AFGHANISTAN

ICRC provides emergency medical assistance to hospitals

As Kabul suffers its severest outbreak of fighting in six months, ICRC delegates have ensured that the capital's main hospitals have sufficient medical supplies to deal with the emergency. Sources report that more than 860 wounded were admitted to the hospitals and some 1,470 outpatients treated in the last few days, after fighting began on the first day of the New Year. Delegates immediately carried out surveys in all the hospitals, in spite of the fighting, to evaluate the situation. Relief efforts have centred on providing medical equipment although one of the hospitals, the Indira Gandhi, also received fuel for its generator. The delegation keeps medical supplies in Kabul for the two ICRC-assisted hospitals there, Karte Seh and Wazir Akbar Khan. These supplies are sufficient to cover medical needs for several weeks. It is not only the wounded who are in need of assistance; some 2,000 people have sought refuge in a hospital compound and have been provided with bread, sugar, tea and blankets by the ICRC. There are currently 13 delegates in Kabul to carry out relief operations. The ICRC is concerned by the fact that Kabul is now almost cut off from the outside world as its lines of supply, including the airport, have been closed due to the fighting.

In the northern Afghan city of Mazar-i-Sharif, the medical situation is also critical. Earlier this week, ICRC delegates carried out surveys of the three hospitals in the town. Only one now remains open due to the fighting. Some 100 war-wounded have been admitted to hospital. On 4 January the delegates received the necessary authorization to evacuate the wounded across the front line. There are two ICRC expatriates in Mazar-i-Sharif.

The ICRC is appealing to the parties involved in the conflict to allow wounded people to be evacuated and urging the combatants not to target hospitals, medical personnel or civilians.

GENEVA

Military experts meet to discuss landmine plague

From 10 to 12 January the ICRC is organizing a workshop on landmines. High-level military experts will discuss the use of anti-personnel mines as well as alternative systems and their implications. The meeting should make it possible to clarify whether the use of landmines is necessary and to look at other military alternatives. The ultimate goal of these discussions must be the elimination of unnecessary suffering and lasting destruction caused by mines and similar weapons. Representatives from Argentina, Cambodia, China, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, France, Germany, India, Israel, Italy, Mozambique, Russia, the United Kingdom, the USA and the United Nations will be attending the meeting in Geneva.
FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

ICRC delivers one Red Cross message every three seconds

The ICRC exchanged a record 202,000 Red Cross messages in former Yugoslavia during the week before Christmas. This figure represents a rate of one message transmitted every three seconds. The ICRC, with the assistance of local Red Cross branches and national societies, has collected and distributed over 4,700,000 Red Cross messages since the beginning of the conflict in former Yugoslavia.

When the communication infrastructure has broken down, Red Cross messages are often the only link between families who have been separated by the conflict and thus provide a much needed source of comfort and reassurance. The service can only be used to exchange personal news. The messages are collected and distributed throughout former Yugoslavia, in all conflict areas, detention centres and transit centres as well as to family and friends abroad.

ECUADOR

ICRC visits alleged FARC members captured in border clash

On 29 and 30 December two ICRC delegates visited 11 detainees in Quito. The 10 Colombians and one Ecuadorian had been captured following a clash in early December 1993 on the border between Ecuador and Colombia. They are allegedly members of the Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC). The visit took place according to ICRC standard procedures.

INDONESIA/East Timor

Students allowed to leave for Portugal

The seven East Timorese students who had sought political asylum and taken refuge in the Swedish and Finnish embassies in Jakarta in July 1993 have been allowed to leave for Portugal. The Indonesian authorities agreed on humanitarian grounds to a request made by the ICRC concerning their case.

The students left Jakarta on 29 December with ICRC travel documents.
GENEVA

ICRC symposium examines military use of anti-personnel mines

This week 30 military experts from 16 countries attended a symposium on landmines in Geneva. The symposium closely examined three issues: the military utility of anti-personnel mines, alternative systems and control measures.

