SRI LANKA: DISPLACED CIVILIANS KILLED IN AIR STRIKE

Geneva (ICRC) - On 9 July the Sri Lankan armed forces launched a large-scale military offensive against the positions of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) north of the city of Jaffna. The operation, involving intensive artillery shelling and air strikes, immediately forced tens of thousands of civilians to leave the area. Many of the displaced sought shelter in churches and temples, including several hundred people who took refuge in the Church of St Peter and Paul in Navalay.

According to eye-witness accounts, this church and several adjacent buildings were hit by further air force strikes at 4.30 p.m. the same day. During the attack 65 people were killed and 150 wounded, including women and children. That evening and into the night Sri Lanka Red Cross staff evacuated most of the wounded by ambulance to the Jaffna Teaching Hospital. Delegates of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) present the next morning at the scene of the attack noted the widespread damage and measured the extent of the tragedy: many of the bodies had not yet been removed from the rubble.

Deeply concerned by the series of violent acts that have claimed innocent victims, the ICRC calls on the parties involved to respect civilian lives, property and places of refuge. It also urges them to respect the protected zone around the Jaffna Teaching Hospital and to refrain from attacking any other medical facilities.

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BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA: ICRC DENOUNCES POPULATION DISPLACEMENTS

Geneva (ICRC) - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) calls for an immediate end to the displacement of civilians, which is contrary to international humanitarian law. Following the fighting in Srebrenica, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the inhabitants fled the city to seek refuge in the village of Potocari and were then transferred to central Bosnia by the Bosnian Serb forces controlling this region. These people, who are in an extremely precarious situation, are being put on board buses and driven to a front line which they then have to cross on foot. Once on the other side, these persons displaced within their own country are totally destitute.

The ICRC urges the Bosnian Serb authorities to assume their responsibilities and immediately authorize its delegates to assist and protect civilians, prisoners and the wounded, wherever they may be.

The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina has already uprooted and caused the movement of hundreds of thousands of people, who now find themselves displaced within Bosnia or have become refugees abroad. The recent developments in Srebrenica are leading to the same results as the events in western Slavonia in early May, when thousands of people fled towards Bosnia-Herzegovina. In view of these developments, there is unfortunately reason to fear that further tens of thousands of people will suffer the same plight in the future, both in Bosnia and in neighbouring areas. There appears to be no end to the tragedy, as the prospects for these people to return home recede day by day.

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ICRC EVACUATES 88 WOUNDED FROM BRATUNAC AND POTOCARI

Geneva (ICRC) - Three medical teams of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), coming from Pale, Bijeljina and Belgrade, evacuated 88 wounded people from Bratunac and Potocari on 17 and 18 July. These casualties, some of them in very serious condition, were taken to Tuzla. Most of them had previously been treated at the Médecins sans frontières (MSF) hospital in Srebrenica.

The ICRC conducted this operation with the agreement of General Milan Gwero of the Bosnian Serb Army.

When all the wounded had been collected in Bratunac on the first day of the evacuation, 23 of them were refused authorization to leave. The ICRC considers them to be prisoners of war and noted their identities in order to be able to seek permission to visit them.

The ICRC is also concerned about the fate of thousands of people whose families, displaced to Tuzla, have lost all track of them. It is requesting the highest Bosnian Serb authorities to give it access to all persons captured during the recent events in Srebrenica.
ICRC SHOCKED BY BOMB ATTACK IN ISRAEL

Geneva (ICRC) - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is deeply shocked by today's murderous attack on a bus in Ramat Gan, near Tel Aviv.

Such a deliberate act of violence against civilians is contrary to the basic principles of international humanitarian law. The ICRC appeals for the civilian population to be spared and for an end to acts of indiscriminate violence.

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Communication to the press No. 95/34
Geneva, 25 July 1995

NAGORNY KARABAKH CONFLICT: FIVE AZERBAIJANI PRISONERS RELEASED UNDER ICRC AUSPICES

Geneva (ICRC) - On 25 July 1995, the Nagorno Karabakh authorities released five Azerbaijani prisoners held in connection with the conflict that has afflicted the region since 1988. The release took place under the auspices of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). As in previous similar operations, ICRC delegates based in Stepanakert (Nagorno Karabakh) accompanied the released prisoners to the front line, where they were received by other delegates based in Barda (Azerbaijan), in the presence of the authorities. The delegates had previously been able to speak individually with each of the captives to make sure, in particular, that they had freely chosen their destination.

The ICRC welcomes this release and very much hopes that all the people still held in connection with the Nagorno Karabakh conflict will soon regain their freedom.

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ICRC VISITS PERSONS HELD BY BOSNIAN SERB AUTHORITIES AFTER FALL OF SREBRENICA

Geneva (ICRC) - On Wednesday 26 July three delegates and a nurse of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) visited the Batkovic camp in north-eastern Bosnia, where some of the people detained by the Bosnian Serb authorities following the fall of the eastern Bosnian enclave of Srebrenica are being held.

The team registered the inmates and will immediately give a list of their names to the ICRC sub-delegation in Tuzla, so that their relatives can be informed and family news exchanged by means of Red Cross messages.

This is the first time that ICRC delegates have been able to enter a detention camp in the zone controlled by the Bosnian Serb authorities since the Srebrenica events. Today, 27 July, visits are due to be conducted to other places of detention in eastern Bosnia, in particular in Bratunac, north of Srebrenica.

Apart from the moral support they provide during their visits, ICRC delegates register the identity of all the detainees and have private talks with those who so wish, in order to determine whether the conditions of detention and treatment are in accordance with the Geneva Conventions. In addition such visits enable the ICRC to reassure the detainees' families and to help them keep in touch with their loved ones by the exchange of Red Cross messages.

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THE ICRC IS MOBILISING ITS RESOURCES TO ASSIST THE VICTIMS OF THE RECENT FIGHTING IN CROATIA.

Faced with the massive flow of refugees from Knin and Petrinja, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has concentrated its resources in the Banja Luka region where its delegates have so far been able to provide some 40,000 people with food and toiletry. The Serb authorities have also notified the ICRC delegation in Banja Luka that they may expect the arrival of between 150,000 and 200,000 other refugees in the area.

