1987:
Highlights of the ICRC in Action

Over the last year, the ICRC presence in the world increased and, in most countries, its activities intensified. For any commercial enterprise, this would be an encouraging summary of the year’s work. For the ICRC, it is further proof that a world of peace is not for tomorrow.

On four continents, ICRC delegates continued efforts to protect and assist the victims of wars, internal conflicts and disturbances. Prisoners of war were visited in particular in Iran, Iraq, China, Vietnam and Somalia, and, on more than one occasion, the ICRC participated in the repatriation of Iraqi and Iranian POWs. Security detainees were also visited in many countries where the ICRC is at work, and assistance often provided for them and their families.

Whenever possible, delegates evacuated the wounded to hospitals. Orthopaedic programmes for war amputees continued and developed in over 10 countries, while a new orthopaedic centre in Kabul neared completion at the end of the year. Medical assistance also developed, including the launch of mobile clinics in Lebanon.

The civilian population in conflict zones remained highly vulnerable, especially people displaced by the situation. In countries such as Mozambique, Angola, El Salvador, Nicaragua, the Philippines, large amounts of food and material assistance were distributed to these people. Sanitation and water projects, as well as vaccination programmes for children, sometimes accompanied these operations to avoid the added risk of disease.

Tracing activities and the exchange of Red Cross messages, for families separated by conflict, continued to be an important aspect of ICRC work. The Central Tracing Agency often represented the only hope of finding a close relative or the only means of communication between family members.

In the majority of countries where the ICRC was present, some 43 by the end of the year, the dissemination of international humanitarian law and the principles of the Red Cross Movement remained the close companion of all action in the field. Whenever possible, programmes were aimed at the armed forces and police, as well as the public at large.

Many of these activities, apart from visits to prisoners and detainees, were carried out with the help of the National Society concerned. When necessary, the ICRC assisted in the development of these Societies, with training and material assistance, to help them cope with the difficult situations they had to face.

The range of activities corresponded to the variety of victims in any conflict situation. A delegation opened in Suriname and regional delegations in Hong Kong and Tunis. Operations resumed in Afghanistan and began in Haiti. In 1987, the ICRC followed the changing and developing world of conflict, without losing faith in the role its principles and activities can play in the restoration of peace.
Over 100,000 people displaced by insurgency-related incidents in the Philippines received relief supplies. Regular prison visits continued, including material assistance to detainees.

566,000 pupils received Red Cross comics, bringing the total, since the project began in 1984, to 1,250,000. The fourth and final series, to complete coverage of the whole country, was launched in July.

The ICRC relaunched its activities in Mozambique in April, having suspended its action in July 1985 for security reasons. By the end of November, over 112,000 people recently displaced by the conflict had received relief distributions.

In the meantime, wounded civilians and soldiers were evacuated to hospitals, while medical facilities, which the Ministry of Health was unable to reach, received medicaments, medical and relief supplies.

The ICRC hospitals for Afghan war wounded in Peshawar (see photo above) and Quetta, Pakistan, worked at over 100% capacity on several occasions during the year.

In January, the ICRC returned to Afghanistan. By the end of the year, orthopaedic and medical assistance programmes, with the Afghan Red Crescent Society, were under way in Kabul.

The ICRC visited 11 detention centres in Uganda where 4,277 prisoners under the responsibility of the National Resistance Army were registered and assisted. Over 6,000 Red Cross messages were exchanged between detainees and their families.

Relief assistance was given to more than 55,000 civilian victims of the conflict.
On average, some 7,000 people affected by the conflict in Nicaragua received relief distributions each month, based on medical and relief surveys. The ICRC carried out regular visits to eight detention centres and the annual visits to prison farms.

At the two ICRC orthopaedic centres in Angola, new technology was introduced at the beginning of the year to increase production of prostheses and cope better with the increasing numbers of war amputees. Some 125,000 civilian victims of the conflict received monthly food distributions until the harvest in April. Seed distributions started again in September, but were suspended following the crash of an ICRC plane, which killed all six passengers and crew.

In South Africa, the number of community organizers working in black townships was increased from 46 to 66 during the year. Dissemination and first-aid programmes included members of the armed forces and police recruits (see photo above) in their target groups. ICRC delegates continued efforts to gain access to all prisoners detained as a result of the troubles.

Over 23,000 Mozambican refugees received assistance in a joint programme with charitable organizations in the border area.

**Iran/Iraq Conflict**

In the Islamic Republic of Iran, ICRC delegates completed a programme of visits to Iraqi prisoners of war in 15 camps. Meanwhile, in the Republic of Iraq, six complete series of visits to 10 camps were carried out, visiting over 12,700 Iranian POWs during each series.

In March and October, based on a decision taken by the Iranian authorities, the ICRC participated in the repatriation of a total of 177 sick, disabled and elderly Iraqi POWs from Tehran to Baghdad.

An ICRC delegate was also present as an observer in September and October when a total of 30 Iranian seamen captured by the American Forces in the Gulf and the remains of five others were handed over by American representatives to the authorities of Oman, who handed them over to Iranian officials.
By the end of October, it was clear that millions of people would face starvation in the conflict zones of northern Ethiopia. On 12 November, the ICRC called for “open roads for survival” to enable relief convoys to reach victims in their villages and thus avoid overcrowded camps, as was the case in 1984-1985. An appeal for 111 million Swiss francs to cover this operation was launched on 3 December.

A first distribution took place in Wukro in Tigray province during November and early December, and 78,000 people received a month’s food ration. A second distribution began on 10 December in Idaga Hamus, north-east of Tigray’s provincial capital, Mekele, where 6,000 people a day started receiving rations. Over 100,000 people were expected to benefit from this distribution.

In October, at the request of all parties concerned, the ICRC ensured the safe conduct of FMLN/FDR representatives during four days of talks with the government of El Salvador, in the context of the Central American peace agreement.

On average, 100 places of detention were visited each month. The ICRC also participated in the release and exchange of prisoners and evacuated wounded combatants.

Over 90,000 people in areas affected by the conflict had received food aid on several occasions by mid-November. Regular distributions were then reduced thanks to the success of an agricultural programme, launched in January, in which over 12,000 families received seeds and fertilizer.

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The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), together with the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the recognized National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, is one of the three components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

An independent humanitarian institution, the ICRC is the founding body of the Red Cross. As a neutral intermediary in case of armed conflicts or disturbances, it endeavours on its own initiative or on the basis of the Geneva Conventions to protect and assist the victims of international and civil wars and of internal troubles and tensions, thereby contributing to peace in the world.
Occupied territories: a need to protect civilian populations

Since the start of the disturbances that broke out in the occupied territories of the West Bank and the Gaza strip in December last year, the ICRC has reminded the Israeli authorities of their obligations as laid down in the Fourth Geneva Convention which aims to protect the fundamental rights of civilian populations in situations of conflict or occupation.

The ICRC reminded the Israeli authorities that the means used by an Occupying Power to enforce law and order are not unlimited, as the Fourth Convention clearly indicates, and expressed its concern over the disproportionate use of force, as illustrated by the high number of civilian dead and wounded.

On 13 January, the ICRC publicly condemned the expulsion by the Israeli authorities of four people from the West Bank. This practice, already used by Israel on several occasions in the past, constitutes a violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Israel does not recognize the applicability of this Convention to the territories it occupied in 1967, but stated, at the Twenty-fifth International Conference of the Red Cross in Geneva, in 1986, that its provisions were applied de facto in the Gaza strip and on the West Bank.

By mid-January, the ICRC had been able to visit over 950 people, in Israel and the occupied territories, detained as a result of the recent disturbances. The ICRC received regular notifications of arrests from the Israeli authorities and the families of detainees often went to ICRC offices to report the arrest of a member, or members, of their family. Under the terms of agreements with Israel, the ICRC can visit detainees on their fourteenth day of detention, even if they are still under interrogation. ICRC delegates were mobilized from the beginning of the recent events to provide humanitarian aid to the victims. Often present during the incidents themselves, the delegates made every effort, through repeated contacts with the local Israeli authorities, to ensure that the wounded could be evacuated by ambulance as quickly and safely as possible. Regular visits were made to hospitals, both in Israel and the occupied territories, to which wounded civilians had been transferred for treatment.

The ICRC also maintained regular contacts with the families of the deceased, the wounded and those who had been arrested. It thus continued to gather the information essential to the fulfillment of the humanitarian mandate entrusted to it by the international community.

Ethiopia: assistance reaching drought victims

Surrounded by sacks of grain and flour, workers pour out rations of beans at the ICRC distribution point next to Adi Gudom in central Tigray. With this food, the villagers will be able to survive for another month. Story on page 2.
In some villages of northern Ethiopia the food shortage is reaching critical levels, and ICRC officials in the country fear there may be only a month or two left to prevent famine. In order to reach as many as possible of the drought victims threatened by starvation, the ICRC is pressing ahead with its “Open roads for survival” policy with all speed.

The relief operation of the ICRC and the Ethiopian Red Cross is intended to reach over one million people a month in the north — more than the number assisted at the height of the 1984-85 famine. Convoys are moving in thousands of tonnes of food to distribution points in Tigray and Eritrea. In Tigray alone, about 580,000 peasants and farmers were given food rations in January, and the first major distribution was made in Eritrea. In the first five weeks of the operation at the end of last year, over 330,000 villagers were assisted.

The lorries, a fleet of over 80 at present, are getting to the distribution sites with the food, through conflict areas. Security problems on the roads have caused delays and even blockages, but the operation is working. The convoys are going in with only the Red Cross emblem for protection, and the assurances of respect given de facto by all sides involved in the fighting.

Enough food is in the pipeline until May. Up to April, the ICRC will rapidly increase the tonnage reaching the distribution points every month, as the relief action is stepped up and more distribution sites are opened.

To ensure the survival of the people in the north, a maximum effort is needed not only by the ICRC but also by the other relief organizations. The ICRC plans to assist about 800,000 villagers a month in Tigray, and several hundred thousand in Eritrea; the total will be approximately a third of those in need in the northern regions.

Unlike 1984-85, international assistance is being provided before famine breaks out. The food distributions carried out by the ICRC have, for the time being, stopped a mass exodus of the population.

The ICRC believes that as long as the villagers can be assisted on a monthly basis, it should not be necessary to set up camps or feeding centres, and the situation may be contained.

Surveys made in Akele Guzay in southeastern Eritrea, where a distribution of food began at the end of January, showed there was no locally-produced food left in the villages around Adi Keyih and Senafe. The people were surviving from the sale of their animals or the little firewood to be found, in exchange for grain sold on the market at high prices. Some of the poorer villagers said they were existing by eating wild fruit. The ICRC has made this area, which is the most seriously affected in Eritrea, a priority, and intends to feed about 180,000 people by the end of February.

At the end of January, the ICRC had received authorisation to launch its activities in Gondar at the beginning of February, but remained concerned that it had so far been unable to do the same in Wollo. In these two areas, thousands of people had left their homes and gathered around the towns of Korem in Wollo and Ibrit in Gondar.

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Hospital in Quetta enlarged

The ICRC hospital for Afghan war wounded in Quetta, Pakistan, was recently enlarged to cope with a sharp increase in the number of patients. Thanks to a new building, opened in mid-December, it now has sufficient beds to take 100 patients, compared to 60 before.

This hospital, situated near the southeastern border of Afghanistan, had been working at over 100% capacity for several months. Tents had been pitched in front of the hospital to accommodate the extra patients. The increased capacity has meant that the temporary canvas wards have finally been taken down.

Around 60% of the Afghan war wounded admitted to the ICRC hospital in Quetta are initially taken in charge by two first-aid posts set up along the frontier by the Pakistan Red Crescent Society and the ICRC. These people have often endured a long and tiring journey, some of them with severe wounds. A small number is treated at the posts themselves, but the majority are transported by ambulance to the hospital.

Five other such first-aid posts exist along the frontier, transporting the wounded to the other ICRC hospital in Peshawar.

Orthopaedic centre in Kabul operational

At the beginning of January, production and training programmes were launched at the new ICRC orthopaedic rehabilitation centre in Kabul.

A series of 70 crutches is now being made and working models for the production of prostheses are being prepared. The products are largely made out of local materials thanks to the use of appropriate technology developed by ICRC orthopaedic technicians on the spot.

Twenty-seven local employees have been hired, eight of whom have started training programmes, for a trial period, to become orthopaedic technicians or physiotherapists.

This centre, based on an agreement signed with the Afghan Red Crescent Society in January 1987, will help to cope with the large number of people wounded in the conflict who are awaiting treatment in and around Kabul.

Delegation opens in Guatemala

On 20 January, the ICRC officially opened a delegation in Guatemala.

The ICRC has maintained regular contacts with the Guatemalan government since March 1986 in order to obtain permission to act in favour of the victims of the situation prevailing in the country. An agreement to open a delegation was reached in December 1987.

The ICRC team now in Guatemala City consists of four delegates, later to be joined by a doctor, who will implement initial programmes aiming to assist displaced civilians, to carry out actions in favour of persons detained for security reasons and to disseminate knowledge of international humanitarian law.

ICRC assists Lebanese village under blockade

On 7 January, the ICRC was able to escort 23 people out of the village of Yohmor, in southern Lebanon. The village, which has around 4,000 inhabitants, had been isolated by a military blockade for some eight days.

On the same day, two people, who had been taken ill, were evacuated from the village for treatment in a nearby hospital. 190 family parcels were also distributed to the inhabitants and one dispensary.

The ICRC had been able to enter the village for the first time on 5 January, on foot, when it had carried out an evaluation of the villagers needs. The following day, it had returned to deliver supplies and evacuate two pregnant women and five sick children.
Mozambique: ICRC activities restricted

At the end of December, the ICRC was forced to restrict its activities in Mozambique, on a temporary basis, as the security of its airlifts over certain conflict zones could no longer be guaranteed.

Activities are continuing only in areas that can be safely reached by road or sea from the ICRC delegation in Maputo, the capital, and its sub-delegations in three provincial capitals; Beira, Quelimane and Nampula. It is also carrying on the orthopaedic programme in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and the dissemination of Red Cross principles to the armed forces.

During 1987, the ICRC had been able to expand its activities. Food, non-food, medical and sanitation assistance was provided to over 50 different localities in seven of the ten provinces in order to face needs created by the spreading conflict. Three small aircraft were used to facilitate access to rural areas and ensure a certain flexibility.

The ICRC has once again made it clear to all the forces involved that, in accordance with its humanitarian mandate and its neutral status, it wishes to provide assistance to all civilian victims of the conflict wherever they may be. This is the same position as that expressed before the operation was launched.

Every effort is being made by the ICRC to resume the activities that were previously underway and further expand them to assist the victims it has not yet been able to reach.

ICRC nurse receives Henry Dunant Medal

The President of the ICRC, Cornelio Sommaruga, presented the Henry Dunant Medal to Mary-Josée Burnier, formerly a nurse with the ICRC, during a brief ceremony held at the ICRC headquarters in Geneva on 8 January.

Since the foundation of the ICRC in 1863, with its specific mandate as a neutral intermediary and provider of protection and assistance in situations of conflict, its delegates have inevitably been exposed to a certain amount of danger and insecurity. Some have reacted with exceptional courage and devotion, some have even lost their lives in consequence. The Henry Dunant Medal, which is awarded once every two years, was created in 1965 to recognize and reward such outstanding services and acts of devotion to the Red Cross and Red Crescent cause.

Mary-Josée Burnier, who carried out several missions for the ICRC between 1981 and 1985, is one of those whose courage, endurance and strength of character enabled her to overcome some very difficult experiences. In 1982, she had to endure three months of detention in Angola. In 1985, she was seriously injured during a mission in Mozambique and she is still suffering from the effects. On both occasions, she showed remarkable courage and resistance.

The Henry Dunant Medal was thus awarded to Mary-Josée Burnier by the Standing Commission of the International Movement of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in Rio de Janeiro on 27 November last year. The Commission paid special tribute to her courage and the example of exceptional humanitarian devotion that she has given.

During his speech at the presentation ceremony in Geneva, President Sommaruga notably stated: "This medal, which has been awarded to an ICRC nurse who endured her sufferings with dignity both during and after the exercise of her humanitarian duties, honours all ICRC collaborators, who accomplish their tasks as delegates, often under very difficult conditions!"

In her response, Mary-Josée Burnier declared: "I dedicate this medal, with my deepest respect, to all those who have lost their lives during missions for the ICRC over these past few years!"

First awarded in 1969, the Henry Dunant Medal has so far been received by 49 members of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

East Timor: family reunions

On 12 January, 13 people from East Timor were flown to Portugal to be reunited with their families. The first of the year, these family reunions were organized by the ICRC with the agreement of the Indonesian and Portuguese authorities.

This programme for the reunion of separated families began in 1979, together with the repatriation of people born in Portugal. At the request of the Portuguese and Indonesian authorities, the ICRC started a programme to repatriate former Portuguese civil servants in January 1986.

So far, 190 people have been reunited with their families and 577,398 of which are former Portuguese civil servants, have been repatriated.

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International Committee of the Red Cross

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Presidental tour of southern Africa

The President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Cornelio Sommaruga, paid official visits to five countries of southern Africa (Tanzania, Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe), from 12 to 20 February 1988.

In choosing southern Africa for his first official mission on the continent since he assumed the Presidency of the ICRC nine months ago, Mr. Sommaruga intended to express the ICRC's deep preoccupation with the magnitude of the humanitarian needs in this region, as a consequence of conflicts. Of particular concern are the critical humanitarian problems created by the massive internal displacement of people within Mozambique, and the plight of refugees and returnees in southern Africa in general.

During his visit, the President of the ICRC called on the Heads of State of Tanzania, Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, with whom he was able to have constructive, stimulating and positive exchanges of views, which he also pursued with a number of Ministers of the five countries.

He was able to emphasize the specificity of the international humanitarian mandate of the ICRC, which is to act in war areas throughout the world with neutrality, independence and impartiality, and which consists in protecting and assisting all victims.

Expressing his appreciation for the Ministerial Resolution 1059 on the ICRC, adopted by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in Addis Ababa in 1986, Mr. Sommaruga thanked the Heads of State for supporting the humanitarian work of the ICRC and its universally recognized humanitarian principles.

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Occupied territories: delegation reinforced as activities stepped up

As the situation in the occupied territories continued to deteriorate, the ICRC sent out an additional team of five delegates and one nurse, at the end of January, to reinforce the delegation already on the spot.