The participants concluded that anti-personnel mines do constitute an effective military weapon, as they are used for defensive purposes. However, it was recognized that this strict military use could not always be guaranteed, and proper precautionary measures could not always be taken, especially in internal armed conflicts. It is in this context that anti-personnel mines are often directed against civilians and continue to maim and kill long after the conflict has ended.

The symposium did not set out to make any policy recommendations or to consider aspects other than military ones. It is now up to governments to take all relevant factors into account so as to find the most effective solutions. The ICRC hopes that the report on this meeting will make a constructive contribution to the work of the intergovernmental group of experts designated to prepare for the forthcoming review conference of the 1980 United Nations Convention on conventional weapons.

NICARAGUA

Over 160,000 landmines still in place

On New Year's Day the ICRC handed over to Nicaragua's Ministry of Health the Erasmo Paredes orthopaedic centre in Managua, opened by the ICRC in 1985. In the eight years during which the ICRC ran the centre, 2,872 artificial limbs and 7,950 orthopaedic appliances were produced, and 1,700 amputees were fitted, many of them children.

Mine explosions cause terrible suffering, not only during conflicts but also long after they are over. Although the war in Nicaragua ended three years ago, the country is still infested by an estimated 160,000 mines.

IRAQ

Embargo causing shortages at blood transfusion centres

The international embargo on Iraq, in place for over three years now, is hampering the work of government-run blood transfusion centres in the country, which are seriously short of basic items such as blood bags and hepatitis and AIDS test kits. Since the beginning of January the ICRC has been distributing these items to centres throughout Iraq, as part of its large-scale assistance programme for the Iraqi population. The assistance provided includes medicines, X-ray and orthopaedics supplies, and sanitation materials.
NAGORNO-KARABAKH

Fighting escalates on all fronts

There has been an escalation in the violent clashes between Azeri and separatist forces that have been taking place in the Nagorno-Karabakh area during the past month. Fighting has spread to all fronts, claiming hundreds of victims on both sides. The ICRC is distributing emergency medical supplies to hospitals and to medical facilities on the front lines (field hospitals and first-aid posts) to help them cope with the constant influx of war casualties, and has just dispatched a further 6.3 tonnes of medical assistance.

ICRC delegates have been working in the area since early 1992. They are continuing to seek access to all prisoners and civilians held in connection with the conflict, not only in Nagorno-Karabakh but also elsewhere in Azerbaijan and in Armenia.

In Azerbaijan the ICRC is distributing aid (family parcels, warm clothing, blankets, etc.) to thousands of people who fled their homes after last year's spring and summer offensives and are currently in six districts east of Nagorno-Karabakh. In northern Nagorno-Karabakh, the ICRC plans to help some 5,000 families now back in their home villages. In Armenia the ICRC is assisting nearly 30,000 conflict victims in 60 villages along the border with Azerbaijan.

The ICRC is also organizing regular sessions on the rules of international humanitarian law for all armed forces involved in the conflict.

AFGHANISTAN

ICRC delegation hit but work continues

Despite intense fighting, the ICRC is pursuing its medical assistance to ten hospitals in Kabul and the hospital in Mazar-i-Sharif, which have already treated over 4,500 wounded. Taking advantage of the 8 January ceasefire, many inhabitants fled to safer areas of Kabul or to Jalalabad. Together with the Afghan Red Crescent, the ICRC is providing food for 830 displaced people, most of them children, in north-western Kabul. The ICRC delegation in the Afghan capital was hit by three rockets, which caused damage but no injuries. The ICRC currently has 22 expatriate staff in Afghanistan, working in Kabul, Mazar-i-Sharif, Jalalabad and Herat.