According to Pierre Krähenbühl, head of the ICRC delegation in Banja Luka, the refugees "arrived in cars and buses; they are extremely tired and tense and the main priority at the moment is to provide them with food". For the time being, ICRC stocks on the spot are sufficient to meet the immediate needs of 50,000 people for a week as well as provide for a soup-kitchen. The ICRC is currently organising an increase of its emergency stocks so to be able to cope with the new emergency situation.

On the medical side, the ICRC is providing medicine and surgical equipment to the hospitals in Banja Luka and Petrovac as well as to the field hospital established on the banks of the Una river at Novi. The ICRC Banja Luka delegation, which has 17 expatriates and 70 local employees, has recorded the presence of a number of wounded people among the refugees. Also in Banja Luka, the ICRC has set up drinking water distribution points.

In Krajina itself (at Knin and Vojníc), the ICRC has enough emergency stocks to provide 30,000 people with food and basic necessities.

In Knin, the ICRC team, composed of five people, has set itself the priority task to visit Sunday (6/8) the town's hospital so to assess the nature and scope of the needs. Also, the United Nation's contingent in Knin has asked the ICRC to come and attend to the dozens of wounded who were evacuated from the city's hospital to the UN compound during the fighting.

Finally, the Croatian authorities have informed the ICRC of the capture of dozens of prisoners during the recent fighting and has authorised the ICRC to visit them.
ICRC PRESIDENT VISITS FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

Geneva (ICRC) - The President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Cornelio Sommaruga, is travelling to the former Yugoslavia today, Monday 7 August. His visit is prompted by the recent events in Croatia and Krajina and the resulting mass exodus of refugees to Banja Luka and Prijedor on the one hand, and by the displacement of the population of Srebrenica and Zepa to central Bosnia on the other.

During his week-long stay Mr Sommaruga will have talks with the authorities in Belgrade, Sarajevo, Zagreb and Pale. The purpose of his mission is to obtain firm commitments from the various parties that they will protect and respect all categories of vulnerable people - displaced persons, refugees, prisoners, and minorities. He will also tackle the issue of opening access routes for humanitarian relief convoys and ensuring their security.

Mr Sommaruga intends to obtain pledges from both the military and the civilian authorities that they will ensure respect for international humanitarian law in its entirety.

The ICRC President will also be travelling to the regions where most of the victims of the recent events in the former Yugoslavia have taken refuge, in particular Tuzla and Banja Luka.

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Communication to the press No. 95/38
Geneva, 10 August 1995

ICRC VISITS SERBS HELD BY CROATIAN AND BOSNIAN AUTHORITIES

Geneva (ICRC) - On 9 August teams from the International Committee of the Red Cross visited 353 Croatian Serbs detained by the Croatian authorities following the recent military operations. They are being held in six different places of detention in Croatia. All were registered by delegates and had an opportunity to write Red Cross messages to their families.

On 8 August delegates visited 107 Croatian Serb combatants taken prisoner by Bosnian forces around the town of Bihac. They too were able to write family messages.

The detainees were interviewed in private by the delegates, who will regularly repeat the visits. Apart from providing reassurance to the detainees and their families, these visits afford the persons protection and ensure that they are treated in accordance with the rules of international humanitarian law.

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Communication to the press Nr 95/39
16 August 1995

ICRC STATEMENT ON NAGORNY KARABAKH CONFLICT

Geneva (ICRC) - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) welcomes the release of detainees held in connection with the Nagorny Karabakh conflict. Active hostilities came to an end 15 months ago, and since then the cease-fire has generally been respected by both sides.

The ICRC urges the parties concerned to release those still being detained in relation with the conflict. Until this is done, it is seeking access to every detention centre holding persons covered by its mandate.

The ICRC hereby reminds the various parties that the authorities concerned must ascertain the fate of persons reported missing as a result of the hostilities. This must be done without delay so that families can be informed. The ICRC once again offers the parties its help in meeting this responsibility, in the hope of putting an end to the uncertainty endured by people without news of their relatives.

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Communication to the press No. 95/40
16 August 1995

BOSNIAN SERBS EVACUATE MEMBERS OF CROAT AND MUSLIM MINORITIES

Geneva (ICRC) - The situation of the Croat and Muslim minorities living on Bosnian Serb-controlled territory has deteriorated sharply over the past few days, as a result of the massive influx of Serb refugees from Croatia and the presence of armed men among the refugee population. Delegates of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have observed numerous cases of abusive behaviour against these minority groups, particularly in the Banja Luka area.

The ICRC has stepped up its approaches to the Bosnian Serb authorities, urging them to restore order and ensure the protection and security of these minorities. Despite the ICRC's efforts, however, the situation has not improved. Thousands of people have been expelled from their homes, and there have been reports of ill-treatment and killings.

At the end of last week, ICRC delegates discussed these matters with representatives of the minority groups and with the parties involved in the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. Seeing that all attempts to protect the minorities had failed and that their lives were in danger, the ICRC obtained the Bosnian Serb authorities' permission to hold private interviews with all persons likely to be evacuated, including men who were being prevented from leaving, to check whether they wanted to go and to ensure that families would not be split up in the process.

On 14 August, however, the Bosnian Serb authorities began evacuating hundreds of people from these minority groups to Croatia, without giving the ICRC the opportunity to interview them before their departure as had been agreed, so it has been impossible to verify whether they in fact want to leave. It is also feared that more families will be separated by these evacuations. In Prijedor ICRC delegates have observed that members of minority groups are being threatened and forced by the local authorities to abandon their homes.

The ICRC is gravely concerned by these latest developments and stresses once again that subjecting civilians to abuse and forcibly displacing the population are contrary to the provisions of international humanitarian law. The ICRC calls on the Bosnian Serb authorities to put an end to these violations, and reaffirms that it is ready to interview people likely to be evacuated so as to ensure that their departure can take place in decent and reasonably safe conditions.