Despite repeated interventions asking the Israeli authorities to respect the dispositions of the Fourth Geneva Convention, the ICRC noted that serious violations in the treatment of civilians both during and after disturbances continued. The Fourth Geneva Convention notably stipulates that people living in occupied territories "shall at all times be humanely treated, and shall be protected especially against all acts of violence" and that the occupying power is prohibited from taking any "measures of brutality whether applied by civilian or military agents".

ICRC delegates, who continued to visit the injured in hospitals in the occupied territories and in Israel, made representations to the Israeli authorities each time that they witnessed breaches of this Convention and cases of brutality.

Due to the large number of civilians injured during incidents, the ICRC has decided to provide four fully-equipped ambulances to the local branches of the Red Crescent on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip. The decision is a result of a complete medical survey carried out in February and of the regular contacts maintained with local medical staff and representatives of the Red Crescent in the field.

ICRC delegates were the only people authorized to enter the refugee camps and villages placed under curfew at the beginning of February. They carried out regular visits to these areas to assess the situation, identify possible needs, and investigate abuses and allegations of ill-treatment.

By mid-February, the ICRC had visited over 2,000 people, in Israel and the occupied territories, arrested since the disturbances broke out at the beginning of December. The visits have enabled the delegates to restore contacts between those detained and their families, through the exchange of Red Cross messages, and to organize material assistance for the detainees. The conditions of detention are also checked and discussed with the Israeli authorities.

The ICRC remained extremely preoccupied about the situation prevailing in the occupied territories and the possibility of a deterioration which could lead to even more serious humanitarian consequences. Its delegation on the spot will continue to monitor events closely, ready to respond to any urgent needs that may arise among the civilian population, and to take every opportunity to remind the Israeli authorities of their obligation to respect the Geneva Conventions.

News in brief

A team from the ICRC's regional delegation in Hong Kong, including a doctor and an interpreter, visited 17 Vietnamese prisoners detained in China at the beginning of February. All the prisoners were registered and 11 of them wrote Red Cross messages to their families.
Philippines: ever adapting to new situations

In a situation where localized disturbances are not infrequent and equally hard to predict, and in which attempts to destabilize the government are not unknown, the ICRC must be sure to be allowed to carry out its mandate and ever ready to provide for new needs.

The Philippines, where the ICRC has been active for over 10 years, is a good example of an understanding of the importance of the ICRC's activities, thanks to good contacts with the authorities at all levels and with the National Red Cross Society, and of the need to continually adapt to new situations.

Following the uprisings of January and August last year, the ICRC started to visit military detention centres in the capital, Manila, at the end of December. Over 300 military and police personnel detained in connection with these events had been seen by the end of February.

For the first time in the Philippines, ICRC delegates distributed extra food rations, at the beginning of February, to over 2,400 civilians displaced as a result of clashes between the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the opposition New People's Army in the south of the island of Luzon.

Unlike the majority of displaced persons in the Philippines, who can usually return to their homes a short while after such incidents, these people had received assistance from the ICRC, in collaboration with the Philippines National Red Cross, in September 1987 when they were first displaced, but had been unable to return home since. After a follow-up evaluation of these people's situation, the normal food ration, which is made up of rice and vegetable oil, was supplemented with an extra ration composed of locally-purchased dried fish and mongo beans.

The ICRC also carried out distributions to over 480 people in the western province of the island of Mindoro, situated some 100 km south of Manila, following clashes between government and opposition forces. This is the first time that the ICRC has given assistance to displaced civilians in this province.

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Presidential tour of southern Africa

(continued from page 1)

During his meeting in Lusaka with Dr. Kenneth Kaunda, Chairman of the OAU, the President of the ICRC discussed a number of issues of common interest to the OAU and the ICRC.

In Harare, he had a similar exchange of views on humanitarian problems in Africa and other parts of the world with President Robert Mugabe, in his capacity as Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Finally, the President of the ICRC had the opportunity to discuss a number of humanitarian issues with representatives of the African National Congress (ANC), the Pan African Congress (PAC) and the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO).

Mr. Sommaruga also visited the headquarters of the local National Red Cross Societies in Dar-es-Salaam, Lusaka, Lilongwe, Maputo and Harare. He discussed their humanitarian activities with their respective Executive Boards, with a view to enlarging the existing cooperation of the ICRC towards their development.

At the end of his visit and considering the present suffering of the Mozambican people — which he had discussed in detail in Maputo with President Chissano — the President of the ICRC is convinced that

— all those concerned by the urgent humanitarian needs of the civilian population in Mozambique, wherever these women, children and other innocent people are,
— all those who may have any kind of influence on the events which cause this tragic suffering,

will understand his appeal and firm wish that the full-fledged humanitarian action of the ICRC should be realized without obstacles and without further delay.

The ICRC is grateful for the warm atmosphere in which the official visit took place and for the deep understanding shown by the highest authorities of the five countries visited, and expresses thanks for the support of all those who can facilitate a positive response to the humanitarian challenge the international community is faced with, taking into account the present delicate political context.
Ethiopia: a need for relative optimism

Relief operations aiming to avert famine among hundreds of thousands of victims of drought and conflict in northern Ethiopia pressed ahead in February, despite a number of difficulties.

The ICRC carried out its first distribution, at the beginning of February, in the province of Gondar where thousands of people have arrived from Tigray or Wollo in search of food.

In Tigray, which is one of the areas most affected by the drought, the number of food distribution points was increased as planned, in spite of military operations carried out by opposition forces which led to the closure of roads and convoys being blocked for several days at a time. Fighting around the town of Adigrat in the north of the province resulted in the cancellation of a distribution there and the postponement for a week of another distribution further south in Wukro.

According to Leon de Riedmatten, the ICRC's deputy Delegate General for Africa; "the roads should certainly be open far more often than they are today". While the open roads concept has been generally accepted, together with the idea that the ICRC and its convoys move around with no military escort, Mr. de Riedmatten stressed that they needed to achieve a situation in which the Ethiopian authorities allowed the roads to stay open.

Airlift operations by the ICRC and other relief organizations were also disrupted in February due to a fuel shortage in Asmara, the provincial capital of Eritrea. The ICRC Hercules transport plane was consequently forced to fly food into Tigray from Addis Ababa, meaning a longer distance and fewer flights a day.

A serious shortage of lorries, estimated at around 400, faced other organizations working in northern Ethiopia. Over 90 lorries had been destroyed in attacks by opposition forces since last October, including the latest attacks in January on the road from the Red Sea port of Massawa to Asmara.

The number of people in need of food assistance has increased considerably since the famine of 1984-85, due to population growth, the return of a large number of refugees from Sudan and more areas being affected by the drought. It is therefore essential not only that the roads remain open, but that all the organizations working in northern Ethiopia make a concerted effort to cover all the victims of the situation between them.

Discussions were underway for a clearer allocation of the areas to be assisted. The ICRC hoped that the governmental Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, together with non-governmental agencies, would cover the people living in and around the towns, leaving the ICRC, according to its mandate, to assist those who cannot be reached by other organizations in view of the conflict situation.

In the province of Wollo, thousands of displaced people remained around the town of Korem. "Wollo is the major concern of the ICRC today. This region represents everything that the ICRC wanted to avoid: the creation of camps and a resettlement programme in an emergency situation," stated Mr. de Riedmatten. At mid-February, the ICRC was still prevented from launching its relief programme in Wollo.
A plaque commemorating the foundation of the "Committee of Five", later to become the International Committee of the Red Cross, was unveiled in Geneva, on 9 February, before a large gathering of people.

It was on 9 February 1863, 125 years ago, that a momentous event in the history of mankind took place in a building called the "Casino de St. Pierre" in the rue de l'Evêché. On that day, a philanthropic organization called the Geneva Public Welfare Society held a meeting during which a committee with five members was created. That committee, baptized the "Committee of Five", was composed entirely of citizens of Geneva — Henry Dunant, Gustave Moynier, Guillaume-Henri Dufour, Louis Appia and Théodore Maunoir. Just a few months later, it was named the International Committee for Relief to the Wounded in Time of War, before becoming, in 1876, the International Committee of the Red Cross.

It was at the instigation of its Chairman, Gustave Moynier, that the Geneva Public Welfare Society had placed on its agenda for the meeting of 9 February 1863 "the creation of a body of voluntary nurses attached to armies in the field — the conclusion of Henry Dunant's book "A Memory of Solferino". It appointed a committee of five members to present a proposal to this effect to an international philanthropic congress which was to have taken place that year in Berlin. The congress was cancelled and the committee decided to submit the project at an international conference in Geneva. Fourteen States sent representatives, who adopted a series of resolutions that laid the foundations of the Red Cross Movement.

At the invitation of the Henry Dunant Society, a large crowd assembled at the historic building on 9 February 1888 to commemorate this event. In the presence of representatives of the City and Canton of Geneva, the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, and representatives of the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the Swiss Red Cross and the Geneva Public Welfare Society, the commemorative plaque was unveiled by Stéphane Reverdin, a direct descendant of Henry Dunant. Direct descendants of Théodore Maunoir, Gustave Moynier and Louis Appia were also present. The plaque bears an inscription in French stating: "In this house, on 9 February 1863, the Geneva Public Welfare Society formed a committee whose members, Louis Appia, General Dufour, Henry Dunant, Théodore Maunoir and Gustave Moynier, laid the foundations of the International Committee of the Red Cross".

The President of the ICRC, Cornelio Sommaruga, paid tribute to its five founders, stating that "armed only with their profound motivation, their imagination and their audacity, they had deliberately thrown down a challenge to history... This plaque" he added, "commemorates a landmark in the history of humanity".

The ceremony was opened by Roger Durand, President of the Henry Dunant Society. Other speakers were Pierre Wellhauser, President of the Geneva Council of State, C. Sommaruga, President of the ICRC, C. Haegi, Mayor of Geneva, and R. Durand, President of the Henry Dunant Society.

Among the congratulatory messages received by the ICRC was one from Javier Perez de Cuellar, Secretary General of the United Nations, who wrote: "Your accomplishments in bringing protection and assistance to the victims of armed conflicts are an inspiration to us all!"

The ceremony, which was one of a series of events to commemorate the 125th anniversary of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, ended with a reception.

For an organization like the ICRC, 125 years of existence are commemorated rather than celebrated. A plaque was thus unveiled in Geneva, on 9 February, to recall the creation of the "Committee of Five" which later became the International Committee of the Red Cross.

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Ethiopia: relief operation virtually paralyzed

It was a black March for ICRC relief operations in the conflict-torn, drought-stricken north of Ethiopia. The consequences for hundreds of thousands of people facing starvation could well be even blacker. As fighting intensified dramatically, efforts to stave off famine and distribute essential food supplies were seriously compromised.

In the province of Wollo, where the ICRC has been seeking to launch its assistance programme since December, authorization was definitively refused in mid-March. At the same time, the civilian population in disputed areas, whose urgent needs were not provided for, continued to move towards western Tigray, Gondar or the town of Korem, where thousands of displaced people have reportedly gathered.

Food convoys and distributions were suspended in northern Eritrea at the end of the month following a sharp escalation in fighting. At ICRC headquarters in Geneva, it was feared that prolonged hostilities could have serious consequences on its relief operation in northern Ethiopia if convoys transporting food to Tigray continued to be prevented from getting through.

Fighting also raged around a number of towns in the province of Tigray bringing the ICRC's assistance programme to a virtual standstill. In view of this situation, the ICRC issued a public statement in mid-March, warning that the nutritional state of the population was deteriorating at an alarming rate and stressing that it and the other organisations involved in the relief effort were capable of preventing famine if only the military situation would permit.

The situation in Tigray, where around two million people are mainly dependent on outside help, is the most serious in northern Ethiopia. During the first two weeks of March, hardly any food could be distributed to the large numbers of people awaiting assistance.

The amount of food entering the province by road to restock warehouses has fallen considerably. 12,000 tonnes were transported into Tigray in December, 6,000 in January, only 2,500 in February, and the figure will be even lower for March. As a result, many regional warehouses, which depend on regular supplies arriving by road, sat empty last month.

At the same time, the number of people in need of food aid has risen dramatically. The ICRC had succeeded in increasing the number of its beneficiaries each month since December. In February, despite food convoys being delayed and blocked on numerous occasions, over 360,000 people in Tigray received monthly food rations. Altogether in northern Ethiopia more than 540,000 people received food from the ICRC. However, the virtual paralysis of its relief operation has inevitably dealt a severe blow to plans to feed over a million people a month in the northern provinces in the near future.

The month of March saw important developments in the situation in northern Ethiopia. As one ICRC official put it: "The initial situation of drought in a conflictual environment has suddenly been completely reversed. We now find ourselves in a situation of conflict in a drought environment".

This evolution posed the most serious threat to the relief operation since it began in November last year. At that time, nutritional surveys showed that the ICRC had started its distributions early enough to prevent famine. Recent evaluations indicate a serious deterioration in the condition of the victims with up to 18% of the population in some areas suffering from severe malnutrition.

The ICRC is continuing to do its utmost to remove all obstacles that stand in the way of averting a disaster on the scale of the famine of 1984-85. It will do everything it can to prevent millions of innocent people from being deprived of their right to humanitarian assistance.

News in brief

The two additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions were ratified by Guyana on 18 January and New Zealand on 8 February with effect after a period of six months. These latest ratifications bring the total number of States party to additional Protocols I and II to 73 and 66 respectively.
The ICRC launched its appeals to the donor community in mid-March, asking for funds to cover its emergency operations for 1988. Seven regions or countries of the world where conflict continues to call for urgent assistance in favour of civilian and military victims are presented: Africa, Afghanistan and the Pakistani border area, Kampuchea/Thailand, the Philippines, Central America, Iran/Iraq and Lebanon.

The total budget for 1988 emergency operations, which constitutes the special budget, amounts to 360 million Swiss francs. This is an increase of around 46% over last year's figure. The ICRC has made a total cash appeal of 262 million Swiss francs, the balance brought forward from 1987 and, more particularly, the value of contributions in kind or in services expected making up the rest of the budget figure.

The budget for Africa accounts for approximately two-thirds of the total budget for 1988 and much of the increase. This is largely due to the major operation in Ethiopia to save hundreds of thousands of people from starvation, which represents almost 45% of the Africa budget. There have also been less significant, but proportionally substantial, increases for operations in Lebanon, Iran/Iraq and for Afghan conflict victims.

The ordinary budget, which covers permanent running costs and small-scale operations, has increased slightly since last year to reach 94 million Swiss francs.

In 1987, the ICRC spent a total of 263 million Swiss francs to ensure its humanitarian activities. The institution is mainly financed by voluntary contributions from State governments, the EEC and National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

**Central America**

In El Salvador, as in Nicaragua, the effects of the conflict on civilian victims are exacerbated by the isolation of the latter. The ICRC will therefore continue efforts to increase their self-sufficiency and autonomy as regards medical and food needs. Visits to detainees and dissemination, particularly among the armed forces, will be the other main activities of the ICRC in this area of the world.

Following the opening of delegations in Guatemala and Haiti, operations will also be launched in these two countries in collaboration with their respective Red Cross Societies.

**Africa**

As in previous years, the ICRC will carry on emergency operations in nine countries torn by armed conflicts on the African continent.

Ethiopia once again became the centre of attention in 1987 when the spectre of famine reappeared. The relief operation set up during the last months of the year will carry on in 1988. In the conflict areas in the north of the country, the ICRC estimates that it will have to give food assistance to over one million people.

Major operations are also necessary in Angola and Mozambique with the provision of assistance to victims of the conflicts in isolated areas which are all the more difficult to reach as a result of the fighting and require considerable logistic means. In South Africa, the ICRC gives support to the South African Red Cross community organizer programme which aims to increase the Red Cross presence amongst the black and coloured populations of the townships.

Details of other operations for 1988 in Africa are contained in the 220-page report “Africa emergency appeal”.

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**Seminar on prisons in Africa**

The prison system and human rights were major topics of an important seminar for the heads of penitentiary institutions of English-speaking African countries held in Zimbabwe's capital, Harare, in early March.

Over 20 African States were represented by more than 30 prison commissioners and ministry officials. The six-day seminar was opened by the Zimbabwean Minister of Justice and, together with African and European specialists, the participants discussed a series of subjects ranging from the respect of prisoners' rights and the training of prison officers to the present trends in prison administration and alternatives to imprisonment.

Officials taking part stressed the traditional African disapproval of imprisonment as a penal measure. It was generally agreed that efforts should be made to find more appropriate alternatives.

Emphasis was also placed on the need for a greater protection of human rights in the treatment of prisoners. Recommendations included a wider dissemination among prison officers of the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, more systematic monitoring by governments and prison administrations of practices in prisons, and the authorisation of visits to prisoners by international human rights and humanitarian organisations, such as the ICRC.

Workshops on labour and medical treatment and hygiene in African prisons took place during the seminar, enabling the participants to exchange their experiences and discuss specific problems they had encountered.

The Harare seminar devoted a whole day to the ICRC during which its activities on behalf of prisoners, particularly in Africa, and the basic rules that govern its work in prisons were presented.

The seminar was the second of its kind and was organized at the request of those who participated in the first one in Italy in 1985. A third is to be held in the near future for French-speaking African nations.
According to its mandate under the Third Geneva Convention, which both States have signed, the ICRC intends to pursue its efforts to provide protection for the prisoners of war held by the two belligerents. The exchange of Red Cross messages between the prisoners and their families, which is carried out by the Central Tracing Agency, will also continue. In 1987, 2,286,850 Red Cross messages were exchanged.

In 1988, the ICRC's activities in Lebanon, carried out in collaboration with the Lebanese Red Cross, will aim to satisfy the needs of the population, which have increased under the combined effects of the long years of war and an unprecedented economic crisis. To cover emergency needs created by the conflict, the ICRC will reinforce its assistance to the existing medical infrastructure. Stocks of food will be permanently maintained to help people affected by the conflict when necessary. The ICRC will also concentrate its efforts on socio-medical assistance to the population, in order to attenuate the long-term effects of the conflict, by providing more support to programmes organized by the National Society. Visits to people from various factions involved in the conflict who are held in detention will continue in 1988. As in the past, the Central Tracing Agency will be highly active.

In 1987, the ICRC signed two agreements with the Afghan Red Crescent Society, one for an orthopaedic programme and the other for a medical assistance programme. At the end of 1987, an orthopaedic rehabilitation centre for war amputees was opened in Kabul and will become fully operational this year. Medical assistance for National Society dispensaries in Kabul was also started and should be extended to other regions of the country during 1988. At the same time, training courses will be given to the dispensary personnel by members of the ICRC. Visits to people detained in relation to the conflict started at the beginning of the year, in keeping with an agreement signed with the Afghan authorities last year.