LIBERIA

Violence and hardship persist

Many thousands of people in Liberia continue to suffer extreme hardship because of the situation in the country. The recent flare-up of violence and related security problems have forced the ICRC to suspend its activities in the north-western region of Lofa. In NPFL-held central Liberia, however, ICRC operations begun last November are proceeding in four priority regions. Despite transport problems, over 2,000 tonnes of relief have been distributed to 65,000 beneficiaries. ICRC visits to places of detention run by all the parties to the conflict are continuing throughout Liberia, except for Lofa.
ANGOLA

ICRC launches relief operation

The ICRC resumed its humanitarian flights in Angola on 17 January. Food and medicines are being flown from Benguela to Huambo and Malanje on board Hercules C 130 aircraft. As a neutral and independent intermediary, the ICRC received authorization from both parties to the conflict to launch a relief operation for all victims.

In Huambo malnutrition has reached alarming proportions: 36% to 48% of children in some parts of the town are severely affected, and 80% are undernourished or malnourished. In Malanje, almost 40% of the population are displaced persons and the situation there is equally disastrous. Acute malnutrition is the main problem throughout the Planalto and in encircled government towns, according to a recent survey by an ICRC doctor and nutritionist. “The nutritional and medical situation is catastrophic”, reported Christophe Harnisch, head of the ICRC delegation in Luanda, on his return from Kuito and Menongue.

Several organizations are working in Angola, but so far humanitarian efforts fall far short of the needs. The ICRC is therefore planning to extend its operation throughout the country and will provide both food and non-food aid.

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SOUTH AFRICA

“Put humanity first”

On 17 January the ICRC launched an information campaign in Transkei to increase awareness of the rules that protect civilians during outbreaks of fighting.

“In the run-up to the elections there may be increased tension in certain areas, which could result in more violence,” says Nic Sommer, Pretoria-based ICRC spokesman. “Obviously the Red Cross desperately wants to see an end to the killing, but if violence does continue we want to make everyone - and especially political leaders - aware of their responsibility to differentiate between those who fight and those who don’t. We are asking people to put humanity first.”

Prepared in cooperation with the South African Red Cross Society (SARCS), the campaign features local radio spots, television and radio interviews and meetings with political and community leaders. The month-long operation will also highlight the neutral role of the Red Cross in assisting victims of violence. Following the pilot project in Transkei, the campaign will be extended to Natal and the Pretoria-Johannesburg region. Given the importance of radio in the country, the message is expected to reach many millions of people.

The need to improve knowledge of the Red Cross was emphasized by a security incident in Kathlehong, East Rand, on 17 January. The Red Cross team on duty in the township was forced to withdraw after one of its vehicles was stoned by onlookers at a funeral. The ICRC and the SARCS deplore this incident, during which a SARCS volunteer was slightly injured. The Red Cross team was the only paramedical unit at the scene.
In their joint relief operation for victims of violence, the ICRC and the SARCS assisted nearly 40,000 people in 1993 and carried out more than 600 visits to 340 places of detention. The ICRC has some 30 expatriate staff in South Africa, based in Pretoria and five regional offices.

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MEXICO

ICRC to assist victims of uprising in Chiapas

On 17 January the Mexican authorities granted the ICRC permission to work under its humanitarian mandate on behalf of the victims of the recent uprising in the southern state of Chiapas. The agreement came in response to an ICRC offer of services.

As soon as the clashes broke out on 1 January, the ICRC contacted the Mexican Red Cross, which was evacuating the wounded and civilians. An ICRC delegate then went to Tuxtla Gutiérrez on 5 January to assess needs.

Once the authorities had given their agreement, three delegates began to set up an operation in Chiapas in favour of the wounded and people arrested or reported missing, and to provide support for the Mexican Red Cross.

Further information: Cristina Fedele, ICRC Geneva
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AFGHANISTAN

First medical convoy reaches Kabul

The first ICRC convoy to reach Kabul since the renewed outbreak of fighting arrived in the Afghan capital from Peshawar on 17 January. The convoy’s three trucks and four other vehicles were carrying 10 tonnes of medicines and emergency medical supplies for the 12 hospitals in Kabul receiving ICRC support and 13 dispensaries in and around the city.