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ICRC CONDEMNS DELIBERATE TARGETING OF CIVILIANS IN JERUSALEM

Geneva (ICRC) - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) strongly condemns today's bomb attack on a bus in Jerusalem in which several civilians were killed and many others injured.

The ICRC is deeply concerned by the recurrence of indiscriminate attacks against civilians, which constitutes a serious violation of the basic principles of international humanitarian law.

The ICRC appeals once again for an immediate halt to the deliberate targeting of civilians and for compliance with the elementary principles of humanity.

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Communication to the press No. 95/42  
28 August 1995

SARAJEVO MARKET SHELLED AGAIN

Geneva (ICRC) - Shortly after 11 a.m. today, Monday 28 August, a single shell landed on a crowded market place in the heart of Sarajevo, killing 35 people and wounding 91 (according to hospital sources). Further explosions rocked the same area shortly afterwards.

The shell fell close to the Merkale market place where a bomb exploded on 5 February 1994.

The ICRC's medical delegate in Sarajevo has already delivered emergency supplies of intravenous fluids, disinfectants, antibiotics, tetanus vaccine and dressing materials to the main hospitals.

In recent weeks the Sarajevo area has been subjected to periods of heavy shelling including rocket attacks. This latest attack has however caused more deaths and injuries from a single explosion than any other since the Merkale shelling last year.

The ICRC condemns in the strongest possible terms the shelling of civilian facilities that has resulted yet again in the loss of many civilian lives and has left the population in deep state of shock.

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Communication to the press No. 95/43
4 September 1995

ICRC WORLD WIDE WEB SITE OPENS ON THE INTERNET

Geneva (ICRC) - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is pleased to announce the opening of its World Wide Web site on the Internet, which can be accessed at:

http://www.icrc.ch

The site provides information on a wide range of topics relating to conflict and conflict victims, and on the role, activities and concerns of the ICRC. The material is in the form of press releases, fact-sheets, in-depth articles, illustrated brochures, position papers, etc.

The texts of the main treaties of international humanitarian law (the four Geneva Conventions and their two Additional Protocols) are also available, together with details about this body of law and related matters.

Users will find information on the ICRC's involvement in and its position on events such as the Review Conference of the 1980 UN Weapons Convention and the Beijing Conference on Women, and material concerning the 26th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, which will bring together States and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in Geneva in December 1995. Details are also given on access to the sites of other Red Cross/Red Crescent organizations.

A special feature of the ICRC Web site is that it is created on the Lotus Notes groupware platform and is transferred to the Web using a gateway product called Lotus InterNotes Web Publisher. This approach facilitates the updating process, which is already partially decentralized within the organization so that users can have immediate access to the latest information.

For further details, please contact Karen Saddler (tel. ++4122 730 2391; e-mail: saddler@gva.icrc.org).

If you would like to be put on our e-mail list for press releases and the weekly ICRC News, send your e-mail address to: comrex_pr@gva.icrc.org

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Communication to the press No. 95/44
6 September 1995

ICRC AGAIN URGENTLY APPEALS FOR FUNDS:
153 MILLION SWISS FRANCS NEEDED TO COVER OPERATIONS IN 1995

Geneva (ICRC) - As its resources dwindle, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) today launched a renewed urgent appeal to donor governments, asking for another 153 million Swiss francs (US$ 126 million) by the end of the year. "The donor fatigue of certain governments can place the ICRC in a serious financial crisis, but we remain optimistic that the money needed can be raised", said Christian Komevall, Head of the ICRC's Communication and External Resources Department.

The ICRC's initial operational appeal launched at the end of last year was for 511 million Swiss francs (US$ 422 million). Since early 1995 the ICRC has had to respond to overwhelming humanitarian needs. The fighting in Chechnya at the beginning of the year compelled the institution to finance a whole new operation from scratch. In addition, ICRC activities have continued to grow in numerous countries elsewhere. In Rwanda tremendous overcrowding in prisons has prompted the delegation to undertake a massive assistance programme; in the former Yugoslavia the recent developments have led to a sharp increase in expenditure; and in Sri Lanka the end of the cease-fire has meant an intensification of ICRC activities. For all these operations, as well as for those in Afghanistan and Somalia, the ICRC has had to increase its budget to the new current total of 620 million Swiss francs (US$ 512 million). "It must be realized that the implementation rate of operations forecast by the ICRC is extremely high, so that the real expenditure will be close to this budgeted figure", Komevall pointed out.

Jean de Courten, ICRC Director of Operations, underscored the importance of its work in several conflicts where it is often the only organization able to operate on all sides on behalf of all victims of war and political violence, and where its independent and impartial approach and its neutrality guarantee protection and assistance for victims in desperate need. "The specific nature of the ICRC has to be fully understood by the governments and is the main argument we put forward in order to obtain the necessary funds", he explained.
Communication to the press No. 95/45
8 September 1995

FORMER YUGOSLAVIA: FIRST ICRC VISIT TO PERSON DETAINED BY INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL TRIBUNAL IN THE HAGUE

Geneva (ICRC) - On 5 September, three delegates of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), including a doctor and an interpreter, visited the only person detained by the International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in The Hague. This person has been charged by the Tribunal with grave breaches of international humanitarian law committed within the context of the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The visit was carried out in accordance with the ICRC’s customary working procedures. These provide for an overall assessment of detention conditions and enable the individuals visited to speak confidentially and without witnesses with ICRC delegates. The visit was conducted following an agreement reached with the Tribunal last May and falls within the ICRC’s humanitarian mandate which is recognized by the entire international community.
KUWAIT: ICRC FACILITATES FAMILY VISIT TO JORDANIAN DETAINEES

Geneva (ICRC) - On 25 and 26 September, Jordanian nationals who were sentenced by the State security court to long prison terms in Kuwait after the Gulf war received visits from family members travelling from Jordan.