In Pakistan, the ICRC will maintain the medical infrastructure it has set up along the border, including its two hospitals in Peshawar and Quetta which were particularly active in 1987.

In 1988, the ICRC will continue to assist displaced people, in collaboration with the Philippine National Red Cross. This activity mainly applies to the island of Mindanao, but the needs of people on Luzon and in the Visayas, affected by incidents linked to the insurrection, will also be closely monitored. Visits to people detained for reasons related to the insurrection will continue throughout the 12 regions of the country. In the meantime, the vast campaign to disseminate knowledge of international humanitarian law and the principles of the Red Cross will continue to be developed.

The Philippines

Kampuchea/Thailand

The main activities of the ICRC in Thailand are to provide protection and material assistance for some 270,000 displaced people living in camps along the Thai/Kampuchean border. Efforts to increase security in the camps will be pursued in 1988. In the medical field, the ICRC will maintain the three surgical teams at Khao-I-Dang hospital, which covers the needs of the entire population along the frontier. The Central Tracing Agency will also continue to offer its services to the population of the camps.

In Kampuchea, one of the priorities is to reinforce the country's medical infrastructure. The ICRC will go on providing medical supplies to hospitals treating war victims. Logistic support for medical and surgical teams provided by various National Red Cross Societies will also be maintained this year.

The ICRC is appealing for a total budget of SFr. 360,242,500 to cover the cost of special emergency actions. The ICRC is appealing for SFr. 262,280,800 in cash.
IRAN/IRAQ: THE ICRC REACTS

Following a new and tragic escalation in the conflict between Iran and Iraq in March with the use of chemical weapons, the ICRC publicly condemned this cruel practice which led to the terrible suffering and death of a large number of civilians.

The statement, issued at the end of the month, reminded the two belligerents that the use of chemical weapons, whether against civilians or military personnel, was strictly forbidden by international law and to be condemned at all times. The ICRC also declared its readiness to provide emergency assistance for the victims of such attacks.

The ICRC had already approached the two parties and issued a public appeal at the beginning of March, in response to the dramatic escalation of attacks on civilian targets, asking for indiscriminate bombings to cease. Both sides were urged to respect the fundamental rules on the protection of the civilian population during hostilities, contained in the laws of war.

It was stressed that the parties to the conflict were "directly responsible for the ever more cruel suffering being inflicted on civilians in this breach of the most fundamental precepts of humanity" and that all necessary measures should be taken to spare civilians from any further attacks.

The ICRC has condemned attacks on the civilian population within the context of the armed conflict between Iran and Iraq on several occasions in the past, in particular in its solemn appeal of February 1987.

Angola: relief operation resumed

In the central Planalto province of Huambo, in Angola, the ICRC opened three feeding centres for children in February and March. The centres, two of which are in the provincial capital, Huambo, and the third further north in Bailundo, catered for over 200 children each. Food distributions started at the beginning of March and over 15,000 people received food rations during the first two weeks of the month.

ICRC flights over the Planalto region, covering the provinces of Huambo, Bié and Benguela, were able to resume on 22 February. They had been suspended in October last year when an ICRC plane crashed. In the meantime, ICRC delegates had been unable to leave the provincial capitals to visit outlying villages, due to the lack of security.

By the end of February, after repeated contacts with all sides involved in the fighting, the ICRC had ensured sufficient security guarantees for its flights over the provinces to relaunch its relief operation for civilian victims of the fighting.

However, the difficult period between two harvests, which began last December, had already made itself felt. The worst affected areas are in the province of Huambo. The latest surveys amongst the displaced population have situated the average level of severe malnutrition at 15%, with some places around the provincial capital attaining 37%. These are the most serious levels of malnutrition that the ICRC has had to face on the Planalto.

The relief operation is being stepped up rapidly in order to cover emergency needs and prevent the situation from deteriorating further. Forecasts for the next harvests vary from one place to another, but in some areas, where food reserves are particularly low, people have already started to eat their unripe crops. Relief supplies also need to arrive urgently to avoid putting local seed production in jeopardy.

Nigeria commemorates 125th anniversary of International Red Cross

A series of commemorative stamps to mark the 125th anniversary of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement were launched, in February, at a special ceremony in the Nigerian capital, Lagos.

The ceremony, which was organized by the Nigerian Red Cross Society (NCRS) and the ICRC, took place in the presence of the President of Nigeria, General Babangida, the commanders of the Nigerian Army, Navy and Air Force, several ministers and ambassadors.

It was opened by the President of the NCRS who described the history and activities of the Society, while the ICRC regional delegate presented the history of the Movement and of international humanitarian law.

The stamps were officially launched by President Babangida. During his speech, the Nigerian President notably commended the National Society for its humanitarian role in national affairs. He also expressed the government's support for the ICRC's efforts to provide humanitarian services to the needy.

This was one of a series of events to commemorate the Movement's 125th anniversary. Launched in November last year, the campaign also enables National Societies to make their activities better known in their respective countries and the Movement to promote its ideals and objectives.

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Lebanon: ICRC appeals to combatants

The ICRC’s delegation in the Lebanese capital, Beirut, issued an urgent appeal to all combatants and their leaders in April, calling on them to respect the basic rules of international humanitarian law and the protective emblem of the Red Cross.

The public statement was made after a series of acts, in flagrant violation of the laws of war and the neutral status of the Red Cross, had been committed amidst the renewed violence that flared in southern Lebanon at the beginning of the month.

A number of combatants captured during the fighting had subsequently been killed, in violation of the basic rules of international humanitarian law which states that people taking no active part in hostilities, including members of armed forces who have been taken prisoner, should be treated humanely at all times.

As a convoy of Lebanese Red Cross (LRC) ambulances, escorted by the ICRC, transported three wounded towards a Beirut hospital, it had been stopped and the wounded inside the vehicles had been shot dead by the assailants. In another incident, an LRC first-aid worker had been wounded at a southern checkpoint. Attempts had also been made to use Red Cross vehicles for non-humanitarian purposes.

It was within this context that the ICRC spoke out against this “total disregard for the most elementary respect of human dignity and for the purely humanitarian mission of the Red Cross”. It condemned these grave violations of humanitarian law and appealed for the Red Cross emblem to be respected in order to enable its representatives and medical staff to carry out their work.

Over the last three years a number of Red Cross personnel and members of voluntary organisations have been killed or injured during attempts to evacuate the wounded, while others have been kidnapped. Red Cross vehicles have also been destroyed, shot at or stolen. The ICRC has thus issued a number of public appeals in the past in an attempt to ensure respect for Red Cross neutrality.

President of ICRC visits Cuba

ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga paid an official visit to Cuba in mid-April at the invitation of the Cuban government.

President Sommaruga was able to discuss a number of international humanitarian issues during a two-hour meeting with the Cuban leader, Fidel Castro. He had similar talks with several members of the State Council and government, and met with the President, Secretary General and staff of the Cuban Red Cross.

At a news conference held in Havana at the end of his three-day visit, Mr. Sommaruga announced that the ICRC had for the first time received permission to visit people detained for reasons of state security in Cuban prisons according to standard ICRC procedures.

He also stated that Cuba had agreed to become party to Protocol II additional to the Geneva Conventions which covers the protection of victims of non-international armed conflicts. Cuba became party to Protocol I, relating to the protection of victims of international armed conflicts, in 1982.

Government officials, and particularly the Cuban President, all expressed their gratitude for the ICRC’s visits to two Cuban pilots captured in Angola earlier in the year, and for its assistance over the past 10 years to a Cuban soldier held in Somalia.

The dissemination of international humanitarian law in Cuba was also discussed.

News in brief

The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and the State of Qatar acceded to Protocol I additional to the Geneva Conventions on 9 March and 5 April respectively, with effect after a period of six months.
Ethiopia: ICRC forced to leave Tigray and Eritrea

The situation facing millions of drought and conflict victims in northern Ethiopia worsened dramatically at the beginning of April, as a number of relief organisations, including the ICRC, received an order from the Ethiopian government to leave the provinces of Eritrea and Tigray.

The international relief effort, launched last year, had managed to feed hundreds of thousands of people every month in an attempt to stave off famine in the two provinces. Approximately one-third of the operation was covered by the ICRC which planned to reach one million people per month by June.

However, heavy fighting brought relief operations to a virtual standstill in March. Food distributions continued normally only in the province of Gondar, where the ICRC had reached over 100,000 people by the end of the month. As opposition forces made important advances in Eritrea and Tigray, the Ethiopian authorities announced a general mobilisation, and then ordered foreign relief workers to leave the two provinces “for their own security” in early April.

The order to withdraw came at a time when the needs of the civilian population were greater than ever. Nevertheless, by mid-April all ICRC delegates in Eritrea and Tigray had been recalled to Addis Ababa, together with the transport planes used by the ICRC to airlift food to the victims.

At the time of going to press, negotiations with government officials and the Ethiopian Red Cross Society were continuing in the hope that the ICRC would be able to return to Eritrea and Tigray in the near future.

Iran/Iraq: emergency aid for conflict victims

The ICRC handed over a first batch of urgently needed medical and material supplies to the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) in mid-April, to help it cope with the growing number of civilian victims of the conflict.

Since the end of February, the civilian population in Iran and Iraq has once again become the target of military attacks in clear violation of international humanitarian law and culminating in the use of prohibited chemical weapons. The ICRC consequently offered to help their respective Red Crescent Societies to assess the humanitarian needs among the civilian victims, and to provide medical and material assistance wherever the need may arise.

Following a request for support from the Iranian Red Crescent Society, the ICRC sent a team of four delegates, including a doctor, to evaluate the extent and nature of needs among the civilians displaced or otherwise affected by the conflict. The team visited a number of areas, including the Haiabja region occupied by Iran and Bakhtaran province in Iran. The survey revealed urgent needs for medical and material assistance.

The ICRC therefore launched a special and urgent appeal on 8 April to other National Societies for donations in cash or in kind. Supplies needed included a variety of medicines, 5'000 tents, 50'000 blankets and a number of other items with a total value of Sfr. 3,280,000.

Just one week later, a plane chartered by the ICRC flew from Frankfurt to Tehran with the most urgently needed supplies on board, which were handed over to the IRCS.

In the meantime, a second team of ICRC delegates had completed a comprehensive survey of the displaced population in seven camps and a number of schools in Bakhtaran province and Iranian Kurdistan. There were found to be over 45,000 people who had been evacuated for security reasons or who had sought shelter in fear of further attacks.

The ICRC declared its willingness to issue a complementary appeal to cover any further needs, should the conclusions of this latest survey prove it necessary, in order to ensure protection and material assistance for these civilians protected by the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949.

One young villager among many in Tigray and Eritrea who, because of the conflict in the north, is receiving no more food from the ICRC.
El Salvador: more food distributed after crop failure

As a result of poor harvests in the autumn of 1987 in El Salvador, the ICRC carried out ad hoc distributions of beans and oil in areas affected by the conflict during March and April, despite food distributions having been phased out at the end of last year.

Food distributions had been an integral part of the ICRC's activities in El Salvador since 1980. By 1986, over 100,000 people were receiving food rations on a monthly basis. However, a new programme was launched at the beginning of 1987, under which over 12,000 families were provided with seeds, fertilizer and insecticide to enable them to regain a degree of self-sufficiency.

The programme was carried out in two stages which coincided with the two planting seasons in El Salvador. Beneficiaries received maize seeds between February and April, and bean, sorghum and sesame seeds between June and August. By September, results showed that the maize harvest had been a success and distributions of corn as food were brought to a halt. By the end of the year, the ICRC had stopped all food assistance.

However, the habitual end-of-year rains did not come. The earth remained dry in September and October, resulting in poor harvests from the seeds planted during the second half of the year. While this did not alter ICRC plans to discontinue regular food distributions, it became clear by February that a number of people would need supplementary food to compensate for some of the crop failure.

One-off distributions of beans and oil therefore began in March for beneficiaries of both the food and agricultural programmes of 1987. By the end of March, over 30,000 people had received supplementary rations and distributions came to an end in April.

In the meantime, preparations were made for the 1988 edition of the agricultural programme for a new set of beneficiaries. Surveys were carried out in a number of areas affected by the conflict and initial distributions of maize seed, fertilizer and insecticide began at the end of April for an estimated 1,200 families.

It is hoped that the ICRC will also be able to phase out this programme in the medium-term, once farmers in areas affected by the conflict are again self-sufficient enough to produce what they need in terms of food crops.

Uganda: the ICRC returns to the north

The ICRC received authorization from the Ugandan authorities to return to the conflict-stricken north of the country at the beginning of March, having suspended its relief operation in June last year for security reasons.

A team of delegates subsequently visited the northern towns of Soroti, Lira, Gulu and Kitgum during March and April, in order to assess present security conditions, to carry out preliminary surveys of needs among the civilian population and to re-establish contacts with the local civil and military authorities.

Security conditions remained tense in most of the area and were exacerbated in rural districts by attacks from cattle raiders who often did not spare the villagers or their dwellings. The initial surveys revealed that there were tens of thousands of displaced people gathered around the towns. Soroti, for example, has seen its population of some 30,000 citizens almost doubled by the arrival of people from the countryside in search of greater security.

At mid-April, the ICRC operation moved into its second stage when another team, including medical staff, left to carry out more detailed evaluations in the towns and rural areas. An assistance programme to provide emergency medical and material supplies for over 70,000 displaced persons was envisaged by the ICRC delegation.

The ICRC started its relief operation in Uganda in 1979 with the provision of supplies to displaced persons and support for the local medical infrastructure. By the end of 1986, it was providing assistance for over 100,000 people.

The ICRC continues to visit some 5,000 people detained in relation to the conflict. Such visits have continued uninterrupted in Uganda since they began in 1979.
Occupied territories: ICRC actions and reactions

As the unrest that has swept the territories occupied by Israel entered its fifth month in April, 16 more expulsions were carried out by the Israeli authorities. The ICRC once again objected to the use of such a measure, which is in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

It also protested at the destruction by Israeli forces of over 30 houses belonging to residents of the occupied territories which were carried out between the end of February and mid-April. The Geneva Conventions clearly prohibit such wilful damage to personal property. In one village over thirteen houses had been destroyed. ICRC delegates provided tents for over 400 people who had been made homeless after their houses had been dynamited.

The ICRC handed over four ambulances to the local branch of the Red Crescent Society on the West Bank in April. In view of the present situation, it has decided to provide ten more ambulances to ensure two per district covered by the Society. A three-week course to train local branch personnel as ambulance drivers, financed by the ICRC, was thus started with 24 participants, and another will follow to reach a target of 50 trained drivers.

More delegates were sent out to the occupied territories during March and April to enable the delegation to step up its activities. New arrivals included a delegate to set up a Central Tracing Agency network in Israel and the occupied territories. This will create a structure through which the ICRC will be able to inform families when relatives are arrested or detained, provide better protection for detainees and issue detention certificates.

By mid-April, the ICRC had visited over 5,000 people detained in connection with the recent disturbances and held in eight military detention centres which have been set up specially to accommodate them. The most recently created centre, in the Negev desert, already held over 2,000 detainees. Visits were carried out on a regular basis by teams of ICRC delegates to check on the treatment of the detainees, the conditions of detention and to ensure that their families could visit them.

The ICRC started providing assistance to detainees held in the centres by distributing recreational items and educational materials in March. In addition, it paid travel costs for families to visit their relatives twice a month. As clashes between Palestinians and Israeli forces continued, the ICRC reinforced its presence in the camps and villages of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. In the meantime, medical staff went on visiting hospitals, clinics and dispensaries to assess medical requirements and see people wounded during the events.

Kampuchea: three families reunited

Three Kampuchean women, who had been separated from their families for as long as eighteen years, were flown to France to be reunited with their children at the end of March.

The children had made a request to the French Red Cross (FRC) in 1984 and at the beginning of 1985 for their mothers to be able to join them. The ICRC, in collaboration with the FRC, then had set to work to obtain the necessary authorization from the Kampuchean authorities. A positive response was finally received in January 1988.

An ICRC delegate accompanied the three women to Ho Chi Minh City airport, where he saw them onto a plane bound for Paris. On arrival, they were welcomed by representatives of the FRC. A highly emotional moment followed as the three families were once again united after long years of separation.

The ICRC has organized a total of 13 family reunions between Kampuchean families since it became active in the country in 1979. For the time being, only families separated during the pre-1979 period are allowed to be reunited and on condition that the departing family member has a visa to enter the host country.

Fifteen cases remain pending at the ICRC's Central Tracing Agency, which handles all such operations, and it is hoped that at least some of these will be able to join their families in the not too distant future.

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Commemorative school with Red Cross centre opens in Togo

The "Marc Blaser School" and a local branch of the National Red Cross Society, situated in its grounds, were officially opened in Togo at the beginning of April, just one year after the cornerstone was placed at a special ceremony to mark the start of construction work.

The school is named after an ICRC delegate who died in December 1985 while working for the ICRC in Angola. His parents subsequently decided to have a school built in memory of their son and chose a small village in Togo as the site for their project.

As the school was so clearly linked to the ideals of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the ICRC regional delegation and the Togolese Red Cross (TRC) decided to open a local Red Cross branch on the school premises. ICRC delegates participated in the creation of the Red Cross centre and the training of a group of first-aid workers.

Mr. and Mrs. Blaser took part in the opening ceremony which was also attended by representatives of the local authorities, the President of the TRC and a large gathering of local people. The main ceremony was followed by a visit to an exhibition on the Red Cross, its ideals and activities, which had been prepared for the event in the new centre.
The ICRC in Iran and Iraq

The ICRC launched a fresh appeal to the international donor community in May, for urgently needed medical and relief supplies for civilians affected by the conflict, including large numbers of displaced Iraqi nationals, who have been accommodated in camps organized by the Iranian authorities.

This complementary appeal was made in addition to that issued in April for displaced civilians, particularly those affected by chemical bombings. In view of the presence of Iraqi civilians on Iranian or Iranian occupied territory, both appeals were issued in accordance with the ICRC’s mandate under the Fourth Geneva Convention.

The new appeal followed the results of a survey carried out by ICRC delegates in camps in Bakhtaran province and Iranian Kurdistan where over 45,000 displaced people have been accommodated.