These supplies should be sufficient to treat several hundred seriously wounded patients over the next two weeks.

According to surveys carried out in the capital, some 7,000 people have been wounded and 2,200 of them have been admitted to the city’s hospitals.

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GEORGIA

Tangerines to thank ICRC mailing service

As a result of the fall of Sukhumi on 27 September last and the recapture of all Abkhaz territory by Abkhazian forces, tens of thousands of people were cut off from their families. "Each case is a real tragedy", said Thierry Schrayer, the delegate in charge of the ICRC’s Central Tracing Agency office in Sukhumi.

For the 100,000 people who fled the region during the events, the ICRC has become the only link with the outside world. Almost 3,000 family messages were exchanged by the ICRC between September and December 1993 alone.

The ICRC has delegates in Tbilisi, Kutaisi and Sukhumi, and a fourth office was recently opened in Ochamchire on the Abkhaz side. The plan is to open another office in Zugdidi on the Georgian side by the end of January, since insecurity and lack of transport are preventing people from travelling.

“I’m here. I’m OK. I’m alive!” That in essence is the message that the ICRC’s mailing service takes to anxious relatives. When parents hear that their children are alive they are moved to tears. “They are overjoyed when I tell them that they can send messages in reply”, said Schrayer. “The work we do is practical and extremely rewarding. The people we help are so grateful that we receive kilos and kilos of tangerines every day”, he added, visibly moved by such generosity.

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FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

ICRC flies more than 1,900 tonnes of relief into Sarajevo

An average of 25 tonnes of relief supplies are flown into Sarajevo daily aboard “Red 389”, the ICRC’s Ilyushin 76 aircraft. To date the plane has made 76 trips from Zagreb to the besieged Bosnian capital, bringing in more than 1,900 tonnes of relief.

The bulk of its cargo consists of food such as flour, beans, sugar, corned beef, canned vegetables, tea and cocoa. These supplies go to the 17 soup kitchens that the ICRC is running, together with the local Red Cross, on both sides of the front line. The kitchens serve one hot meal a day to over 15,000 of the city’s inhabitants. Those who can do so come to the distribution points themselves, while the elderly or disabled have their meals delivered to them by Red Cross volunteers known as “Red Cross runners”. Individual food parcels are also provided to the needy.

Other ICRC supplies distributed to 30,000 beneficiaries in Sarajevo include blankets, stoves, winter clothing, footwear, plastic sheeting, soap, detergent, candles and matches, all vital necessities during the winter months.

The ICRC also flies in medical supplies for the city’s Kosevo hospital, where the rehabilitation ward for war casualties has been renovated by the Norwegian Red Cross and the ICRC. Generators and spare parts are brought in regularly for the Netherlands Red Cross and ICRC gas heating programme for the capital.

Finally, over 100,000 Red Cross messages are flown in and out of Sarajevo every week. These messages are often the only link between members of families split up by the war.

The ICRC airlift began last October and will continue at least until the spring.

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MEXICO

ICRC visits detainees in Chiapas

Three ICRC delegates, one of them a doctor, went on 19 and 20 January to Chiapas State prison, where they registered 70 people arrested following the uprising of 1 January last. On 24 January they visited two minors held at a rehabilitation centre near Tuxtla Gutiérrez. The ICRC carried out this humanitarian work in full agreement with the authorities. Clothes, blankets, soap and bread, provided by the Mexican Red Cross, were distributed to the detainees following the visits.

Further information: Cristina Fedele, ICRC Geneva Tel. ++ 4122 730 2836

AFGHANISTAN

Cut off for three weeks

On 23 January, the ICRC crossed the front lines with 12 tonnes of wheat flour for the inhabitants of Microrayon, a south-eastern district of Kabul which had been completely cut off by the fighting. Some 5,000 people had been unable to leave their homes to buy food for the past three weeks.

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SOMALIA

Veterinary programme: “Mission accomplished!”