A group of 16 people, including several children, arrived at Kuwait airport from Amman on Monday 25 September and were met by Kuwaiti officials and ICRC delegates. The families were able to see their detained relatives twice, each time for several hours, at Kuwait central prison before returning to Amman on Wednesday afternoon.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) facilitated this visit - the second of its kind in Kuwait since the Gulf war - on humanitarian grounds and organized it in close cooperation with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and of the Interior of the two countries concerned.
BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA: ICRC PRESSES FOR FREE ACCESS TO ALL PERSONS DETAINED BY PARTIES TO CONFLICT

Geneva (ICRC) - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has still not been given access to persons captured by the armed forces involved in the military operations conducted in Bosnia-Herzegovina - in particular the north-west of the country - over the past few weeks. In addition, in areas controlled by Bosnian Serb forces the ICRC has been denied access to a number of places of detention, in some cases since February. This means that detainees withheld from the ICRC, whether intentionally or otherwise, are being deprived of their right to protection from possible ill-treatment or forced disappearance.

In recent weeks the ICRC has taken all necessary steps to gain access to the detainees in question, but in vain. Approaches, both oral and written, have been made at the highest level to the Bosnian Serb authorities, the Bosnian Croat authorities and the government of Bosnia-Herzegovina. These approaches concern all the military personnel presumed captured by the parties as well as members of the international forces and civilians arrested in connection with the conflict.

The ICRC once again reminds all the parties to the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina that they have solemnly undertaken on numerous occasions to comply with the rules of the Geneva Conventions, in particular those relating to the protection of persons captured and detained. The ICRC therefore urges them in the strongest terms to end the current deadlock by:

- notifying the ICRC of the identity of all persons they have captured;
- granting it access without delay to all places of detention and to all persons held in such places;
- respecting the earnest commitments they have made.

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Communication to the press No. 95/48
9 October 1995

SOUTHERN LEBANON : FIRST ICRC VISIT TO KHIAM DETENTION CENTRE

Geneva (ICRC) - Today, Monday 9 October 1995, a team of delegates from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) began a visit to the Khiam detention centre in southern Lebanon. This is the first time that the ICRC has been granted access to this prison since it was opened more than 10 years ago.

The visit is being carried out under the mandate conferred on the ICRC by the Geneva Conventions. Four Arabic-speaking delegates, a doctor and an interpreter are conducting the visit in accordance with the ICRC's standard working procedures, whereby the ICRC must:

- have access to all places of detention,
- be allowed to see all the detainees in private and speak with them freely in a place of their choice,
- be able to repeat its visits.

During the visit, the delegates assess the detainees' treatment and their material and psychological conditions of detention.

After the visit, the ICRC's findings and recommendations will be submitted to the authorities in a confidential report.

Further information: Rolin Wavre, ICRC Geneva, tel.: ++ 4122 730 2876

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INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS
MUSLIM MINORITIES EXPELLED FROM BANJA LUKA

Geneva (ICRC) - More than 3,500 Bosnian Muslims have been expelled from the Banja Luka region and sent towards Zenica over the past three days. Women, children and the elderly are loaded on buses bound for central Bosnia, but the men are prevented from leaving with their families. It is anticipated that such transfers of minorities will continue during the coming days: 1,400 people are expected to arrive today in Zenica, and several thousand more may follow.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is extremely disturbed by the conditions in which these transfers are being carried out and shares the families' concern about what will happen to the men left behind. The ICRC calls upon all the warring parties to reach an understanding whereby those who volunteer to leave can do so in safe and decent conditions. It also urges the Bosnian Serb authorities to notify it of the names of all the men remaining behind and to grant its delegates immediate and unrestricted access to them.

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INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS
Vienna Diplomatic Conference Achieves New Prohibition on Blinding Laser Weapons and Deadlock on Landmines

Geneva, 13 October 1995. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) welcomes the adoption today of a new legally binding humanitarian law instrument which will prohibit the intentional use of laser weapons to blind soldiers or civilians. This is one of the few times that a particularly barbarous form of warfare has been prohibited in advance. However the Vienna Review Conference of the 1980 United Nations Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), which has just concluded three weeks of negotiations in Vienna, was unable to fulfil its principal mandate of negotiating new restrictions on the use of landmines, which currently kill and maim some 2,000 persons per month throughout the world. It is set to resume its work on landmines during the next six months. An exact date will be set at the closing session Friday afternoon.

Overly technical proposals and political unwillingness to limit the use of landmines

The ICRC deeply regrets that the Review Conference was unable to agree on measures to prohibit or severely restrict the use of landmines. This unfortunate outcome reflects both the overly complex technical nature of many of the proposals considered and an unwillingness on the part of many States to place significant limits on landmine use to achieve the humanitarian goals of the Conference.

Since it opened on 25 September the Vienna Review Conference achieved a large measure of provisional agreement on amendments to the CCW's Protocol II on landmines which the ICRC considers important steps forward, including:

- Extension of the scope of the landmine restrictions to cover internal as well as international armed conflicts;

- Assignment of responsibility for the clearance of landmines to those who lay them;

- Increased protection from landmines for ICRC, national Red Cross and Red Crescent personnel and other humanitarian workers;

- A requirement that all minefields be recorded; and

- A prohibition on the use of mechanisms which cause a mine to explode when an electromagnetic detector, such as those used by mine clearance teams, comes near it.

A number of other rules were considered but either ran into deadlock over technical issues or were weakened by the introduction of exceptions:

- A prohibition on the use of anti-personnel mines which are not detectable (however no agreement was possible on specifying a minimum metallic content for achieving this or on the maximum time period for its implementation);
• A prohibition of the use of long-lived anti-personnel mines except in fenced, marked and guarded minefields (however, most delegations were willing to waive this provision in situations "where direct enemy military action makes it impossible to comply");

• A requirement to use self-destructing mines in areas from which civilians are not excluded by physical barriers (however there was no agreement either on a maximum permissible failure rate of self-destructing mechanisms or on the length of the "grace period" for implementation of this provision).

The ICRC regrets that, in the course of negotiations, proposals were blocked which would have required that anti-tank mines be detectable and which would prohibit their use with anti-handling mechanisms - which cause a mine to explode when clearance teams attempt to remove it. It also regrets that no verification provisions were agreed upon, either for the reliability rates of self-destructing mines or for alleged violations of the amended Protocol.