Although considerable means have been employed by the Iranian authorities to set up the camps and provide basic necessities in a short space of time, the size of the operation has made it difficult for them to cope with all the needs. The ICRC requested donors to provide 100,000 blankets, 2,500 tents, 10,000 kitchen sets, as well as medical supplies.

ICRC delegates will visit the camps on a regular basis in order to monitor any new needs and will make every effort to organize the reunion of families who were separated during evacuation.

Visits to Iraqi prisoners of war (POWs) interned in Iran had not yet resumed in May. The ICRC completed a series of visits, in December 1987, to Iraqi POWs in 15 camps and six hospitals, and has since been negotiating with the Iranian authorities in the hope that it will be able to obtain access to all Iraqi POWs, in accordance with its mandate under the Geneva Conventions.

In Iraq, ICRC delegates completed a series of visits to 10 camps for Iranian POWs early in May. This was the second series to be carried out since the beginning of the year. Over 20 young prisoners were registered for the first time during these visits.

Evacuation of war wounded

The ICRC organized the evacuation of 29 wounded and disabled Salvadoran guerrillas from El Salvador in early May, in accordance with its role as a neutral intermediary. They were all flown to Cuba on board a plane chartered by the institution.

The operation went according to plan thanks to the collaboration of the civil and military authorities, the opposition FMLN, the Church and the Salvadoran Red Cross Society. In 1987, a total of 157 wounded guerrillas were evacuated to Cuba under similar conditions.

Uganda: 94 children released

The Ugandan authorities released 94 children aged under 14 at the end of April, from the Luzira complex of prisons in Kampala where they were detained for reasons related to the conflict.

ICRC delegates had visited these young prisoners on a regular basis and requested their release on humanitarian grounds.

During the visits, the ICRC was able to get the children separated from the adult detainees and ensure that they received food rations that took their physical growth into account.

At the moment of their release, the ICRC distributed clothes and blankets to the children.
Emergency assistance in Lebanon

Military activities intensified dramatically during the month of May in Lebanon. The ICRC, together with the Lebanese Red Cross, was particularly active in providing assistance to the victims in and around Beirut, and to the north of the “security zone” in the south of the country.

In the midst of the violent clashes that opposed fighters of the Amal movement and Hizbollah militia men in the southern suburbs of Beirut, the number of wounded accumulated rapidly. Hospitals in the area, which had to cope with over 100 wounded a day, were soon faced with urgent needs for provisions of blood and medical supplies.

ICRC delegates, taking advantage of each lull in the fighting, carried out surveys of the medical infrastructure in the southern suburbs and distributed medicines and medical material worth 72,000 Sfr. to hospitals and dispensaries in the area. In addition, two hundred units of blood, donated by the Swiss Red Cross, were flown out to Lebanon to replenish the depleted blood banks.

Red Cross medical teams were on alert 24 hours a day to provide medical supplies wherever they were needed and to help those who visited their offices in search of assistance.

A cease-fire agreement finally provided the opportunity to evacuate some of the wounded before fighting resumed.

The ICRC and the Lebanese Red Cross were able to transport five wounded combatants to nearby hospitals on 11 May.

The fighting in southern Beirut led to a mass exodus of the civilian residents to safer regions. The ICRC provided the Lebanese Red Cross with some 290 family parcels and over 1,000 blankets for people who had moved to quieter areas of the town.

Another 800 family parcels were handed over to the High Shi'ite Council and to the Islamic Health Committee which carry out social welfare activities for the community in general. This material was distributed in the southern suburbs themselves to civilians, irrespective of their political or religious affiliations, who had been unable to flee the fighting.

In mid-May, inter-Palestinian clashes broke out again in the camps of Chatila and Borj-el-Brajneh resulting in a number of wounded. ICRC delegates were able to enter the camps and evacuate the wounded to hospitals for treatment. A number of dispensaries inside the camps were also provided with medical material.

In southern Lebanon, the ICRC provided medical supplies to several villages affected by the military operation carried out by the Israeli Defence Forces and the “South Lebanon Army” earlier in May. It was the only organization allowed to enter the villages of Ain Ata and Mimes during the Israeli presence, while delegates arrived at the village of Machgara within one-and-a-half hours of bombardments taking place.

Once the operation was over, the bodies of nine militiamen killed at Maidoun were handed over to the ICRC by the “South Lebanon Army”. Two Lebanese Red Cross convoys, escorted by the ICRC, transported the bodies back to their families in Machgara and Baalbek.

A message via the media

The ICRC organized a nation-wide media campaign on the rules of behaviour for combatants, from 6 to 20 April, in collaboration with the Lebanese Ministry of Information and the heads of information of various political parties in Lebanon.

The ICRC has been active in Lebanon for over 20 years working relentlessly, in collaboration with the Lebanese Red Cross, to alleviate the suffering of the victims of conflict. The past two years, in particular, have witnessed a certain deterioration in the attitudes and behaviour of various armed groups in the country as regards the basic respect due to the Red Cross and its emblem.

The information campaign, presenting the history and principles of the International Movement of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, was largely broadcast by radio and television stations, and well covered by national and local newspapers. Nine hundred posters were also distributed to hospitals and dispensaries throughout the country, and for use by the Ministry of Information.

A broad public was thus reached with a simple reminder of the necessity to respect the basic humanitarian rules that govern the Movement’s work and the emblem which is a sign of the neutral and impartial assistance it offers.
The development of an operation

In Afghanistan, the ICRC received authorization in May to extend its activities into the provinces. This is the first time that the institution has been given the opportunity of working outside the capital.

In Kabul, where the ICRC has been at work since January 1987, its orthopaedic rehabilitation centre, run in collaboration with the Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS), was officially opened at the beginning of May. This followed months of careful preparation, including training local personnel. The centre registered over 350 patients in March, while hundreds of others were put on a waiting list. The production of artificial limbs started in April and the first patients were fitted with new limbs soon afterwards.

The conflict in Afghanistan has led to a large number of people, often the victims of mines, having limbs amputated. The orthopaedic programme in Kabul represents the first stage of an activity that the ICRC hopes to extend to the provinces in the coming months.

A large proportion of the civilian population has been displaced within the country as a result of the conflict. Many have fled to the capital where the medical infrastructure has gradually become overburdened. The first distribution of medical supplies, based on detailed surveys by ICRC medical personnel, was made to three hospitals in Kabul in April and distributions will continue on an ad hoc basis according to needs.

The ICRC also expanded its assistance programme to seven ARCS dispensaries. A third nurse arrived in Kabul to reinforce the team carrying out a training programme for the medical staff in the dispensaries, and medicines and medical materials were provided.

Construction work on the ICRC surgical hospital in Kabul has now begun. The hospital will be completed in several stages, and should initially provide bed space for up to 45 patients. In accordance with the ICRC's principles of neutrality and impartiality it will be open to all Afghan war wounded, and patients should be admitted as early as July.

ICRC delegates continue to visit prisoners detained in relation to the conflict at the principal Afghan prison, Pul-I-Charki. The visits, which began in March, are carried out according to ICRC standard procedures, including private interviews with the detainees. At the same time, delegates based in Pakistan visited prisoners held by Afghan opposition movements near the border.

Assistance to Afghan conflict victims is also provided in Pakistan, where the ICRC has been present since 1981. Its surgical hospitals in Peshawar and Quetta have treated over 31,000 wounded Afghans and the figure continues to rise. In April, the number of wounded admitted to the two hospitals was the highest for 12 months, as fighting raged near the border. The ICRC has seven first-aid posts along the frontier, staffed by Pakistani Red Crescent personnel, where initial medical assistance is given to the wounded arriving from Afghanistan. An additional first-aid post is expected to be opened in the near future.

Courses to disseminate basic humanitarian principles and provide training in first aid continued in May at the ICRC delegations in Peshawar and Quetta, and at the border posts. These courses have so far reached more than 17,000 Afghan refugees in Pakistan.

The most important task remains to be accomplished in the conflict-torn provinces of Afghanistan, where the ICRC will have the opportunity of providing assistance to the people who have been the most severely affected by over eight years of conflict.
As is the custom each year, the International Movement of the Red Cross and Red Crescent celebrated the birthday of Henry Dunant, on 8 May, as World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day.

A joint message was issued from Geneva by the ICRC and the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to mark the occasion. It was an important reminder that one man's horror and consequent reaction to the plight of the wounded left to suffer and die on a battlefield in Solferino in 1859, had given birth to the internationally recognized Geneva Conventions — by which governments pledge themselves to respect and protect victims of armed conflicts — and a worldwide neutral and impartial Movement committed to the protection of human dignity and the alleviation of human suffering.

National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies world-wide organized local and national events in his memory. As a result of Dunant's suggestion that "relief societies for the wounded" should be formed in various European countries, there are today 146 National Societies scattered around the globe.

In the midst of a world which carries more than its share of suffering and cruelty, the Movement has grown to a membership estimated at over 250 million people. Above and beyond their immense diversity, these men and women are united by their commitment to helping people in need.

World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day was also the occasion to evoke the Movement's 125th anniversary which is being commemorated this year under the slogan "125 Years at Work ... and still developing". The notion of development applies to both the Movement itself and the activities it carries out. While emergency assistance to victims of conflicts and natural disasters remains its principal concern, the Movement has moved towards programmes involving the participation of local populations and which enable a return to self-sufficiency. Only in this way can the Movement's long-term goals be achieved.

Jacques Moreillon, present Director General of the ICRC, announced, in May, that he would leave the institution on 31 October to take up the post of Secretary General of the World Organization of the Scout Movement.

Mr. Moreillon, who holds a Master's degree in law and a Ph.D. in political sciences, began his association with the ICRC 25 years ago when he wrote a thesis on "The ICRC and political detainees". He has since carried out more than 200 missions in some 70 countries on behalf of the institution. He served as a delegate in India and Vietnam, Head of Delegation in Syria and Israel, Regional Delegate in South America and Delegate General for Africa. He later held the post of Director of the Principles and Law Department where he was a great architect of doctrine for the ICRC and the International Movement of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

Jacques Moreillon considers the choice of the scouts as the next step in his career, as the natural continuation of his humanitarian ideals. A scout himself in his youth, he qualified the experience as the "backbone" of his adolescence, in particular because it provides a good schooling for the character. In the face of an increasingly chaotic world, he sees a need to "invest in creating people who will be capable of making the right decisions in complicated situations."

The ICRC expressed its profound gratitude for the devotion and talent with which Mr. Moreillon has served the Red Cross cause for the last 25 years. It is a cause that he will no doubt continue to serve; at least indirectly. "In choosing the scouts, I am abandoning nothing of my Red Cross ideal", he stated. "I will have dedicated 25 years of my life to trying to heal the wounds of conflict victims; perhaps by preparing the leaders of tomorrow, I will contribute to the eradication of those conflicts and the wounds they create."

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), together with the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the recognized National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, is one of the three components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. An independent humanitarian institution, the ICRC is the founding body of the Red Cross. As a neutral intermediary in case of armed conflicts or disturbances, it endeavours on its own initiative or on the basis of the Geneva Conventions to protect and assist the victims of international and civil wars and of internal troubles and tensions, thereby contributing to peace in the world.
Afghanistan: ICRC issues revised appeal for funds

In view of the rapid evolution of the Afghan conflict since the beginning of the year, the ICRC issued a revised Emergency Appeal in June for funds to cover increased activities on behalf of Afghan conflict victims and the costs of a special contingency plan.

The initial Appeal, issued in March for some 20 million Swiss francs, thus rose to over 57 million Swiss francs.

Proximity talks between Afghanistan and Pakistan led to the signing of an agreement in Geneva in April. The Soviet troops stationed in Afghanistan began to withdraw in May, while some three million Afghan refugees in Pakistan and two million more in Iran began to consider returning home to a country devastated by over eight years of conflict.

Within the context of this changed, but uncertain, situation, the ICRC has budgeted for the first six months of a highly flexible contingency plan. Its implementation will depend on the development of the military situation in Afghanistan.

The plan mainly concentrates on medical assistance for the victims of the fighting nationwide. Since the ICRC returned to Afghanistan in January 1987, its activities have been limited to the capital, Kabul. However, thousands of displaced people are also in need of assistance in the rest of the country. The medical infrastructure has been severely damaged and antipersonnel mines represent a serious danger for everyone.

It also aims to develop activities to protect and assist all those detained by parties to the conflict and to set up a tracing network to exchange Red Cross messages, inform families when relatives have been killed in the fighting and handle tracing requests from people with no news from a member or members of their families.

Finally, a framework is included for providing relief supplies for an initial six-month period to 100,000 displaced people and, if no other organization can help them, to 20,000 returning refugees.

Whether the war continues or military operations slow down, the ICRC, coordinating its programmes with other non-governmental organizations working on behalf of the victims, is prepared to adapt to the situation in the interests of the large numbers of people affected by the conflict.

In the meantime, fighting has intensified, particularly along the Pakistani border, leading to greater medical needs. The eventual return of refugees must already be monitored and prepared. The ICRC is therefore increasing its presence and activities in the border area and a minor part of the budget increase is to enable it to continue this expansion according to needs.

An ICRC delegate talks to detainees during a visit to Atlit prison in Israel. Atlit is one of the seven military detention centres where most of those arrested during the recent unrest in the occupied territories are being held. For a report on a visit to Quezziot, the military detention centre located in the Negev desert, see page 2.

The ICRC visits Cuban jails

A team of ICRC delegates ended a first series of visits to security prisoners in Cuban jails in June. This is the first time that the institution, in accordance with its standard procedures, has had access to such prisoners in Cuba.

The visits followed an agreement ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga reached with Cuban President Fidel Castro during his visit to Havana in April. Following further negotiations, the ICRC obtained the necessary guarantees that it would be able to interview the prisoners without witnesses, register the names of the prisoners seen, have access to the detention centres where they are normally held and repeat the visits in the future.

The team, led by the head of the ICRC's regional delegation in Costa Rica, visited 395 security prisoners in 12 detention centres scattered throughout the country. According to ICRC practice, confidential reports will be presented to the Cuban authorities.

Protection and assistance for victims of the unrest in the occupied territories

Photo: ICRC/Tochik / IRB 17/111
THE ICRC MAKING THE ROUNDS

A reporting team from ICRC headquarters in Geneva spent from 8 to 17 June with the ICRC’s delegation in Jerusalem. Michèle Jaquery (texts) and Thierry Gassmann (photographs) were able to follow some of the work done on behalf of the victims of the unrest in the occupied territories.

Barbed wire and sand: Queziot

Leaving Gaza and Jerusalem early in the morning of 14 June and heading south through the Negev desert, three ICRC vehicles pass through checkpoints and enter Queziot. The sign at the gate states clearly that this is a closed military area and no photographing is allowed. Meeting with the camp commander, the ICRC visiting team is informed that the total number of detainees now stands at 2,722.

Queziot is one of seven detention centres under the responsibility of the Israeli army. Most of the people arrested since the beginning of the intifada (uprising) in the occupied territories are detained in these centres, and ICRC delegates have been authorized to visit all of them. The total number of detainees in the centres had reached nearly 5,200 in June. Regular visits also continue to some 4,500 detainees under the responsibility of the prison service or under interrogation.

Detainees live under tents in many of the military detention centres, tents lined up to form compounds surrounded by fences and barbed wire entanglements. The ICRC has given special attention to Queziot because of its size and location. In this desert of scrub vegetation and sand that shifts over a rocky bed, far from any population centre, it is clear, for example, that delegates must make sure the water supply is adequate. The detainees here are further isolated by the boycott of family visits declared for this centre. For weeks, the ICRC delegation had been negotiating with the authorities, seeking ways to help detainees re-establish contact with their families.

The breakthrough came and, on 14 June, the ICRC vehicles that drove into Queziot were packed with newspapers, books, recreational games and boxes of letters.

Although of utmost importance to the detainees, providing this assistance was not, in fact, the main purpose of the visit. On 31 May, the entire ICRC delegation had conducted a census of all military detention centres, and master lists were then drawn up on the tracing office computers in Jerusalem. Weekly registration visits to each detention centre should keep these lists up to date so that families coming into ICRC local offices can be told where their sons, brothers or fathers are being held. These weekly “short” visits have been added to the schedule of ongoing “normal” visits that include detailed evaluations of camp conditions and interviews without witness.

Keeping track of who is where

The visiting ICRC team had to cover all three camps at Queziot that day, registering new arrivals, noting those transferred from other places of detention, talking to detainees about conditions in general and taking down any urgent requests. The delegates knew that this “short” visit would take the whole day, since there are 2,144 detainees (mostly from the West Bank) in camps A and B, and 578 more (from the Gaza Strip) in camp C.

The team split up, with each delegate responsible for a certain number of compounds. Methods are always adapted to the numbers involved and the organization of the compound: delegates sometimes proceed tent by tent, but more often they ask the detainee who agrees to serve as a translator to call all newcomers to one tent to fill out the ICRC registration cards prepared in English and in Arabic. Those who already filled out a card during the census or in one of the follow-up visits must not fill out another one: the delegate simply notes the details of the transfer in each case.

Keeping the lists up to date means taking the time to check on all releases and transfers. The numbers involved and the rapid turnover make the job seem awesome, but, as Paul Grossrieder, ICRC head of delegation for Israel and the occupied territories, said recently, “Knowing exactly where people are and being able to tell their families is, after all, the cornerstone of protection. It is one of the most important tasks of the ICRC.”

An ICRC nurse and medical field officer speak to a patient at Makassed hospital, a 200-bed private facility in East Jerusalem. ICRC nurses and field delegates regularly visit hospitals and clinics throughout the occupied territories, specifically asking to see new patients admitted with wounds received in incidents related to the intifada. In some cases, with the agreement of the patient, a report will be made on the incident to the authorities.

The two ICRC nurses currently working in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip also evaluate medical care in the territories: a complete survey of medical facilities was conducted in February and another evaluation was under way in June, taking villages one by one, to check on general health conditions and on ambulance or other services available to evacuate patients when needed.
The ICRC’s Central Tracing Agency (CTA) held the first workshop for the tracing services of Asian and Pacific National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies at the beginning of June.

The seminar, which took place in Singapore in collaboration with the Singapore Red Cross Society, brought together the representatives of 24 National Societies to discuss ways to be better prepared to help people who have been separated from their families. They were given the opportunity to become better acquainted with the CTA’s “Guide for National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies”, which provides detailed information on how to run a tracing service, and to discuss other specific themes related to the subject.