The ICRC's veterinary programmes in Somalia have now been taken over by the private sector and local associations. Livestock breeders, veterinarians and pharmaceutical concerns have joined forces to continue this vital work. The ICRC's largest operation of this kind, under which over 10 million head of livestock were treated or vaccinated, thus comes to an end. “Mission accomplished”, said François Grünewald, who is in charge of ICRC agricultural and veterinary programmes.

Somalia’s nomads, who represent 70% of the population, depend on their herds for their livelihood. This basic means of subsistence was severely affected by the war, and the country’s veterinary services have not been functioning since 1991. The decline in productivity was compounded by the spread of parasites and epidemic diseases.

The ICRC realized right away that in the vast territory of this war-torn country food aid alone could not guarantee the survival of local herdsmen. The veterinary programme, carried out with the help of 23 teams of Somali specialists and largely financed by the EC, showed promising results very soon. “Mortality and morbidity rates dropped quickly and the state of the herds improved”, said François Grünewald. Camel exports from northern Somali ports have resumed.

To ensure a smooth handover, preparations were made throughout 1993, including training seminars for veterinarians. Various NGOs (OXFAM, Catholic Relief Services, etc.) received sizeable stocks of equipment and vaccines so that they could maintain the supply and distribution of medicines after the ICRC’s withdrawal.

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ANGOLA

First ship reaches Lobito

An ICRC ship carrying 3,250 tonnes of food, 50,000 blankets, jerricans, cooking pots and soap arrived in Lobito on 26 January. A second ship loaded with 11,000 tonnes of relief supplies will leave Belgium for Angola at the end of the month.

ICRC aircraft are now making three flights a day from Benguela to Huambo and Malanje. In the first week of the airlift, 360 tonnes of cooking oil and maize flour were flown in and distributed to community kitchens. These three daily flights will have to be maintained and possibly even increased up to the April harvest. The living conditions of thousands of people suffering from hunger and the effects of the conflict should improve if the harvest is good.

To all TV networks: footage available next week
Contact Roland Sidler, ICRC Geneva Tel. ++ 4122 730 2303

AZERBAIJAN

Culture at the service of humanitarian law

The conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh has been raging for nearly six years now and ICRC teams have been in the region helping the victims for two years. As well as providing emergency assistance, they do everything possible to promote awareness of the basic humanitarian rules among the population and the armed forces, in line with ICRC policy all over the world. ICRC delegates in Azerbaijan have taken a close interest in the area’s traditional culture and have designed a calendar illustrating articles from the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols by passages from Azerbaijani literature. “You should have compassion for prisoners of war. The execution of prisoners of war is never praiseworthy. If you respect this principle, you will be rewarded in this world and in the next.” This quote from a work by Gabusnama reflects the rules contained in Articles 13 and 14 of the Third Geneva Convention, which deals with the treatment of prisoners of war. All the illustrations were created by the famous Azerbaijani artist, Yelchin Mammadov. The calendar was entirely produced in Azerbaijan and is now being distributed throughout the country.

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AFGHANISTAN

ICRC: last remaining lifeline to an isolated country

A month after fighting resumed in the Afghan capital Kabul, the ICRC is still facing a situation of extreme emergency: over 500 serious casualties were admitted to the city’s hospitals last week. The conflict has already left 800 people dead and 10,000 wounded this year, and has forced countless people to flee their homes. This is causing enormous human suffering and could well have adverse effects on regional stability. The ICRC is rapidly becoming the sole remaining humanitarian lifeline for a country threatened with isolation.

Despite growing difficulties in transporting relief supplies (Afghan airspace has been closed since 24 January), two road convoys from Peshawar, Pakistan, reached Kabul via Jalalabad on 30 and 31 January. Some 32,000 displaced people in the capital are receiving assistance from the Afghan Red Crescent, with food (mostly flour) and blankets being distributed at 48 points in the city. The ICRC is providing this programme with technical and logistic support. Meanwhile, about 200 families fleeing the fighting arrive in Jalalabad each day. In the Samarkhel camp there, the ICRC is assisting some 9,000 people (1,500 families), mostly from the Tagab and Sarobi areas where fighting raged last November prior to the current battle for Kabul.