**Until a ban is achieved, mines must be subject to greater international scrutiny, regular review and national legislation**

Despite the impasse over landmines, the ICRC sees the Vienna Review Conference as a step towards the stigmatization and elimination of anti-personnel landmines. The Conference clearly demonstrated that the international public outcry about these weapons has broken the consensus that they are legitimate weapons of war. By the first week of the Review Conference some sixteen states had joined with the ICRC, the UN Secretary General, the Organization of African Unity and the European Parliament in calling for total prohibition. Other groupings of States supported bans on all non-self destructing anti-personnel mines, on all remotely-delivered mines and on the use of mines in international armed conflicts. Most States and insurgent groups now understand that the use of these weapons will be subject to increasing international scrutiny.

The ICRC supports the Conference's decision to continue negotiations with the aim of urgently arriving at more effective results than would have been achieved in Vienna and plans to play an active role in the preparation of this meeting. In the meantime, the ICRC urges States to begin implementing immediately and unilaterally the types of measures for the protection of civilians which they advocated in the Review Conference.

In addition, enhanced public efforts at the national level will be needed to ensure:

• The maintenance and strengthening of existing moratoria on the international transfer of anti-personnel mines;
• The prohibition of national production and use of such mines;
• For States which have not yet done so, accession to the 1980 Convention including its existing landmine Protocol; and
• Promotion of more stringent measures, including a total ban on anti-personnel mines.

**Blinding Laser Weapons: new Protocol bans use and transfer**

The Conference's addition of a new fourth Protocol prohibiting intentional blinding with laser weapons represents a significant breakthrough in international humanitarian law. The prohibition, in advance, of the use of an abhorrent new weapon the production and proliferation of which appeared imminent is an historic step for humanity. It represents
the first time since 1868, when the use of exploding bullets was banned, that a weapon of military interest has been banned before its use on the battlefield and before a stream of victims gave visible proof of its tragic effects.

The new Protocol prohibits both the use and transfer of laser weapons specifically designed, as one of their combat functions, to blind permanently. It also requires States to take all feasible precautions, including training of armed forces, to avoid permanent blinding through the legitimate use of other laser systems. This Protocol is the first time that both the use and transfer of a weapon has been entirely prohibited under international humanitarian law. This demonstrates the strict nature of the prohibition.

Efforts to achieve this Protocol were initiated by Sweden and Switzerland at the 1986 International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent and pursued by the ICRC in accordance with its mandate for the promotion and development of international humanitarian law. Between 1989 and 1991 the ICRC convened four international meetings of experts on this issue and in 1993 published Blinding Weapons - the primary reference work on the subject.

As with landmines, the ICRC stresses the importance of vigorous national efforts to ensure implementation of the new Protocol on blinding laser weapons, including:

- Acceptance of the Protocol by national governments at the earliest possible date; and
- National measures to prevent the production and proliferation of blinding laser weapons.

**Solution lies in political decisions**

The deadlock with which the Vienna Review Conference ended demonstrates that not enough countries yet consider the landmine issue to be a major humanitarian and environmental catastrophe. The ICRC encourages all states which will participate in the resumed session of the Review Conference to rise above their narrow national interests in the general interest of humanity.

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**On 13 October, ICRC delegates are available for interviews in Room 0733, C Building, 7th Floor, Vienna International Centre.**

Tel: 43 1 213 45 4648 or 43 1 213 45 4722 (Offices) or 43 1 203 5545 (Hotel)

Yves Sandoz, Director of Law, Principles and Relations with the Movement
Toni Pfanner, Head of the Legal Division
Peter Herby, Legal Division
Louise Doswald-Beck, Legal Division
Chris Giannou Medical Advisor
Johanne Dorais-Slakmon, Campaign Co-ordinator

**From 14 October, please contact the ICRC in Geneva (41-22-734-6001)**

Press Co-ordinators:
Johanne Dorais-Slakmon, Campaign Co-ordinator
Toni Burgener 0892023670 (Natel)
The ICRC intends to publish, in November, a more detailed summary of results and comments on the Vienna Review Conference.
Communication to the press No. 95/50
13 October 1995

VIENNA CONFERENCE ON UN WEAPONS CONVENTION

ICRC REGRETS OUTCOME ON LANDMINE ISSUE BUT WELCOMES NEW BAN ON BLINDING LASER WEAPONS

Vienna/Geneva (ICRC) - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) deeply regrets that the Review Conference of the 1980 United Nations Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, held in Vienna over the past three weeks, was unable to agree on measures to prohibit or substantially restrict the use of landmines. This unfortunate outcome reflects both the overly complex technical nature of many of the proposals considered and an unwillingness on the part of many States to place significant limits on landmine use, in order to achieve the humanitarian goals of the Conference. The ICRC does, however, welcome the adoption today of a new, legally binding agreement which will prohibit the use of laser weapons to intentionally blind soldiers or civilians.

The new protocol prohibits both the use and the transfer of laser weapons specifically designed to cause permanent blindness. It also requires States to take all feasible precautions, including training of armed forces, to avoid permanent blinding through the legitimate use of other laser systems.

Despite the deadlock on the landmines issue at the Vienna Conference, the ICRC sees the Conference as a step towards the stigmatization and elimination of anti-personnel landmines. The Conference clearly demonstrated that the international public outcry about these weapons has broken the consensus that they are legitimate weapons of war. By the first week of the Conference sixteen States had joined the ICRC and the Secretary General of the United Nations in calling for a total ban.

The ICRC encourages all the States that will participate in the resumed session of the Review Conference to rise above their narrow national interests in the general interest of humanity.