For those Societies who already had tracing services, the meeting was also an excellent opportunity to exchange ideas and experiences and, in some cases, to meet regular correspondents face to face for the first time.

The International Red Cross in support of disarmament

The International Movement of the Red Cross and Red Crescent expressed its support for the disarmament cause in June, and called on States to stop the use of weapons which cause cruel and unnecessary suffering.

This was part of a message sent by the Movement to the United Nations General Assembly’s Third Special Session on Disarmament which opened in New York at the beginning of June.

Disarmament as a means of promoting peace coincides with the Movement’s own efforts, on a humanitarian basis, to limit the effects of war. The ICRC, as the guardian of international humanitarian law, and more particularly the Geneva Conventions, has historically played a role in setting limits on the waging of war and protecting its victims. The Movement as a whole has been involved in assisting all those affected by conflict and disseminating humanitarian law and principles. It has always considered these activities as a basic contribution to a peaceful world.

Gustave Moynier, one of the founders of the ICRC, stated, on the subject of the 1864 Geneva Convention: “To tread this path is to take a decisive step” which must “result in the absolute condemnation of war ... Future generations will see warfare gradually disappear. This is dictated by an infallible logic.”

The disarmament debate itself, however, concerns the security of States and is inevitably highly political. The Movement is therefore limited to supporting the end result in order to safeguard its basic Principles of neutrality and impartiality.

However, war remains a reality and the distinction between combatants and non-combatants, which is of major concern to the ICRC, has become increasingly difficult to apply in view of the development of more and more devastating methods of warfare. The Movement has made every effort to prevent the use of weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, and to forbid or restrict the use of conventional weapons having particularly cruel or indiscriminate effects, such as anti-personnel mines and certain projectiles.

It was with this in mind that part of Protocol I of 1977, additional to the Geneva Conventions, contains a clear reminder that methods of warfare are not unlimited and that the use of weapons which cause superfluous injury is prohibited. In addition, it forbids the use of weapons that severely damage the natural environment.

An ICRC doctor explained that “for us, as doctors, superfluous injuries are, for example, open fractures, which are terribly infected, and which, instead of being simple, have shattered the bone leaving splinters inside the whole leg. It only needs one bullet to create such an injury. Often the only way to save a life is to amputate. This means that many people are handicapped for life. They are often very young and not combatants at all.”

The ICRC, supported by the rest of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, has often reminded governments of their humanitarian responsibilities. It has publicly spoken out against the use of particularly devastating weapons on several occasions in the past. As early as 1918, it appealed to the belligerents involved in the First World War not to use poisonous gases. As recently as March this year, it condemned the use of chemical weapons which is expressly prohibited in international law, in the war between Iran and Iraq.

While unable to be involved in the detailed discussions on the means of achieving disarmament, the Movement has always and will continue to support this aim and to contribute to reducing the tensions and distrust which accelerate the arms race and increase the risk of conflict.
The ICRC announced in June that it had been forced to bring to an end its relief operation for hundreds of thousands of victims of conflict and drought in northern Ethiopia.

In a public statement, the ICRC stressed that it was “with deep regret, and against its own wishes,” that it had taken this decision.

The announcement came after the Ethiopian government upheld orders for the withdrawal of all ICRC expatriate staff involved in the relief effort in the north. ICRC delegates were ordered out of Eritrea and Tigray in April, and were told to leave Gondar in May. All attempts to negotiate a limited presence in the north of the country, where the needs for assistance have become increasingly urgent, were unsuccessful. It was thus made impossible for the ICRC to continue to assist and protect the victims in accordance with its mandate.

The ICRC relief operation, carried out in collaboration with the Ethiopian Red Cross Society, was launched in November last year. It provided food for over 500,000 beneficiaries in February and had planned to reach one million people by July. However, fighting escalated dramatically during March and, soon after, the Ethiopian authorities ordered the ICRC and other relief organizations to withdraw.

An estimated two million people are threatened with starvation in northern Ethiopia, where they have been caught between the effects of an upsurge in the fighting and the severe drought that struck the area last year.

In the interests of these victims, and in view of the impossibility of continuing its own humanitarian work, the ICRC has sought agreement from its donors for the transfer of the bulk of its foodstocks and logistic means to the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and other non-governmental organizations.

The League, which already has a disaster relief operation for drought victims in non-conflictual areas of the country, made a formal request to the ICRC to benefit from this move. It intends to monitor and support a limited assistance programme in the north, which is to be implemented by the Ethiopian Red Cross Society.

In the meantime, the ICRC is maintaining a presence in Addis Ababa in order to continue its work on behalf of Somali prisoners of war captured almost ten years ago. This aspect of its work, under the Third Geneva Convention, has not been called into question by the Ethiopian authorities.

The ICRC, which is entrusted under the Geneva Conventions and the Statutes of the International Movement of the Red Cross and Red Crescent with the specific mandate of acting as a neutral intermediary in time of international or internal conflict has, despite the present difficulties, repeated the offer of its services to the Ethiopian government. It hopes that a constructive dialogue may be re-established to enable it to resume its independent and neutral mission of assisting and protecting conflict victims.

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Relief operation begins in southern Sudan

The ICRC sent two teams of delegates to southern Sudan in July, to assess the needs of the civilian population affected by almost five years of internal conflict. This move followed the approval of a plan for a relief operation on behalf of the civilian victims in the south by the Sudanese government and the opposition Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) at the end of May.

One ICRC team left the Sudanese capital, Khartoum, for the towns of Wau, Malakal and Juha, while the second team left Lokichokio, in neighbouring Kenya, for Kongor, Pochola and Yirol which are held by the SPLA. Each team was composed of seven specialized delegates.

The towns to be visited are situated in regions severely affected by the conflict; Bahr al-Ghazal, Equatoria and Upper Nile. In addition, hundreds of people are reported to have died of starvation and thousands have converged on the main towns in the hope of finding food and relative security. It is estimated that millions of people may face acute food shortages in southern Sudan by the end of the year.

The two ICRC teams immediately began surveys of the health of the civilian population, the existing food stocks, the conditions of hygiene and water supplies. The whole operation is being carried out under the protection of the Red Cross emblem and without military escort.

The ICRC steps up activities in Somalia

A team of six ICRC delegates and a doctor were sent to Somalia in July, to visit Ethiopian prisoners of war (POWs) and civilian internees who have been detained in Somali camps since the end of the Ogaden conflict in 1978. The visits followed the signing of an agreement in April between Ethiopia and Somalia to normalize relations between the two countries. It included a clause stipulating the repatriation of all POWs and other persons detained in connection with the conflict. The Somali authorities subsequently authorized the ICRC to register all the prisoners in accordance with its standard procedures and expressed their wish for an ICRC presence as a neutral intermediary when the repatriation takes place.

The ICRC also sent another team to Somalia in July, composed of medical staff to advise and assist hospital personnel in the Somali capital, Mogadishu. The medical team included a surgeon, an orthopaedic specialist, an anaesthetist and three nurses, provided by the National Red Cross Societies of Australia, Denmark, the Netherlands, New Zealand and Sweden.

Hospitals were having to cope with an unprecedented influx of wounded in need of war surgery, following the outbreak of serious fighting between government forces and the opposition Somali National Movement (SNM) in the north-west of the country at the end of May.

The most severely wounded with complicated fractures and highly infected injuries began to arrive in Mogadishu at the beginning of June and ICRC delegates carried out regular visits to the hospitals receiving them. Medical supplies and orthopaedic material were airlifted to the capital and distributed to four hospitals there in June and July.

Teams of delegates were also able to visit two towns in the north-west of the country on two occasions. Each time medical material was supplied to the hospitals receiving the wounded.

Philippines: half-year round-up

During the first half of the year, the ICRC stepped up its programme of visits to people detained in connection with the insurgency or one of last year's coup attempts in the Philippines. Delegates visited a total of 660 detainees in the provinces of Luzon, the Visayas and Mindanao.

Assistance was also provided for over 75,000 beneficiaries displaced by the fighting in the three main regions of the country. ICRC delegates, together with members of the Philippines National Red Cross, assisted victims in areas where no Red Cross assistance had been required before and supplementary food rations were distributed for the first time.

Finally, the first seminar on international humanitarian law to be given on a national level by the ICRC in the Philippines, was held at the headquarters of the Philippines armed forces in Manila for 60 officers from all over the country.
All in a day's work: Gaza South

You enter the Israeli-occupied Gaza Strip through barbed wire and miles of asphalt gleaming in the heat, in a wide zigzag through a military checkpoint. Along the streets, sand alternates with black stretches where tyres were burnt. Soldiers lounge in their jeeps, watching through sunglasses, as old peasant farmers shuffle along with their donkeys and wooden carts, and women walk by without a word, draped in black from head to toe.

Bureij camp has been under curfew for four days when ICRC delegate Bertrand Roux and his field officer, Jabal, who are responsible for the ICRC operation in Gaza South, pull up at the gate. The soldiers say it is forbidden to enter, but Bertrand insists that the Red Cross has always been authorized to visit the clinic. After some argument and radio checks, the white car with the red crosses is waved on in.

The camp is shuttered up tight, metal doors closed on every house, soldiers patrolling. According to the 1985 census, 16,000 Palestinians live here, but we drive around empty streets as loudspeakers announce in Arabic a reminder that the curfew is still in effect. Under its pale blue flag, the clinic set up by the United Nations Works and Relief Agency (UNWRA) is open, but few patients are able or willing to come. Electricity has been cut throughout the camp since the curfew began.

After visits to the clinic and to the camp hospital, a 70-bed facility run by UNWRA, we go to pick up an ICRC local employee who has been unable to leave the camp for four days. At the gate, more discussions: the soldiers ask for written authorization, but Bertrand insists that ICRC employees are allowed to go out to work. Finally, they let us through.

Dropping the employee off at the office, we head for the next stop in this day of field work.

Basic shelter

In a nearby village, a young man was arrested and is currently under interrogation. The house he lived in did not belong to him, but it was destroyed anyway, and now his father and mother, brothers and sisters must take shelter under the ICRC tent that we are delivering today.

The destruction of houses is intended to be an exceptional measure, but in this district three houses were destroyed on the same day. In one of these cases, the ICRC agreed to deliver a second tent to a family of ten. Bertrand pulls the package from the car. It will be put up beside the first small, white bell tent which stands beside an immense pile of rubble where their house used to be.

Many, many questions

On our way to the local ICRC office, we are waved to a halt by a young boy, 11 or 12 years old, asking about his brother. "He was arrested six days ago," the boy says. "But still no news. We used to have news in two or three days." The field officer replies: "There used to be few detainees, now there are thousands. Come to our office in another two or three days. Maybe we'll have new lists by then."

Most of the people coming into the ICRC local offices ask about detained relatives. The ICRC and local Red Crescent organizations provide a bus service for families to visit relatives in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Families also ask the local offices for certificates of detention to prove that the breadwinner is detained, so that the family can get help from UNWRA and other organizations.

The last stop today is in another small village where an incident occurred last night. We heard that a woman was taken to hospital, returned home this morning and wants to talk to an ICRC delegate. The field officer fills out an incident report as she relates what happened. He would be providing moral and psychological support to the victims of this conflict even if he only listened. But the written details also form the base upon which the head of delegation will take up the matter with the authorities in Tel Aviv.

Bertrand still has plenty to get through. Cases handed over by the detention delegates to follow up, reports to write, contacts to make to find out what happened elsewhere that day, and so plan tomorrow's schedule... It is all in a day's work, here in Gaza.
Delegation in Pakistan increases activities

The ICRC delegation in Pakistan has been working harder than ever over the past few months on behalf of the victims of the Afghan conflict. The fighting in Afghanistan has escalated, particularly in the southern provinces, leading to considerable pressure on the ICRC's surgical hospital in Quetta which receives Afghan war wounded. At the same time, the delegation has stepped up efforts to visit prisoners detained in relation to the conflict. Dominik Landwehr reports from Pakistan.

Increased fighting

Zabul and Kandahar, in southern Afghanistan, are the two provinces where fighting has been the heaviest for several months now, often rendering the road between Kandahar and Chaman impassable.

Chaman is a small village just inside Pakistan where the ICRC has stationed ambulances and a first-aid post. Of the eight first-aid posts the ICRC has set up in the border area, Chaman has been one of the busiest since the fighting intensified across the frontier. It often takes days for the wounded to reach Pakistan from the Afghan interior, but when they finally arrive at the Chaman post, they receive initial treatment before the most serious cases are transported to the ICRC hospital in Quetta.

Prompt reaction to pressure

The hospital has witnessed an unprecedented influx of Afghan war wounded since May. It treated 145 patients in April, 215 in May and as many as 260 in June. Room had to be found for 160 patients at one time, in a hospital which until recently had a capacity of only 100 beds.

By the end of May it was clear that something had to be done. Extra doctors, nurses and other medical staff were badly needed. Robin Gray, who is from the British Red Cross and in charge of the ICRC's medical activities in Pakistan, remembered that it was a Tuesday when he sent a telex to Geneva requesting additional personnel.

Jon Karlsson, a male nurse from the Icelandic Red Cross, was one of the people contacted. "I got a phone call one Wednesday afternoon at the Reykjavik city hospital where I work, from the Icelandic Red Cross asking me whether I could leave immediately for Quetta", Jon explained. "My boss agreed and the next morning I was already on a plane for Geneva where I was given my instructions and a visa. I arrived in Quetta on the Saturday."

In fact, a total of eight new people, who constituted a third surgical team, as well as extra nursing staff, arrived in Quetta that Saturday, thanks to National Societies, just four days after Robin sent his telex.

Besides new staff, more space for the patients was needed. Robin explained: "There is always one tent set up and ready in Quetta, but we have put up five more, so now the hospital can accommodate up to 200 patients." A new operating theatre was installed within two weeks. The tents and all the equipment needed for surgery came from a field hospital which was donated by the Norwegian Red Cross and is always held ready for use.

The Quetta hospital feels the effects of the increased fighting particularly acutely. Andreas Wigger, the deputy head of the delegation, said that things are somewhat different in Peshawar where the delegation has its headquarters, as well as another surgical hospital, an orthopaedic centre and a paraplegic centre, run in collaboration with the Pakistan Red Crescent Society. "Peshawar is a big city where there are lots of relief organizations at work. There are also other hospitals in Peshawar which treat Afghan war casualties."

The tragic effects of the war

Whether in an ICRC hospital in Quetta or Peshawar, the tragic effects of the war are driven home by numerous cases. Robin Gray confided that he never ceases to be appalled by the amount of suffering he sees. "It is truly terrible to see it day in day out. What affects me most is the fact that so many of our patients are women and children."

(continued overleaf)
A twelve-year-old boy, Said Rahman, is just one example. He was in the first-floor ward of the ICRC hospital in Quetta with thick white bandages covering his head and the places where his hands used to be. He could no longer eat by himself and so his father sat beside him and fed him at mealtimes.

"We are a family of nomads", the old, bearded man began, "and we were in Kalat, in Zabul province. My son was tending sheep in the mountains when he found a mine which blew up in his hands. It took 24 hours to get here to the hospital.”

Said lost both his hands; as a result of his facial injuries he is now completely blind in one eye and can only distinguish between light and dark with the other.

**Protection — another important mandate**

ICRC delegates in Afghanistan began visiting prisoners detained in relation to the conflict at the main prison in Kabul, Pul-I-Charki, in March and have received authorization to visit those held in the provinces. A major effort is also being made by the ICRC delegation in Pakistan to visit the prisoners held by the Afghan resistance movements.

“Our delegates in Peshawar and Quetta meet Afghan resistance commanders and representatives day after day”, Andreas Wigger said, “to explain to them what their responsibilities are towards the prisoners they have captured.” One of the purposes of these talks is to obtain consent for the ICRC to visit all the prisoners they hold.

Andreas admitted that only a small number of those prisoners are able to receive visits from the ICRC at the moment. “This is an extraordinarily difficult task which requires a lot of perseverance”, he added. However, the positive attitude of most of the resistance leaders, who recognize and understand the importance of the ICRC’s role, augurs well for the future.

The ICRC’s mandate covers all the victims of the conflict, whoever they are and wherever they may be held. As Andreas Wigger commented: “Mothers, fathers and children are worrying about what has happened to their loved ones, wondering whether they are still alive or are perhaps held in captivity. For us to be able to inform their families, people in positions of responsibility on both sides must give us access to their prisoners and tell us who has been killed in the fighting.”

The ICRC succeeded in organizing a round-the-world trip at the end of June, to save the life of a Kampuchean refugee living in the United States.

Thirty-eight-year-old Saron Pen urgently needed a bone marrow transplant for which only a close relative could be used as a donor. Notified by its delegation in New York and assisted by the Kampuchean Red Cross, the ICRC in Phnom Penh found Saron’s family and, after medical tests, a younger brother was chosen to make the trip.

Acting as a neutral intermediary between the two countries which do not have diplomatic relations, the ICRC also carried out the necessary negotiations with the Kampuchean authorities for the brother to be authorized to go to the United States on humanitarian grounds. He finally left Phnom Penh at the end of June to fly to San Francisco. On arrival, he was met by representatives of the American Red Cross and taken to the hospital in Boston to participate in the delicate operation that could save his brother’s life.

The ICRC was also involved when an American citizen taken prisoner over a year ago was released by the Kampuchean authorities in July. The American embassy in Bangkok informed the ICRC of the capture of Brian Bono last year. After contacting the Kampuchean authorities, the ICRC received guarantees that he was in good health and transmitted Red Cross messages to him from his mother.

The Kampuchean authorities finally decided to free Mr. Bono on condition that a member of his family went to fetch him. He was officially handed over to ICRC representatives at the offices of the Kampuchean Red Cross in Phnom Penh at the beginning of July. His brother, who had flown in from the United States for the occasion, accompanied him on the flight to Bangkok, first stop on his way home to Colorado.

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**Humanitarian trip to save a life**

Mr. Javier Perez de Cuellar, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, visited ICRC headquarters in July, where he met with ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga and several members of the Committee.

During their speeches, both Mr. Perez de Cuellar and Mr. Sommaruga underlined the complementary relationship established between the two institutions over the years in their efforts to limit the use of force. They stressed the importance of maintaining close contacts between the organizations and of encouraging States to become party to the instruments of international humanitarian law, in particular the 1977 Protocols additional to the Geneva Conventions.

A private meeting followed, during which the activities of the two institutions were discussed, particularly in relation to the war between Iran and Iraq and the conflicts in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Sudan and Kampuchea.

