medical, nutritional and material aid.

++++
COMMUNICATION TO THE PRESS

19 NOVEMBER 1993 N'EXISTE PAS