For additional information and interviews, please contact Johanne Dorais Slakmon, ICRC Vienna, ++43 1 21 345 4648 or 4722 or Tony Burgener, ICRC Geneva, ++41 22 730 2317

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Press Release No. 95/51
7 November 1995

ICRC CONVOY ATTACKED IN BURUNDI

Geneva (ICRC) - A 22-year-old Burundian employee of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Nsengiyumua Voisin Emmanuel, died on 6 November when an ICRC convoy was attacked in Kaburantwa, on the road to Cibitoke, about 35 km north-west of Bujumbura. The lead vehicle, in which Mr Nsengiyumua was travelling along with a delegate seconded to the ICRC by the German Red Cross and 11 other Burundian staff members, was struck by a grenade and a dozen rounds of small-arms fire, four of which hit the windshield. A number of the people in the convoy were wounded.

This incident occurred only nine days after an ICRC tanker truck ran over a mine in Gihanga, 25 km north of Bujumbura. In a separate incident in the same area, another vehicle came under fire on 9 September.

Despite the acute needs of the civilian population, caused by a situation that has seriously deteriorated over the past few weeks, the ICRC is obliged to temporarily suspend its operations in some parts of the country where fighting is taking place.

The ICRC has so far been able to assist the victims of the conflict in spite of the increasingly dangerous conditions. Yesterday's attack occurred in an area where much of the system to supply drinking water to the Imbo plain has been sabotaged. Thus, by late October the ICRC was providing some 40,000 people with 800,000 litres of water every week.

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ICRC LAUNCHES MEDIA CAMPAIGN AGAINST ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES

Geneva (ICRC) - "Landmines must be stopped". With this unequivocal message, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) today launched an international media campaign to ban anti-personnel mines. In a stirring appeal to the media, political leaders and humanitarian organizations, ICRC President Comelio Sommaruga declared: "Despite your sustained work and ours, the scourge of landmines continues unabated. In the hour we meet here, and in every hour which passes, three people will be killed or crippled for life by these mines". This mindless carnage, he stressed, "is an affront to humanitarian values. It is an affront to civilization. It can and must be ended".

The wide-ranging campaign includes a series of advertisements in print and on television and radio designed to mobilize public opinion and to stigmatize the production, stockpiling, transfer and use of anti-personnel mines in the eyes of the world, particularly in anticipation of the forthcoming sessions of the Review Conference of the UN Weapons Convention, which will reconvene in Geneva in January and April 1996. The campaign will be taken up at national level in 1996 by National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies worldwide. The creative aspects were developed by Abbott Mead Vickers - BBDO, a leading London-based agency with a network of offices in 61 countries.

According to President Sommaruga, the stalemate reached at the Vienna Review Conference reflects the failure of the international community to strike a balance between military interests and humanitarian necessity. He deplored the fact that "there is little political will for change, and that military powers, North and South, still resist the elimination of anti-personnel mines from their armouries". In such circumstances, he warned, "the solution to the mines disaster will have to rely on the dictates of the public conscience".

The President was joined in his appeal by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and a group of Nobel Peace laureates, including Mairead Maguire, Lech Walesa, Oscar Arias Sanchez, Elie Wiesel, the Dalai Lama and Aung San Suu Kyi.
Mr Sommaruga concluded by highlighting the role of the media in shaping the public conscience. It was public pressure that led to the banning of chemical weapons and the abolition of apartheid, to the response to famine in West Africa and Eritrea and to the prohibition of torture. "Humanity", he added, "is not impotent in the face of brutality and injustice".

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Henry Dunant Medals Awarded

Six people, three of them posthumously, have been awarded the Henry Dunant medal for humanitarian service at a ceremony in Geneva on 2 December 1995.

The recipients of the medal named for the founder of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement are:

- Dr. Hugo Ernesto Merino Grijalva, former President of the Ecuadorean Red Cross.
- Mrs. Jacqueline Briot, of the French Red Cross
- Botho Prinz zu Sayn-Wittgenstein-Hohenstein, Chairman of the Standing Commission
- Tunku Tan Sri Mohamed, former Chairman of the Malaysian Red Crescent (posthumously)
- Professor Hans Haug, former President of the Swiss Red Cross, former Vice-President of the International Federation and member of the International Committee of the Red Cross (posthumously)
- Dr. Esmildo Gutierrez Sanchez, former Secretary General of the Cuban Red Cross (posthumously)

The medals were awarded by the Council of Delegates which is composed of representatives from 169 National Societies of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

The medals, awarded every two years, recognise and reward outstanding services and acts performed on behalf of the Movement. Criteria for receiving the award include incurring risks on behalf of others which endanger life, health and personal freedom. The medal may also be awarded for a long period of service devoted to the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

The Henry Dunant Medal is a red cross embossed with the profile of the founder of the Movement, attached to a green ribbon. It takes precedence over other Red Cross badges or decorations.

Since 1969, 61 members of the Movement have been awarded the Henry Dunant Medal, 16 of them posthumously.

For further information please contact: Tony Burgener 089 202 36 70
PROFILES OF THE AWARD WINNERS

Dr. Hugo Ernesto Merino Grijalva
Dr. Merino Grijalva began his Red Cross service as a 12-year-old volunteer. He participated in countless social campaigns, provided assistance during disasters and was instrumental in modernising Ecuador's blood bank. As President of the Ecuadorian Red Cross, a post he held for 18 years, he participated in many regional and international meetings. He is the founder of societies for paediatrics, ophthalmology, cardiology and oto-rhino-laryngology and currently teaches at the University of Ecuador.

Madame Jacqueline Briot
Madame Briot started working with the French Red Cross in 1939 as a volunteer. During the Second World War she carried out numerous missions as a Red Cross nurse and social worker, after which, she dedicated many years of work to the development of first aid. In 1955, she set up first aid programmes in several West African countries. She was elected President of the departmental Committee of Vendée in 1971, and member of the Board of Directors of the French Red Cross in 1975. Today, she is its Honorary Administrator.

Botho Prinz zu Sayn-Wittgenstein-Hohenstein
Botho Prinz zu Sayn-Wittgenstein-Honehstein was elected Vice-Chairman of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Standing Commission in 1981 and has been its Chairman since 1986. He too began his service with the Red Cross as a volunteer. He was elected member of the German Red Cross in 1979, became its President in 1982 and has been its Honorary President since 1994. He has been involved in missions disaster areas in South-East Asia, Africa, and Central and South America.