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**UN Secretary-General visits the ICRC**

**Edited by the Press Division of the ICRC.**

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The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), together with the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the recognized National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, is one of the three components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

An independent humanitarian institution, the ICRC is the founding body of the Red Cross. As a neutral intermediary in case of armed conflicts or disturbances, it endeavours on its own initiative or on the basis of the Geneva Conventions to protect and assist the victims of international and civil wars and of internal troubles and tensions, thereby contributing to peace in the world.
ICRC reacts to Israeli violations of Geneva Convention

As the uprising in the territories occupied by Israel entered its ninth month in August, the ICRC reacted to new Israeli violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention and the serious humanitarian consequences they entail.

The institution publicly deplored the tragic deaths of two administrative detainees who were shot by Israeli forces at Queziot military detention centre on 16 August, during troubles in the camp. Some 2,500 people from the occupied territories are currently held at the Queziot detention centre, situated in the Negev desert in Israel, where they live under tents in particularly harsh climatic conditions.

ICRC delegates carrying out a routine weekly visit in the camp at the time of the incident were forced to cut the visit short as the first direct clashes broke out between detainees and guards. They immediately approached the competent authorities.

In a public statement, the ICRC appealed to the Israeli authorities to take appropriate measures to improve the conditions in the centre and render the situation compatible with the rules of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

In its latest public statement, the ICRC made a solemn appeal to Israel to put an end to the use of all measures that breach the Fourth Geneva Convention causing unnecessary suffering and hardship. Such measures include the disproportionate use of violence, and collective punishments such as the wilful destruction or walling-up of houses, bans on travel and the growing of crops, and restrictions on economic activity.

The ICRC also protested in August against the expulsion to Lebanon by the Israeli authorities of a total of 12 residents of the occupied territories and the issuing of expulsion orders to an additional 25 people. The Fourth Geneva Convention clearly stipulates that individual or mass forcible transfers, as well as deportations of protected persons from occupied territory, are forbidden, regardless of their motive.

The ICRC office in Ksara provided the deportees with blankets and family parcels, and gave them the opportunity of writing Red Cross messages to be distributed to their families.

A total of 32 residents of the occupied territories have been expelled to Lebanon by the Israeli authorities since the beginning of the year, without counting the 25 expulsion orders issued recently.

Over 260 people have died and hundreds have been injured in the occupied territories over the last eight months. ICRC delegates have continued to provide protection and assistance to the increasing numbers of victims and have maintained regular contacts with the Israeli authorities.

The delegates regularly visit over 5,400 people detained in military detention centres as a result of the recent events. Medical support is provided to hospitals and local Red Crescent branches by ICRC medical personnel, who also visit the wounded admitted to medical facilities.

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In addition, ICRC delegates are present in the camps and villages of the occupied territories and provide material assistance to families whose houses have been destroyed or who have been left without their major breadwinner.

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First prison visits in Mozambique

The ICRC completed visits to detainees in the main prison in the Mozambican capital, Maputo, and then moved on to the provinces in August, during the first prison visits to be carried out in Mozambique since the country became independent in 1975.

The visits are the result of negotiations which ended in an agreement with the Mozambican authorities in May. Under the terms of this agreement, the ICRC is authorized to visit all security detainees according to its standard procedures.

ICRC delegates visited over 400 detainees in Machava prison in Maputo, before going on to Sofala province where they completed visits to 125 detainees in the provincial capital, Beira.

The operation began on 27 June and will continue province by province until all the detainees concerned have been seen.

The first group of Ethiopian POWs and civilian internees arrive at Dire Dawa from Mogadishu on 23 August. This was the first of a series of flights organized by the ICRC to repatriate Ethiopian and Somali prisoners captured during the Ogaden conflict. See page 2.

(Photo ICRC/H. Mach - ETHI-SOMA 88 - 2/27)
Somalia/Ethiopia: ICRC repatriates POWs

The ICRC began at the end of August to repatriate prisoners held for over a decade by Ethiopia and Somalia as a result of the Ogaden conflict. The operation was started with the agreement of the two countries concerned and according to the ICRC’s standard procedures.

The repatriation was the result of an agreement signed between Ethiopia and Somalia in April, under which both parties accepted to send their respective prisoners home.

ICRC delegates completed preliminary visits to the Ethiopian POWs and civilian internees in Somalia in July. In Ethiopia, the Somali POWs were seen in mid-August. During these visits the delegates were able to talk to the prisoners in private and fill out registration cards.

In preparation for the repatriation, delegates in Somalia began the transfer of the thousands of prisoners and internees to Mogadishu at the beginning of August. Lorries transported the people on trips lasting a whole day in some cases, while the wounded and sick were moved by plane.

ICRC press officer, Jürg Bischoff, was on the spot as the first repatriations took place on 23 August.

"At dawn this morning, nine lorries left the transit camp at Merka for Mogadishu with 177 people on board. The group included officers, soldiers and militiamen, including a lone Cuban soldier, but also civilian men, women and children. Many of the families in the group were separated during their captivity and had just been reunited in the ICRC transit camp after eleven years of uncertainty.

At the airport in Mogadishu, the prisoners were greeted by the Ethiopian ambassador and then officially handed over to representatives of the ICRC. A Boeing 707 chartered by the ICRC was waiting for them on the tarmac. As they boarded the aircraft, the pleasure of their new-found freedom and of going home beamed from their faces. The white plane with the large red crosses painted on it took to the air at 10 o’clock for a flight that was to last just over an hour.

On arrival at Dire Dawa in Ethiopia, the prisoners’ families, as well as the civil and military authorities, were there to welcome them home. There was music and dancing, as the eyes that eagerly sought a familiar face in the crowd filled with tears of emotion.

A group of men dressed in blue stood out from the crowd. This was the first group of 111 Somali prisoners of war. Representatives of the two countries signed documents officially testifying to the exchange of prisoners and finally it was their turn to board the plane for the flight home. Inside the aircraft, the Somali ambassador went around speaking to the liberated prisoners. The plane took off again towards two o’clock in the afternoon.

On arrival in Mogadishu, the joy of being home was overwhelming as the President of the Republic greeted the men as they got off the plane."

After the sixth flight left Mogadishu for the Ethiopian town of Dire Dawa on 26 August, it was forced to make an emergency landing at Djibouti airport due to technical problems. On board were 178 recently released Ethiopian POWs and civilian internees, one Somali official, two ICRC delegates and nine crew members. Around 20 Ethiopians were wounded and immediately taken to hospital. First reports indicated that no one had been seriously injured.

The ICRC resumed the flights two days later to complete the repatriation.

The ICRC to act in favour of victims in southern Sudan

The ICRC completed surveys of six towns in southern Sudan at the end of July and prepared to launch a major operation to assist and protect the civilian population affected by some five years of conflict. The plan of action was presented to the Sudanese government and the opposition SPLA (Sudan People’s Liberation Army) in August for final approval.

Surveys were carried out in July in the towns of Wau, Malakal, Juba, Kongor, Pochala and Yirol, following an agreement reached with the Sudanese government and the SPLA at the end of May. Assistance programmes are expected to include relief and medical aid, as well as a vaccination campaign to safeguard the remaining cattle essential to the livelihood of thousands of people.

In the meantime, the ICRC delegation in Khartoum put relief supplies lorries, delegates and medical staff at the disposal of the Sudanese Red Crescent in a gesture of solidarity immediately following the serious flooding that left over one million people homeless in the Sudanese capital at the beginning of August.

The ICRC provided as much assistance as it could to cover at least some of the immediate needs, in view of the staff and stocks of relief supplies it already had on the spot for the operation in southern Sudan. The Sudanese Red Crescent sought assistance from the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, whose role it is to co-ordinate international Red Cross assistance for the victims of natural disasters.
The ICRC was officially approached on 24 August by the United Nations Secretary General, Javier Perez de Cuellar, with a request to organize the eventual repatriation of prisoners of war captured during the conflict between Iran and Iraq. The request was made during a meeting between the UN Secretary General and ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga at the United Nations in Geneva, the day before Iran and Iraq began direct talks.

UN Security Council Resolution 598, which has now been accepted by both sides, includes a provision for the release and repatriation of all POWs without delay after the cessation of active hostilities, according to the terms of the Third Geneva Convention. The ICRC has said on several occasions it is ready to assist in the repatriation of the POWs, following Iran's acceptance of the UN Resolution in July.

The date on which the repatriation may begin will depend on the negotiations between Iran, Iraq and the UN. Nevertheless, as a ceasefire took effect on 20 August, monitored by a UN team of 350 unarmed military observers, tens of thousands of prisoners of war came a step closer to going home.

The ICRC, which has been active in the two countries since the conflict began in 1980, has registered over 50,000 Iraqi POWs in Iran and more than 19,000 Iranian POWs in Iraq, including some 5,000 registered at the end of July. These figures do not however represent the total number of POWs captured during the war, nor those at present detained by the two sides.

A total of 1,306 wounded, sick and elderly POWs have been repatriated since the beginning of the conflict, under the auspices of the ICRC.

The exchange of Red Cross messages between the prisoners and their families has been ensured by the ICRC's Central Tracing Agency. In 1987 alone, over 1,300,000 Red Cross messages were exchanged between Iraqi POWs and their families, and more than 800,000 between Iranian POWs and their relatives.

ICRC delegates in southern Lebanon were called on to provide emergency medical assistance in August, after the area between the two Palestinian camps of Ein-el-Helwe and Mieh-Mieh, near Sidon, was bombarded by Israeli forces.

The attacks left a number of civilian casualties who were transferred to the Red Crescent hospital in Ein-el-Helwe. ICRC delegates visited the facility at the request of the "Palestinian Red Crescent" and promptly distributed the necessary medical supplies.

There have been many new arrivals at the Palestinian camps near Sidon and Tyre in recent months as the factional clashes that broke out in the West Beirut camps of Borj-el-Brajneh and Chatila in May forced large numbers of their inhabitants to seek refuge further south. The ICRC provided relief supplies for 250 newly displaced Palestinian families shortly after their arrival in July at the Ein-el-Helwe and Rachidieh (Tyre) camps.

The month of July also saw the ICRC active for the first time in and around the town of Qoubaiyat, north-east of Tripoli, when fighting flared between religious groups in an area previously spared from factional fighting. ICRC delegates, in collaboration with local representatives of the Lebanese Red Cross, provided medical materials to the health services receiving the wounded and distributed relief supplies, including blankets and family parcels, to people displaced by the events.

By far the largest ad hoc relief operation carried out by the ICRC in recent months in Lebanon took place as a result of the violent clashes that broke out between two groups of militias in the southern suburbs of Beirut in May. The latest figures show that during and after the fighting food and relief supplies were distributed to some 45,000 people, thousands of whom had fled to other parts of the capital or to the south of the country.
Increasing assistance to Afghan conflict victims

ICRC delegates based in Pakistan visited two Soviet prisoners held by the Afghan resistance on two occasions at the beginning of August, during the course of their visits to people detained by the resistance movements. Several visits to Afghan nationals were also carried out according to standard ICRC procedures, including private interviews.

The operation was performed within the framework of ICRC efforts to visit all those detained in relation to the conflict in Afghanistan. In Kabul, ICRC delegates continued the series of visits to detainees in Pul-I-Charki prison which started in March.

The ICRC delegation in Kabul carried out medical evaluations in the province of Balkh in northern Afghanistan for the first time in August. Delegates visited the medical facilities in the provincial capital, Mazar-I-Sharif, and the nearby town of Balkh. They expected to return shortly after the survey to distribute basic medical material to the regional hospital in Mazar-I-Sharif, which was having to cope with daily arrivals of war wounded, and to the Balkh polyclinic.

The programme first reached the provinces at the end of May, when a survey was carried out in Herat, the provincial capital of Salseleh province in north-western Afghanistan. Delegates were able to return there in July, despite highly precarious security conditions, to distribute basic emergency medical supplies to health institutions in the town. The number of war wounded arriving for treatment remained high in July and the ICRC delegation in Kabul intends to continue medical assistance on a monthly basis.

As the ICRC surgical hospital in Kabul prepared to open, the first medical team, sent by the Danish Red Cross, arrived at the hospital during the month and will be joined by a second National Society team later in the year.

Distributions to civilian hospitals in the capital have been stepped up, particularly to those dealing with emergency cases as they received increasing numbers of wounded in July. Emergency medical supplies were distributed to the three hospitals already receiving assistance, while a fourth was assisted for the first time in August.

More and more patients were also going to the four ARCS dispensaries where ICRC expatriate staff has a permanent presence. The quality of service has improved as the three ICRC nurses train the local staff and ensure that they have appropriate medical supplies.

At the ICRC's orthopaedic rehabilitation centre, which officially opened in May, production gradually increased. Over 400 people had been registered at the centre by August, while some 1,200 others, many of whom have had both legs amputated, are now on a waiting list. In the meantime, the ICRC's surgical hospital in Quetta across the border in Pakistan continued to cope with an increasing number of patients. The ICRC's first-aid post at Chaman evacuated more Afghan wounded to the hospital at the end of July. As the hospital with a 100-bed capacity accommodated at least 150 patients at a time in August, the ICRC sub-delegation in Quetta began to arrange to increase its normal capacity to 150 beds.

An Afghan Red Crescent employee treats a patient in the ARCS dispensary at Chaman in Kabul, in the presence of an ICRC nurse.

The ICRC team leader (left) and a local physiotherapist conduct a gymnastics session for amputees at the ICRC orthopaedic rehabilitation centre in Kabul.

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The ICRC assists Iraqi Kurds in Iran

The ICRC provided the Iranian Red Crescent Society with emergency relief supplies for Kurdish refugees in northwestern Iran in September, after thousands of Iraqi Kurds arrived across the border from Iraq and Turkey.

The action was taken following a survey of three refugee camps in Iran's Western Azerbaijan province. Two ICRC delegates, together with representatives of the UNHCR (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) and the Iranian authorities, carried out the survey which revealed urgent needs among the refugees.

The total number of Iraqi Kurds in the province was estimated at over 17,000 at mid-September. In addition to the most recent influx, around 9,000 people were still on the spot who had arrived earlier in the year after the events at Halabja. The camps in which they are accommodated are in a mountainous region 2,000 metres high, with night temperatures of between five and 10°C in September. Within a month or two it will be winter and the snow that falls in the area easily reaches a depth of two or more metres.

While the Iranian authorities, assisted by the Iranian Red Crescent, had set up temporary reception centres and were building or repairing permanent settlements, a large number of the new refugees lacked basic necessities. There were not enough tents to shelter all the recent arrivals, while most of those already living in tents did not have groundsheets to protect them from the cold and damp. The vast majority did not have blankets or any means to cook the food rations they were receiving.

In view of the urgency of the situation, the ICRC offered to provide emergency relief materials to cover the needs of the refugees for two months. The UNHCR will take charge of their longer-term well-being. The proposed assistance included 60,000 blankets, 1,000 tents, 2,000 kitchen sets and 4,000 groundsheets.

The ICRC immediately requested National Societies to provide contributions in cash or in kind for the programme which aimed to assist up to 20,000 Iraqi Kurds in Iran. The first batch of materials was handed over to the Iranian Red Crescent for distribution in mid-September.

Meanwhile, over 50,000 Iraqi civilians had arrived in Turkey. Under a national emergency plan, the Turkish authorities moved them to transit centres away from the border area in September. The Turkish Red Crescent was in charge of providing temporary shelter, blankets, clothing, medical care and other essential services.

At the request of the Turkish authorities, the ICRC sent two delegates to Ankara to discuss the possibility of providing emergency assistance for the Iraqis who had taken refuge in Turkey. The delegates were joined by a doctor and a sanitary engineer a few days later when they left for the south-east of the country to evaluate the eventual necessity for the ICRC to provide humanitarian assistance.

The ICRC also approached the Iraqi authorities in September to remind them of their obligations under the Geneva Conventions to protect the civilian population and to offer its humanitarian services. However, Iraq turned down the offer.

Repatriation of Iraqi POWs

The ICRC repatriated 72 disabled, sick and elderly Iraqi prisoners of war in September, following a decision by the Iranian authorities to release them on a unilateral basis.

An ICRC delegate and a doctor visited the POWs before their release and carried out private interviews with each of them.

The prisoners were handed over to the ICRC in Tehran by representatives of the Iranian authorities on 12 September. They then boarded an ICRC-chartered plane escorted by a doctor, a nurse and two ICRC delegates. On arrival in Baghdad, the ICRC handed over the prisoners to representatives of the Iraqi authorities in accordance with its role as a neutral intermediary.

The operation was not connected with the global release and repatriation of all POWs captured during the conflict between Iran and Iraq as stipulated by the Third Geneva Convention.
Help for the victims of ethnic violence in Burundi

The ICRC provided emergency assistance for victims of the fierce tribal feud that broke out again in northern Burundi in August. The wave of ethnic violence, unseen in the country since 1972, left a heavy toll of dead, hundreds of injured, thousands of homeless and some 60,000 refugees across the border in neighbouring Rwanda.

Following permission from the Burundese authorities, the head of the ICRC's regional delegation in Zaire visited the communes affected by the troubles in the northern provinces of Kirundo and Ngozi. Displaced people were grouped in abandoned houses, schools and churches where they received assistance from the local authorities. Dispensaries had been set up to treat the injured or transfer them for hospital care. The regional delegate visited the hospitals treating the wounded, many of whom needed surgery.

An ICRC plan of action in favour of the victims was accepted by the Burundese authorities in the capital, Bujumbura, at the end of August. The plan included the provision of relief supplies, tracing activities to re-establish contacts between families separated by the events and visits to people detained as a result of the troubles.

An ICRC convoy transporting blankets, kitchen sets, used clothing, soap and jer-rycans was sent to Burundi from Uganda with enough relief supplies for an initial 8,000 displaced people. Distributions began in mid-September in collaboration with the Burundese Red Cross. The ICRC planned to continue providing assistance not only to those still displaced, but also to people in the process of being resettled.

The medical facilities were managing to cope with the influx of victims of the violence thanks to additional medical personnel and materials provided by the Burundese authorities and other non-governmental organisations working in the region. The eight initial centres grouping the displaced population had been reduced by mid-September as people gradually returned to their home areas.

The ICRC provided the displaced civilians with the opportunity of writing Red Cross Messages to members of their families with whom they had lost contact as a result of the events. During the first two days of this activity, the delegate in charge collected over 60 messages.