Tunku Tan Sri Mohammed (posthumously)
Yang Mulia Tunku Tan Sri Mohammed bin Tunku Besar Burhanuddin was Chairman of the Malaysian Red Crescent Society from 1969 to 1994. Under his leadership, the Society grew and acquired an international reputation based not merely on its international development, but also on the part it was able to play in the development of the International Movement. His contribution to the Malaysian Red Crescent is best testified by the prestigious awards the Society has received both nationally and internationally under his leadership. He was elected Vice-President of the International Federation in 1977.
Professor Hans Haug (posthumously)
A Red Cross man *par excellence* because of his profound sense of the moral values underlying the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, his national and international experience with the Red Cross. He started to serve the Swiss Red Cross in 1946. From 1968 to 1982 he was its President and was a Vice-President of the International Federation. In 1988 he joined the International Committee of the Red Cross, of which he remained a member until 1991 when he dedicated himself to the publication of "Humanity for all".

Dr. Esmildo Gutierrez Sanchez (posthumously)
Dr. Gutierrez Sanchez joined the Cuban Red Cross in 1976 and soon became Secretary General of the National Society. In 1985 the Cuban Red Cross was elected to the Executive Council of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies with Dr. Gutierrez as its representative. From 1989 to 1994 he held the office of Vice-President of the International Federation. His many friends within the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement were very much affected by his premature disappearance.

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02.12.95
HUMANITARIAN FORUM OPENS IN GENEVA

More than 1,000 delegates gathered in Geneva today for the opening of the 26th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. The four-day Conference is one of the world’s most important fora for discussing humanitarian issues and international humanitarian law. It brings together over 100 States party to the four Geneva Conventions, over 140 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, their International Federation, and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The Conference is convening for the first time since 1986.

Opening the Conference, the Chairman of the Standing Commission of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, Botho, Prince of Sayn-Wittgenstein appealed to governments to support the work of the Movement and its efforts to enhance the effectiveness of humanitarian aid. ICRC President Cornélia Sommaruga said that the only way to alleviate the suffering of victims of war and disaster was by restoring respect for human rights and international humanitarian law. Dr Mario Villarroel Lander, President of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, said that this was a unique opportunity to revitalise humanitarian action and enhance respect for human dignity. The President of the Swiss Confederation, representing the host country, Kaspar Villiger, urged governments to mobilise all their resources to improve the plight of victims world-wide and to step up their support for humanitarian organisations.

The opening ceremony included a performance by Disimilis, a group of young disabled singers and musicians from Norway. Swiss schoolchildren proclaimed the seven Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

The States and National Societies will be asked to adopt resolutions on crucial humanitarian issues. These include the protection of civilian populations in war, strengthening respect for and dissemination of international humanitarian law, refugees, sanctions and the role and development of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

For additional information and interview requests, please contact the International Conference Media Service
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XXVIe Conférence internationale de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
XXVth International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent
XXVI Conferencia Internacional de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
CONFERENCE FOCUSES ON HUMANITARIAN ACTION

Geneva - The 26th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent ended on 7 December 1995, with the adoption of five resolutions. More than 1,200 delegates representing 135 States party to the Geneva Conventions, 164 National Societies, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) adopted these resolutions by consensus.

Among many other points these resolutions:

• urge States to strengthen the implementation and dissemination of international humanitarian law in order to prevent the steadily increasing violations of it;

• endorse the proposal by an Intergovernmental Group of Experts that national measures be reinforced and that the Swiss authorities convene a group of experts every two years to enhance respect for international humanitarian law;

• recall the obligation of States to repress violations of international humanitarian law and urge them to increase international efforts to bring before courts and punish war criminals and those responsible for serious violations of international humanitarian law, as well as to establish permanently an international criminal court;

• strongly condemn sexual violence - in particular rape - during hostilities as a war crime, and under circumstances, as a crime against humanity, and urge the establishment and strengthening of mechanisms to investigate, bring to justice and punish all those responsible;

• recommend that parties to conflict refrain from arming children under the age of 18 years and take every feasible step to ensure that children under the age of 18 years do not take part in hostilities;

• strongly condemn attempts to starve civilian populations in armed conflicts and urge parties to conflict to maintain conditions in which the civilian population is able to provide for its own needs;

• request parties to conflict not to hinder access by the civilian population to water and to facilitate access for the repair of water supply systems;

• take note of the support of the whole International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement for a total ban on anti-personnel landmines and of the strong encouragement given by all participants for action to diminish the tragic effects of mines and to intensity mine-clearance efforts;
call upon all States to consider, when designing, imposing and reviewing economic sanctions, the possible negative impact of such sanctions upon the situation of the civilian population of a targeted State and also of third States which may be adversely affected by such measures;

call upon States to recognize the need for the Movement to maintain a clear separation between its humanitarian action, on the one hand, and actions of a political, military or economic nature carried out by governments, intergovernmental bodies and other agencies during humanitarian crises, on the other hand, bearing in mind the need for the Movement to maintain, in its humanitarian work, its independence, impartiality and neutrality;

call upon States to respect and ensure respect for international humanitarian law, in particular the general prohibition of forced displacement of civilians, and to ensure efficient and adequate access to internally displaced persons and refugees for neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian organizations, in particular National Societies, the ICRC and the International Federation, as well as for other international organizations, in particular the UNHCR, according to their respective mandates;

call upon States to recognize the need for National Societies to maintain their independence and autonomy of action in order to act in accordance with the Fundamental Principles and the values that they stand for, and to make better use of the potential of National Societies as cost-effective providers of health care, social services and emergency assistance for the most vulnerable;

invite all States and National Societies to encourage non-governmental organizations both to abide by the principles and the spirit of the Code of Conduct in Disaster Relief and to consider registering their support for the Code with the International Federation;

call strongly upon all components of the Movement to continue their support for the development of the network of National Societies so that they are better prepared to react fast in the event of natural or man-made disasters.

The International Conference also elected, in its plenary session on Wednesday 6 December 1995, the new Standing Commission which is composed of two people from the ICRC, its President and Director for Principles, Law and Relations with the Movement; two from the International Federation, its President and Secretary General; and five elected in their personal capacity. Of the 13 candidates on the list the following persons were elected: H.R.H. Princess Margriet of the Netherlands (Netherlands Red Cross), Mrs Christina Magnuson (Swedish Red Cross), Dr Guillermo Rueda Montana (Colombian Red Cross), Mr Tadateru Konoe (Japanese Red Cross) and Dr Byron Ruben Hove (Zimbabwe Red Cross). H.R.H. Princess Margiet was elected by the Standing Commission as its Chairwoman and Mr Byron Hove as Vice-Chairman. The Standing Commission has, among various others, the task of establishing the provisional agenda and the programme of the International Conference. It promotes harmony in the work of the Movement and, in this connection, coordination among its components.
ICRC STILL ACTIVE IN GROZNY

Geneva (ICRC) - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is still working in Chechnya, in particular in the area south of Grozny. Despite press reports to the contrary, activities are continuing in Grozny itself: the ICRC is meeting the needs it considers essential, and is in particular providing drinking water to part of the population. Other activities not directly related to the emergency have been temporarily reduced, owing to renewed tension in the run-up to elections.

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IRAQ: ICRC ACTS AS NEUTRAL INTERMEDIARY

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), acting in its capacity of neutral intermediary, has led a team including several US experts to the crash site of a US pilot lost in 1991 during the Gulf War.

The team has been in Iraq from 9 December. Its mission was organized and is being carried out with the full cooperation and support of the authorities of the Republic of Iraq.

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INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS
Communication to the press No. 95/57
19 December 1995

NORTHERN CAUCASUS/CHECHNYA:
ICRC DEEPLY CONCERNED ABOUT INHABITANTS OF GUDERMES

Geneva (ICRC) - Several thousand people have fled Gudermes, Chechnya's second largest city situated south-east of Grozny, in the wake of violent clashes which broke out on 14 December. According to some accounts, a number of inhabitants are still stranded inside the heavily damaged city.

On 16 and 17 December, an ICRC team took about 100 people by bus to the neighbouring Republic of Daghestan, where they received blankets and food parcels. Similar assistance was provided in Chechen villages near the Daghestan border, where some of the displaced took temporary refuge in the hope that the situation would calm down enough to enable them to return home before long.

ICRC delegates have also distributed emergency medical supplies (antibiotics, analgesics and dressings) to hospitals in Grozny, Urus Martan and several villages near Gudermes, where some 60 wounded have been registered in the past few days.

Although it has temporarily had to reduce its staff in the area, the ICRC has continued its assistance activities for people in Grozny, in particular providing them with drinking water, throughout the legislative and presidential elections. It currently has 48 expatriates and about 200 local employees in the northern Caucasus.
Communication to the press No. 95/58
22 December 1995

NAGORNY KARABAKH CONFLICT: DETAINNEES RELEASED UNDER ICRC AUSPICES

Geneva (ICRC) - Nineteen people held for reasons directly connected with the Nagorny Karabakh conflict have been freed in December 1995. Eleven of them were released under the auspices of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which made sure that they wished to return home and provided them with the necessary logistic assistance for the journey.

In 1995 ICRC delegates have visited 223 people held in direct relation to this conflict. A total of 149 have been freed during the year: 39 by the Azeri authorities, 43 by the Armenian side and 67 by the Karabakhis.

However, as of 22 December, 71 people are still being held directly in connection with the conflict and the ICRC is continuing to visit them.

The ICRC therefore urges all the parties concerned:

- to notify it of any person captured in direct relation to the conflict in Nagorny Karabakh;

- to guarantee its delegates access to all places of detention holding persons detained for reasons directly connected with the conflict;

- since active hostilities have ceased, to release all such persons, in accordance with international humanitarian law;

- to provide information, on the basis of the lists the ICRC handed over to them in August 1995, on the fate of persons reported missing in action so as to relieve the anxiety of their families who are still without news.
Communication to the press No. 95/59
Geneva, 26 December 1995

CHECHNYA: ICRC BRINGS 20 TONNES OF SUPPLIES TO GUDERMES

Geneva (ICRC - For the first time since fighting resumed 12 days ago, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was able to bring over 20 tonnes of relief supplies to Gudermes today. Six vehicles from Grozny - three all-purpose cars and three trucks - reached the centre of the town, where ICRC delegates distributed urgently-required medical supplies to several medical facilities which were still functioning. The relief supplies - blankets, plastic sheeting, candles and jerrycans - were given directly to the people who needed them. This operation was carried out under good security conditions. Following a survey of needs conducted during today's mission, the ICRC is planning a major assistance operation in the next few days to insure that the population has sufficient supply of drinking water and some means of protection against the cold. It will also distribute family parcels containing basic foodstuff.

In the past few days ICRC delegates also assisted 5,000 people from Gudermes who had sought refuge in reception centres in Khasavyurt (Daghestan), providing them with family parcels containing about one month's supply of food. A further 5,000 people had found refuge in private homes.

The ICRC has 48 delegates and 200 local employees in the northern Caucasus.

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Communication to the press 95/60
30 December 1995

ERITREA: 196 PRISONERS OF WAR AND 17 CIVILIANS REPATRIATED TO YEMEN BY THE ICRC

Geneva (ICRC) - On 30 December 1995, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) repatriated 213 Yemeni nationals captured by the Eritrean armed forces during the fighting that took place on the Hanish islands in mid-December. An ICRC plane with Red Cross markings made two flights between Asmara, in Eritrea, and Sana'a, in Yemen. On the first flight the wounded and sick were accompanied by an ICRC doctor.

On 24 December an ICRC team had gone to Asmara to make the necessary arrangements. On 28 and 29 December, six delegates, including a doctor, were able to register the civilians and prisoners of war and to talk with each of them privately.

In carrying out this operation, ICRC delegates received the full cooperation of the Eritrean and Yemeni governments.

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