In the meantime, an ICRC delegate joined representatives of the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the National Society in southern Rwanda at the end of August. Responding to an urgent request from the Rwandese Red Cross, the ICRC immediately provided over 400 kgs of emergency medical supplies. Shortly afterwards, it also handed over 24 50-litre cooking pots for the communal preparation of meals.

Members of the Rwandese Red Cross were in charge of registering the refugees as they arrived and providing them with the necessary relief supplies. First-aiders transported the sick and wounded to the local hospital in Butare.

The refugees were initially sheltered in schools and public buildings which fast became insufficient to shelter the growing numbers of new arrivals. As the school year began, they were transferred to new sites designated by the Rwandese government. The arrival of the rainy season and cooler temperatures made living conditions more difficult, but international assistance began to flow in to provide at least the basic necessities. Once the refugees were resettled, a second ICRC delegate started the task of locating members of families who found themselves in different camps following the exodus. In this way families could be reunited bringing at least some relief and reassurance after so much suffering and uncertainty.

News in brief

ICRC delegates carried out the annual series of visits to prisons in the Arab Republic of Yemen in September. They visited some 1,200 detainees in seven detention centres under the responsibility of the Ministry of the Interior. The visits took place in accordance with standard ICRC procedures, including interviews without witnesses.

The ICRC completed the repatriation of Somali prisoners of war and Ethiopian POWs and civilian internees on 1 September after an operation lasting ten days.

An ICRC-chartered plane carried out 20 round-trip flights between the Somali capital, Mogadishu, and Dire Dawa in Ethiopia. A total of 246 Somalis were thus taken back to Somalia and 3,543 Ethiopians and a Cuban to Ethiopia bringing an end to up to eleven years of captivity.
Towards greater security: the transfer of Khmer civilians

On 5th September, 231 Khmer civilians, who had recently arrived in Thailand from Kampuchea, were able to leave the insecure border area thanks to a transfer operation carried out under the auspices of the ICRC. The destination was the camp called “Site B” situated some 3 km inside Thailand. ICRC reporter Françoise Bory was on the spot to cover the event.

Hardly anyone speaks any more about the plight of displaced Khmer civilians. Nevertheless, both Khmers and Thai villagers continue to suffer from the tension and insecurity that reign along the border between Kampuchea and Thailand. One of the ICRC’s main tasks is to ensure the protection of these people against the effects of the war. This is why Khmer civilians arriving at the frontier are evacuated to Site B.

It was eight o’clock in the morning and stiflingly hot when we arrived at a Thai army checkpoint at a place where three paths meet on the edge of the forest that marks the border between Thailand and Kampuchea. After the usual checks, we went on towards the forest where six men were waiting for us. These were the heads of one of the Khmer factions who were to hand over the group of civilians to the ICRC for transfer.

Several Thai peasants were sitting in the shade of a large teak watching us with curiosity and no doubt amused at the sight of foreigners out in the middle of nowhere. Two buses, a lorry, a truck and two all-purpose vehicles were there marked with the Red Cross emblem and flying Red Cross flags.

A small group of people appeared on the edge of the forest shortly afterwards. It was made up of women and children walking in single file and carrying small bundles of belongings, flasks of water and even chickens squawking their disapproval as they hung by their feet. The small group soon became a crowd of about 100 people who clambered into the buses. We then waited for the rest of the group, comprised of men and young boys who were to travel in the less comfortable lorry and truck.

“These transfers are part of the ICRC’s mandate under the Geneva Conventions and, as these Khmers are in a dangerous zone”, Thomas Pizer, the delegate in charge of the region, explained. “There are mines in the fields — which often wound or kill Thai peasants as well — and the fighting takes place very close by. When the civilians reach the forest, they are generally picked up by army patrols. Their transfer to Site B by the ICRC represents security for these people.”

All the vehicles were crammed full. Once everyone was on board, the convoy set out along the track to join the road leading to Kap Cherng. From there we travelled on tracks again with the dust and potholes reducing the pace to 20 km an hour. It took us two and a half hours to cover the 40 km leading to the camp. On arrival at Site B, the Khmers were registered by the D.P.P.U. (Displaced Persons Protection Unit), which is a special branch of the Thai army in charge of the security of Khmers along the frontier. The civilians were then given materials to build bamboo houses, food rations (which are provided by UNBRO — United Nations Border Relief Operations) and, if necessary, medical care.

The ICRC’s Central Tracing Agency then began the important task, based on the nominative lists of the people transferred, of trying to put family members in touch with each other again. “Each new name recorded in the Agen-

Nicaragua: assistance for flood victims

As flooding hit north-eastern Nicaragua in August, the ICRC provided food aid to victims in conflict areas where other relief organisations were unable to act.

Flooding in the eastern part of the country is a seasonal phenomenon as heavy rains cause the rivers to burst their banks. However, as the years have gone by, the damage caused by the rains has become increasingly significant in regions affected by the internal conflict.

The areas worst affected by the floods were along the Rio Coco Abajo and in the region of Llano Norte near the border with Honduras. Already affected by difficult security conditions and the consequent reduction in cultivable land, the food situation in these areas was precarious and the advent of floods was thus felt all the more acutely.

In addition, a lack of fertilizers and pesticides has favoured a growing destruction of crops by worms and rats. Assistance from relief organisations has also diminished in view of the logistic problems. Finally, the floods of August 1987 and January 1988 further interrupted the farming cycle.

ICRC delegates evaluated the needs in the far north-eastern zones where it is habitually active due to the conflict, while members of the Nicaraguan Red Cross visited the areas around Puerto Cabezas.

The ICRC carried out ad hoc food distributions to over 11,000 people at the end of August. The assistance programme continued upstream of the Rio Coco where over 2,500 people were to be assisted over a three-month period. In addition, food supplies were given to the National Society for distribution to flood victims in villages in non-conflictual zones.
Gold medal for ICRC orthopaedics

The orthopaedic centre run by the ICRC and the Ministry of Health in Nicaragua was recently presented with the national award for the industry with the best performance of the year.

The gold medal of the Order of José Benito Escobar was attributed to the Erasmo Paredes Herrera orthopaedic centre in Managua by the Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega with a tribute to "the effort and dedication of the workers and the ICRC, that have done everything possible to make the project a success".

In 1986, 11 local people were selected to follow a three-year training course to become orthopaedic technicians and thus prepare the centre for future autonomy. As the number of patients on the waiting list increased, a dormitory was added to the workshop in 1987 to accommodate those who were soon to be fitted.

By August this year, the centre had fitted a total of over 690 patients with artificial limbs and some 2,500 with orthopaedic appliances. Some 70% of these people were victims of mines or explosive bullets.

The structure of the workshop, which has largely relied on ICRC expertise, has become solid and clear. Sixty-five local employees ensure the daily routine of the centre, while the 11 "students" are coming to the end of their training course.

The ICRC reduced the number of expatriate specialists from five to three in June (two orthopaedic technicians and one physiotherapist) as they began to assume the role of technical advisers. A success story in terms of assistance means being efficient and avoiding unnecessary dependance.

Physiotherapy for an amputee at the award-winning orthopaedic centre in Managua.

Latin American vote of confidence for ICRC

A resolution supporting the ICRC and urging the respect at all times of international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles was recently approved unanimously by the Latin American Parliament, as it met in the Argentine capital, Buenos Aires.

Members of the parliaments of 17 Latin American countries were present at the meeting, which was opened by President Alfonsin of Argentina. The resolution adopted included a message of gratitude to the ICRC for the humanitarian work it carries out in the world. It proposed greater financial backing for the ICRC and efforts to make the International Movement of the Red Cross and Red Crescent better known.

In addition, the resolution called on the member-States to consider becoming party to the Protocols additional to the Geneva Conventions, if they had not already done so.

A member of the ICRC's Executive Council, Dr. Athos Gallino, attended the meeting, together with representatives of the ICRC's Regional Delegation based in Buenos Aires. Dr. Gallino held talks with senior Argentine government officials. Discussions later took place with the leaders of the Argentine Red Cross concerning cooperation between the ICRC and the National Society.

In the meantime, the representatives of 10 Latin American Red Cross Societies were in the Uruguayan capital, Montevideo, to attend the third training course on the dissemination of international humanitarian law and the Red Cross Principles. The course was organized by the ICRC in collaboration with the Uruguayan Red Cross. Dr. Gallino took part in the closing session and met with government officials and the Director of the Uruguayan National Society.
Medical supplies for hospitals in Burma

Emergency supplies were distributed to hospitals and clinics in Burma during September and October, as a result of serious shortages of materials in medical facilities around the country.

The events that took place brought normal everyday life to a virtual standstill. A general strike, which also disrupted normal air links with Burma, meant that the government’s medical services soon became paralyzed as their stocks diminished without being replaced. In the meantime, large numbers of wounded required treatment.

The ICRC and UNICEF (the United Nations Children’s Fund) flew more than 100 tonnes of medical supplies into the Burmese capital, Rangoon, over a six-day period up to the beginning of October. The aircraft, chartered by UNICEF, transported 20 tonnes of material provided by the ICRC and some 83 tonnes made available by UNICEF.

The flights arrived daily at Rangoon’s Mingaladon airport, where the goods were immediately loaded onto lorries and taken to the provinces. On one occasion a boat had to be used to reach a remote area in the west of the country, while two civilian aircraft were chartered from Rangoon to get to mountainous regions in the north-east.

ICRC and UNICEF officials, together with members of the Burma Red Cross, accompanied the supplies to their destinations and supervised the distributions to civilian hospitals and Red Cross clinics. Three ICRC prosthetists, who have been working on an orthopaedic programme in the capital, participated in the operation, together with the ICRC regional delegate, based in New Delhi, and a doctor provided by the Swedish Red Cross. A total of some 35 hospitals and a similar number of Red Cross clinics in the provinces received enough supplies to cover their needs for approximately two months.

Shortly after the distributions ended, the ICRC doctor began visits to the provincial hospitals assisted in order to assess the results of the operation. Any further assistance depended on how soon the medical services could return to normal.

The ICRC began to assess the situation in Burma in August, when its regional delegate arrived in Rangoon. He immediately established contacts with representatives of the authorities and the National Society. Shortly after, he carried out an initial survey of medical facilities in Rangoon, together with the Burma Red Cross.

In mid-September, he visited the towns of Pegu and Hlegu to the north of Rangoon, together with the Secretary General of the Red Cross Society. In view of the urgent needs, medical materials were immediately distributed to the main hospital in each town.

Seeds for the Planalto

Seed distributions to the civilian population on the Planalto in Angola began in September and had reached some 200,000 beneficiaries by mid-October. The programme, which was first launched late in 1985, aims to help the inhabitants of the region to produce more of their own food.

The Planalto, a high plateau in the centre of the country, is one of the areas worst affected by the conflict in Angola. As large numbers of the civilian population have been displaced by the fighting, the agricultural cycle has gradually been disrupted.

A Hercules transport plane started moving the seed from the Atlantic coast to the provincial capitals in September. The stocks were then flown in small aircraft to the “municipios” for distribution.

Since 1986, when the crops from the first seeds were harvested, the programme has succeeded in providing people with enough food for at least part of the year. General food rations have been provided during the difficult periods before harvests.

Delegates handed out seeds well suited to the Planalto’s soil and climate. The varieties were chosen to produce foods both rich in protein and adapted to the population’s usual diet. The distributions, timed to coincide with the approach of the rainy season, should reach over 300,000 people and continue until the beginning of November.
The ICRC surgical hospital in the Afghan capital, Kabul, opened on 1 October. The first three patients arrived the same day, and just over one week later, some 23 people, including a number of young children, had been admitted for surgery.

The hospital is open to all those wounded as a result of the conflict in Afghanistan and is run by the ICRC according to its principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence.

While some of the patients came from the ICRC’s orthopaedic rehabilitation centre, the majority were transferred from the Afghan Red Crescent dispensaries where ICRC nurses have been supervising a medical programme since October last year.

The hospital has been equipped to take 50 patients. It can, however, increase its capacity to 110 beds in an emergency by erecting tents in the grounds. As the first beds were filled, 21 expatriate staff and 140 local employees set to work to ensure that all the services ran smoothly.

“There is an atmosphere of serenity and confidence within the grounds of the hospital”, the head of the ICRC delegation in Kabul, Mr. Jean-Jacques Fréard, commented about a week after the hospital opened. “The patients are teaching the nurses a few words of Dari, while the nurses impart some basic English”, he added.

The two operating theatres, which were entirely equipped by the Norwegian Red Cross, were manned by the surgical teams provided by the Danish and Finnish Red Cross Societies. A total of six National Societies have provided people to work in the intensive care unit, the X-ray room, the physiotherapy centre, the blood bank, and the auxiliary services installed in the hospital.

The project took some six months to finish. During that time, the buildings chosen for the purpose were repaired and transformed, and all the necessary equipment was installed. In the meantime, the local employees were trained for technical and basic nursing duties. All this theory is now being put into practice.

**News in brief**

ICRC delegates completed in October a series of visits to detainees held under the Internal Security Act in Malaysia. During the visits, which lasted a month, 136 detainees were seen, in accordance with ICRC procedures, in 12 detention centres around the country.

The series followed the acceptance by the Malaysian authorities of a programme presented by the ICRC regional delegation in Indonesia. The last series of visits to detainees in Malaysia took place in 1986.

**The ICRC delegation in Uganda provided medical and relief assistance for 944 prisoners in October, after they were released by the Ugandan authorities.**

The prisoners were freed from three of the prisons that form part of the large Luzira complex in the capital, Kampala, and a military barracks. Some 750 of them had been visited by ICRC delegates during their regular visits to the Luzira prisons.

Delegates distributed food, clothes and blankets to the prisoners. Vitamin tablets and rehydration salts were also given to those in need, before they were transported back to their home towns.

**The final figure for the number of detainees visited by the ICRC in the Arab Republic of Yemen in September was higher than reported in last month’s Bulletin. ICRC delegates visited some 3,300 detainees in nine detention centres around the country.**

Visits to prisoners increase

The ICRC completed in October the first series of visits it has ever carried out to a prison in the Afghan provinces. A team of delegates visited the prison at Mazar-I-Sharif, in northern Afghanistan. The visits were carried out in accordance with standard ICRC procedures, which include private interviews with each person registered. A number of the prisoners had been transferred to Pul-I-Charki prison in Kabul where delegates were soon able to visit them.

Delegates based in Pakistan visited prisoners captured by one of the Afghan resistance movements during fighting around the town of Asadabad in north-eastern Afghanistan. It was the first time that they had been given access to prisoners immediately after their capture. In the south-eastern border area, visits were also carried out to groups of prisoners taken during the fierce fighting around Spin Boldak at the end of September. More prisoners held by the Afghan resistance were visited over the last few weeks than during the whole of last year.

Fighting around Asadabad also resulted in a particularly high influx of wounded for the ICRC hospital at Peshawar, across the border in Pakistan. At the beginning of October, it had 173 patients, some of whom were accommodated in a tent pitched in the hospital grounds. As the two surgical teams already on the spot worked flat out, a third team was sent out by ICRC headquarters in Geneva to help cope with the situation.

**Medical aid in provinces**

Basic medical supplies were distributed to health facilities in Mazar-I-Sharif at the beginning of October. The operation was part of the ICRC’s medical assistance programme in the Afghan provinces, which began with a similar distribution in Herat, in the north-west of the country, last July.
Over 8,000 civilians assisted in Burundi

The ICRC provided assistance for more than 8,000 people in northern Burundi, following the ethnic violence that broke out in August. Blankets, clothes, soap, cooking utensils and agricultural tools were distributed from mid-September to the civilians worst affected by the events.

As the materials transported by convoy from the ICRC’s delegation in Uganda began to run out, delegates replenished their stocks with locally purchased goods in order to continue the operation.

Distributions took place in the communes of Marangara and Ntoga, near the border with Rwanda, where most of the clashes took place. Delegates distributed supplies both in the centres set up for displaced people and out in the villages to which they were gradually returning.

Many houses had been destroyed or looted during the violence, but more and more people went home and resumed their daily activities. Children returned to their studies as the new school year began, people cultivated the fields again, and in ways that will attract the target groups’ attention. A simple, lively approach, based essentially on activities to help victims, was felt to be particularly important when it came to presenting international humanitarian law as a factor of peace to a broad public. As one journalist said: “Journalists are not interested in theory, but in real men and women helping other human beings.”

The general feeling after the seminar was one of satisfaction, mixed with the realisation that a lot of work was still needed to make people aware of the role the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement plays in promoting peace.

On another level, the seminar demonstrated that the basic strength and unity is certainly there. The notion of peace forms an integral part of the Movement’s very existence. United by seven fundamental Principles, people from Ethiopia to Egypt, from Mexico to Morocco and from Canada to Colombia all went to Leningrad for the same reason.

The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement looks at its message of peace

In the first seminar of its kind, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement got together with journalists in October to discuss ways of better informing the public of the role it plays in encouraging and facilitating world peace.

During a four-day meeting in Leningrad, representatives of the ICRC, the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the Henry Dunant Institute and some 30 National Societies held workshops with media specialists to tackle the question.

The seminar was opened by Mr. Alexander Hay, former President of the ICRC and current President of the Commission on the Red Cross, the Red Crescent and Peace which was formed in 1977. The Commission sponsored the seminar, with the help of the Alliance of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the USSR, after the Council of Delegates, the Movement’s General Assembly, called for such an event during its meeting last year in Rio de Janeiro.

At the first World Red Cross and Red Crescent Conference on Peace, held in Belgrade in 1975, peace was defined as “not only the absence of war, but also a dynamic process of cooperation among the states and peoples of the world; cooperation founded on the respect for freedom, independence, national sovereignty, equality and human rights, and on a fair and equitable distribution of resources according to people’s needs.”

While all the participants in Leningrad reaffirmed this vision and the real contribution the Movement makes to this process, they also underlined the difficulties which stand in the way of projecting the Movement as a promoter of peace.

Mr. Alexander Hay addresses delegates at the beginning of the seminar in Leningrad.
The International Museum of the Red Cross opened at the end of October in Geneva. A complex built into the hillside on which ICRC headquarters stand, it represents not only a time-capsule of the creation of the Red Cross and its development into a worldwide movement, but beyond that a powerful picture of man's basic humanity to man across the centuries.

While the ICRC made the land available for its construction, the project was created independently of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, but by someone who worked for the ICRC for many years, Mr. Laurent Marti.

A Financial Commission set up by Marti raised some 24 million Swiss francs to cover the cost of the project. While the Canton and the City of Geneva each provided around two and a half million Swiss francs, governments and commercial sponsors also contributed. Their names are engraved on a donor's panel of honour in the entrance hall of the museum, and some also feature at the entrance to certain exhibition rooms. When asked about the financing of the project, Marti commented: "It is money that would never have been given to the Red Cross if we had not built the museum."

He formed a Commission made up of friends and experts to take charge of the project and in November 1979 an architectural competition was opened. Over 170 Swiss architects entered, 80 of whom submitted their plans and maquettes within the given time limit. The group project presented by Pierre Zoelly, George Haefeli and Michel Girardet was finally chosen as the closest to the form and spirit envisaged by the Commission.

The corner stone was laid during an official ceremony in 1985, in the presence of Nancy Reagan and Raisa Gorbachev. Material was gathered in Europe and the United States for exhibition, and the ICRC opened its archives from which a number of historical documents, photos and films were selected.

Eleven main exhibition halls were set up and modern museology techniques applied to effectively portray the basic humanity of man and the way in which the Red Cross, and subsequently the whole Movement, has channelled this universal quality.

From reproductions of the spontaneous acts of clemency of early civilisations and a cyclorama representation of Henry Dunant's efforts to save lives at the battle of Solferino, the museum takes the visitor on to films and photographs of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement at work in times of conflict and natural disaster in the 20th century.

"The museum represents a journey which leaves you with an impression of something grave, important, but not desperate," Marti stated. Perhaps if it carries any message, it is one of hope in the face of considerable difficulties, and one which points the way to peace once every man realises that, as the large letters engraved in the entrance hall say: "Each individual is responsible for everything before mankind" (Dostoyevski).

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**The Mozambique Red Cross recently became the 147th officially recognized National Society and member of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. Its recognition was announced at the end of September after a meeting of the ICRC's Assembly in Geneva.**

As the founder of the Movement and the guardian of its basic Principles, the ICRC is responsible for recognizing all new National Societies. The statutory conditions for such a recognition include that the Society must be formed in an independent State that is party to the Geneva Conventions, that it must be the only National Society in the State and that it must be officially recognised by the State government.

The Mozambique Red Cross was formed in 1981. With the help of other National Societies and the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, it launched successful training programmes in first aid and disaster preparedness for its volunteers. By 1987, it had 11 provincial branches, 80 local sections and a membership of over 46,000.
Iran/Iraq: return of wounded and sick prisoners

The ICRC began repatriating wounded and sick prisoners of war held by Iran and Iraq on 24 November, following an agreement to return all such prisoners before the end of the year. The operation ran into difficulties and was suspended three days after it began.

The ICRC expressed deep concern at this suspension and immediately took steps to overcome the problems in the hope that the flights would resume and all the wounded and sick would be able to return home as planned.

The first flight left Tehran with 52 Iraqi POWs on board, accompanied by ICRC medical staff and delegates. All these prisoners were seen by ICRC delegates before they left to check that they wanted to be repatriated.

The ICRC-chartered plane landed in Baghdad two hours after taking off and, an hour later, 19 Iranian POWs boarded the same plane for the direct flight to Tehran. Iraq reduced from 41 to 19 the number of prisoners to be repatriated after the arrival of only 52 out of the 115 Iraqi POWs expected from Iran.

Two more return flights took place before the operation was suspended. Iran freed a total of 155 Iraqi POWs out of the 345 scheduled, and Iraq reduced its numbers on a proportional basis, liberating 56 out of 123.

The repatriation of the wounded and sick was the result of an agreement reached with ICRC President, Cornelio Sommaruga, following talks with the Iranian and Iraqi foreign ministers at ICRC headquarters, while they were in Geneva for the latest round of negotiations, under United Nations auspices, for a permanent peace settlement to the Gulf war.

The two sides signed a memorandum of understanding under which the ICRC would repatriate all the wounded and sick POWs in two stages. During the first stage, over 1,500 already registered by the ICRC in camps and hospitals in both countries since the beginning of the conflict would be flown home from 20 November, in an operation lasting no more than three weeks.

In a second stage, the two countries pledged to exchange lists of the remaining sick and wounded through the ICRC's Central Tracing Agency on 5 December. These prisoners, who would first be visited by ICRC delegates, would be repatriated before the end of the year.

Before this agreement, over 1,400 wounded, sick and elderly prisoners of war had been repatriated under ICRC auspices during the eight-year conflict.

At the time of going to press, negotiations continued for the resumption of the operation. Apart from the wounded and sick, the return of tens of thousands of other prisoners of war on both sides remained unsolved. The ICRC has registered over 50,000 Iraqi POWs in Iran and around 19,000 Iranian POWs in Iraq, but estimates the total figure at more than 100,000. The ICRC has urged both parties to consider the general repatriation of all the POWs as soon as possible, in accordance with the provisions of the Third Geneva Convention.

News in brief

In Mozambique, the ICRC visited in November the main prison in Manica province where they saw 156 security detainees.

This is the sixth prison the ICRC has visited since an agreement was reached with the Mozambican authorities in May to visit all security detainees in the country. The visits began in August and a total of over 870 people have been seen so far in six out of the 10 provinces.

ICRC delegates in Colombia recently visited five detention centres in the capital, Bogota, and the provinces. During the visits, 26 security detainees were seen and provided with medicines, clothes, soap and books.

A team of delegates from the ICRC's regional delegation in Buenos Aires visited detention centres in Paraguay, during the second series of visits this year to detainees in the country. It was able to visit eight centres in the capital, Asuncion, and the provinces.
ICRC delegate kidnapped in Lebanon

ICRC delegate Peter Winkler was seized at gunpoint on 17 November on the outskirts of Sidon in southern Lebanon. Three men stopped his car, forced him into the back of their vehicle and sped off to an unknown destination.

The ICRC delegation in the Lebanese capital, Beirut, issued a public appeal the same day for his immediate release and contacted all the parties present in the country. ICRC activities were suspended in the area around Sidon from 23 November, but operations continued elsewhere in southern Lebanon, as well as in Beirut and the west.

There was still no news four days after Winkler's abduction. Deeply concerned by the continuing silence, ICRC headquarters again appealed for his release. The public statement included a reminder of the ICRC's neutral and impartial character, independent of any local, national or international power. "Its delegates have brought protection and assistance to conflict victims of all communities, in particular during the country's darkest hours, and have cooperated with all parties to do so."

The ICRC is one of the few humanitarian organisations which has maintained a presence in West Beirut and southern Lebanon. It has 31 delegates and over 100 local staff based in nine offices around the country. Winkler, who went to Lebanon in September on his first mission, is the fourth ICRC representative to be kidnapped in the country. The three others were released shortly after they were taken.

A number of the organisations and groups in southern Lebanon pledged to help the ICRC find its delegate and have him released. However, at the time of going to press, and despite constant contacts, no one had claimed responsibility for the kidnapping and Winkler had not yet been freed.

Afghanistan programme moves ahead

The ICRC continued to develop its operation for victims of the Afghan conflict, visiting more prisoners and treating dozens of wounded at its new war surgery hospital in Kabul.

The second series of visits to Pul-I-Charki, the main prison in the Afghan capital, began in mid-November, just three months after the first series was completed. Interim visits were carried out to distribute relief supplies to the detainees and deliver Red Cross messages from their families.

Shortly before the new series began, the Afghan authorities released two detainees from the prison and handed them over to the ICRC delegation. The ICRC had requested their release on medical grounds earlier in the year. One was taken to the ICRC's orthopaedic centre, while the other was reunited with his family.

For the first time, the ICRC had access to Dar-Ul-Tadib detention centre for young detainees in Kabul. Visits to the centre, where all the inmates are under 19 years of age, were completed at the end of October.

In the Afghan border area, delegates based in Pakistan visited a number of prisoners held by one of the Afghan resistance movements in Paktia province, and the prisoners were given the opportunity of writing messages to their families.

As more and more prisoners held by the resistance movements are visited in Afghanistan, increasing numbers of families have the chance of communicating with a husband, father or son they may have feared dead. ICRC delegates in Kabul distributed Red Cross messages to some of these families in November, bringing them hope and relief. In certain cases, the relative had only been captured one or two months before.

The delegation in Kabul also takes care of messages between detainees in the prisons it visits and their families abroad. For many of the prisoners this is the only means of communicating with the outside world.

The ICRC war surgery hospital was kept busy. The first victims of recent bombardments arrived at the end of October, and more followed. By mid-November the hospital had 41 patients and had carried out over 120 operations since it opened six weeks earlier. The two surgical teams, as well as nurses and technicians, worked in shifts to keep the hospital operational 24 hours a day.

The delegation stepped up efforts to make the ICRC and its activities better known among the local population, with particular emphasis on the protection of civilians. Apart from courses for the staff it employs locally and Afghan Red Crescent personnel, the delegation began a programme in November for students in colleges in the capital.

The students were asked by the French Red Cross supervisor of the blood bank at the ICRC's hospital in Kabul to donate blood, and they responded readily to the request.

ICRC assistance in Uganda

ICRC delegates provided assistance at the beginning of November for some 2,000 Sudanese civilians in northern Uganda. The people fled their homes in southern Sudan at the end of October as a result of fighting between government forces and the SPLA (Sudan People's Liberation Army). Once across the border, they walked some 60 km before taking refuge in the Ugandan town of Kitgum.

The delegates distributed food rations for a month to the entire group, which included a number of children showing signs of malnutrition. In addition to the corn, beans and oil, cooking utensils and blankets were also provided.

Two thousand Ugandan civilians were given relief supplies shortly before in the northern town of Gulu where they took refuge following clashes between the Ugandan army and opposition forces in the surrounding countryside. As security conditions continued to deteriorate during November, the ICRC again sent a team to the area to monitor the needs of the population.
The crucial role of ICRC surveys

If the concept of humanitarian assistance has not changed in spirit, its application has. The stereotyped image of relief workers rushing off in an emergency to give the hallowed, but all too often inappropriate, assistance, has generally given way, over the last ten years, to the professional team carrying out a rapid, but detailed survey before sending in what is really needed.

"Victims are no longer considered simply as mouths to feed, but as human beings in the fullest sense of the word, not only with physiological needs, but also a specific socio-economic environment", Dr. Pierre Perrin, Head of Training for ICRC health personnel, explained.

This approach has meant a greater effort to avoid damaging or even destroying the essential structures that constitute man in society. At the same time the vital link between health and the environment has been rediscovered. A curative medical programme cannot be successful if malnutrition and lack of hygiene are rampant.

An initial assessment aims to determine what the needs are and what is already available on the spot. The ICRC can then decide whether an emergency assistance operation is necessary or not. Secondhand reports may have exaggerated or underestimated the requirements, mistaken one need for another, or no help may be necessary at all.

The earlier the survey can be carried out after the alarm bells have rung, the better. However, the operation depends on a number of factors outside the ICRC’s control. Permission from the people who control access to the victims may be slow in coming or refused altogether. As the nature of conflicts has gradually changed, more and more populations have become the helpless pawns in a relentless game of power politics in which the leaders scarcely hesitate to play with innocent lives.

The ICRC also has to ensure that it will be able to act independently and exercise control over any assistance it gives, to ensure that it goes to the right people. Security conditions may represent another impediment...

The right help at the right time

Nevertheless, if all goes well, the survey team departs in time. The team can include a variety of specialists depending on the situation: a doctor, nurses, a relief delegate, a nutritionist, a sanitary engineer, an agronomist. Between them they will try to assess the urgency of the situation. They will see if the fundamental needs of the population are being met: food, water, health care, shelter and conditions of hygiene. And if not, they will determine the major problems. The state of the services available will be studied: medical facilities, agriculture, water availability, local markets, sanitation. How many, where, what, why are so many essential questions that have to be answered in a short space of time.

In a situation of famine, for example, a survey not only checks on the nutritional state of the people, but also on the conditions of hygiene and the state of water supplies (factors which can be a source of sickness, weakened resistance or even vital to the population’s survival), the agricultural possibilities available, and the prices of food on the local markets.

Health surveys are of prime importance not only to check on the nutritional state of the victims, but also to ensure that the wounded are being evacuated and medical facilities in the area can cope with the number of people and types of injuries. The setting up of structures parallel to those already in place is avoided whenever possible.

The survey may suggest that medical supplies be distributed to certain hospitals, logistical support given for the evacuation of the wounded, training programmes set up for local staff. There are so many ways of helping people to help themselves while coping with an emergency at the same time.

In Afghanistan, medical supplies are given to a number of civilian hospitals in Kabul on the basis of regular surveys, taking care that the hospitals do not become dependent on this assistance and stop ordering through normal channels. On the other hand, many countries in the grip of conflict do not have the necessary surgical and orthopaedic facilities or specialists. In such cases, a survey will show whether the demand justifies the construction of new facilities. In countries like Pakistan, Afghanistan, Angola, Mozambique and Nicaragua, for example, special facilities have been built by the ICRC, with training programmes for local personnel to ensure continuity for the future.

Ensuring a return to self-sufficiency

While initial surveys indicate the situation at a particular time, assessments have to continue to be made so that assistance can follow the course of increasing, diminishing or changing needs. This is also the only way to monitor the effects of the programme on the victims and, once the initial crisis has been confronted, to take action towards restoring the normal equilibrium at the right moment. This is essential for the longer-term survival of the population.

An assistance programme that stops too early, or only deals with the surface problems, can mean that victims fall back into a serious state shortly afterwards. A programme that goes on for too long incites the beneficiaries to abandon completely their traditional ways and become utterly dependent. In one African village the local people stopped planting corn because they thought they would continue receiving food from the ICRC indefinitely.

Nowadays, the agronomist determines...
when and how a given population affected by conflict can resume their farming activities and produce for themselves again. They may lack seeds and tools, and so an agricultural programme may be launched, closely monitored by specialists. This is the case at present in countries like Angola and El Salvador.

Rapid, well-structured and regular surveys, and the spirit behind them, have become a guarantee not only of more appropriate means of assisting the victims, but also of preserving or restoring their social systems and their self-sufficiency. The term "humanitarian" has thus taken on a fuller meaning.

Houses destroyed: tents for Palestinian residents

The ICRC distributed tents to some 300 Palestinians in the occupied territories, after their homes were destroyed by the Israeli armed forces.

The incident occurred in the village of Jiftlik in the West Bank. Some 70 houses were burnt, dynamited or bulldozed on the same day. In addition, the irrigation systems were destroyed and farming banned for this small community which lives off the land. Altogether some 800 people were affected by the measures.

Tents were distributed to the homeless, while the British Red Cross sent additional supplies in case more were needed. After the initial survey and distribution, blankets and kitchen sets were also ordered for those in need.

In a gesture of solidarity, the ICRC delegation in Nicaragua made its stocks of supplies available to the Nicaraguan Red Cross in November, to help some 18,000 people after hurricane Joan tore across the country devastating much of the Atlantic coast. The towns of Bluefields and Rama were utterly destroyed and numerous other places seriously affected by the high winds and heavy rains that swept the region. An estimated 300,000 people were affected by what has been called the most serious natural disaster in the country's history.

Before the hurricane hit the area, delegates based in Bluefields helped to evacuate the most vulnerable members of the community including the handicapped, old people and patients in the main hospital.

All five ICRC offices in Nicaragua were involved in the emergency relief operation that followed, working in close collaboration with the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the Nicaraguan Red Cross. Additional supplies and teams of delegates were sent out from the delegation in the capital, Managua, to reinforce activities as assessments in the field indicated the urgency of the situation.

In and around Bluefields, Rama, Matagalpa and Juigalpa delegates evacuated people wounded or stranded by the floods, and provided the National Society volunteers with supplies including food, blankets, clothing, cooking utensils and building materials to be distributed to those worst affected by the events. The ICRC provided lorries and a jeep to help them carry out their work, and additional food to cover the needs of 6,000 people for a month as a contribution to the Society's special relief programme. ICRC delegates in Bluefields distributed first-aid sets to health posts, and relief supplies to the hospital and the refuge centres set up around the town.

The Ministry of Health and the army worked to evacuate victims and distribute emergency supplies. Representatives of the League coordinated a relief operation supported by National Societies. Members of the British and Cuban Red Cross Societies were also on the spot.

As assistance flowed in to many of the areas affected by the hurricane, the ICRC concentrated its efforts on the isolated, conflictual zones, particularly in the north of the country, where people had not only lost their houses and crops but also suffered the effects of continued fighting.

Iran: more relief supplies for Iraqi Kurds

A convoy organized by the ICRC recently arrived in north-western Iran with urgently needed relief supplies for thousands of Iraqi Kurds who have taken refuge in the area. Two ICRC delegates accompanied the vehicles on a five-day trip from Turkey where some of the goods were purchased.

Blankets, tents, ground sheets and kitchen utensils were unloaded at Iranian Red Crescent warehouses in Western Azerbaijan province ready for distribution.

As night temperatures dropped below zero in the mountains where the camps are situated, the supplies came as a welcome relief to those still awaiting assistance.

A team of ICRC delegates from Tehran carried out a survey in 13 camps in the province before the distributions began, to check on the state of the population. It appeared that the supplies would be sufficient to cover the present needs, despite the arrival of an additional 11,000 people since mid-September.

However, as more Iraqi Kurds waited to enter the country, the ICRC delegation in Tehran planned to carry out regular assessments and thus ensure a close monitoring of the requirements.

State of emergency in Nicaragua

The ICRC flew 110 people from Vietnam to Taiwan, via Bangkok, in November, on the last of a series of flights to repatriate people of Chinese origin resident in Vietnam.

A large number of Chinese were still in Vietnam when the war ended. In the absence of diplomatic relations, the ICRC set up the repatriation programme for those who wished to leave. Many wanted to go to Taiwan and the programme enabled those with family on the island to be repatriated there. The first flight carried 155 people and year by year many more followed. The ICRC has thus organized the repatriation of a total of 6,198 residents to Taiwan over the last 12 twelve years.

The November flight, organized in collaboration with the Intergovernmental Committee for Migration (ICM), marked the end of the ICRC's involvement in the programme. It will continue under the ICM, in line with an agreement reached with the organisation in June last year.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), together with the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the recognized National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, is one of the three components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

An independent humanitarian institution, the ICRC is the founding body of the Red Cross. As a neutral intermediary in case of armed conflicts or disturbances, it endeavours on its own initiative or on the basis of the Geneva Conventions to protect and assist the victims of international and civil wars and of internal troubles and tensions, thereby contributing to peace in the world.