The ICRC, which has long supported the Karte Seh and Wazir Akhbar Khan hospitals in the Afghan capital, has had to extend its distribution of medical and surgical supplies to 21 other facilities in Kabul and the surrounding area. Hospitals cut off by the fighting have also been supplied with food and fuel.

The ICRC delegation in Afghanistan is staffed by 25 expatriate delegates (15 in Kabul, five in Jalalabad, four in Mazar-i-Sharif and one in Herat) and 320 local employees.

Further information: Jörg Stöcklin, ICRC Geneva
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“Tomorrow may be too late”

Artillery duels, bombing raids and house-to-house fighting in Kabul create very dangerous working conditions for the ICRC and the Afghan Red Crescent in this devastated city. On 30 January, the Ali Abad orthopaedic centre was hit by a rocket. Not far away, a building collapsed and the ICRC brought in a crane to help search for survivors.

“Without the help and dedication of the ICRC’s Afghan staff and National Society volunteers, who risk their lives at every step”, remarked an ICRC delegate, “our work would be impossible”. An Afghan Red Crescent spokesman added: “Afghanistan needs more aid and an increased international presence today. Tomorrow may be too late”.

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

Milk for children in Tuzla

The industrial dairy farm in Tuzla is still functioning in spite of the war. The ICRC supplies it with nutrients and veterinary medicines. With 1,200 animals, including 700 dairy cattle, it is
the largest farm still in operation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The 800 litres of milk it produces every day are shared among the city’s 8,000 schoolchildren, orphans and hospital patients. The ICRC has 90 staff, including eight expatriates, working in Tuzla. At present they are distributing food and winter relief supplies to 48,000 people living on the outskirts of the city and in remote villages.

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SOUTH AFRICA
1993: unprecedented level of ICRC activities

Although there was a slight decrease in violence in some areas of South Africa at the end of 1993, last year was another difficult one for this country struggling for peace and reconciliation. The ICRC had to step up its activities significantly to respond to the situation.

■ Some 40,000 victims of violence were assisted by the institution during the year. Every day, ICRC delegates and local staff and their colleagues from the South African Red Cross Society (SARCS) worked in townships and rural areas, maintaining contact with the various political parties, visiting families whose homes had been attacked, organizing distributions of food, blankets and kitchen utensils, and giving financial assistance for funerals.

■ As well as bringing help after violent incidents have occurred, the ICRC and the SARCS have increasingly sought to prevent - or at least alleviate - suffering in situations where clashes are likely to break out. In 1993 Red Cross first-aid teams were on duty at the scene of well over 150 potentially violent events, treating any casualties on the spot or evacuating them to hospital. In most cases they were the only paramedical teams present.

■ The ICRC also maintained an unprecedented level of activity in the field of detention, carrying out more than 600 visits to prisons and police stations.

■ At the beginning of 1993 the institution had 20 delegates in the country, based in Pretoria, Durban and East London. Now there are over 30 expatriate staff, with additional offices in Port Elizabeth, Bloemfontein and Cape Town.

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AZERBAIJAN
Dissemination on the front line

At the end of January, 350 Azerbaijani soldiers and commanders attended seminars on international humanitarian law given by the ICRC in military bases and barracks in the Kahazagh and Tabuz districts. “The soldiers generally seem quite pleased to see us, but the first thing they want to know is whether we hold the same courses on the other side. They also ask who finances the ICRC”, commented delegate Robin de Baere. This gives him the opportunity to explain that the ICRC is funded by all the countries that have signed the Geneva Conventions and that it organizes courses for soldiers the world over, including the armed forces of countries at peace. Since December, Marc Flegenheimer, the ICRC’s dissemination delegate in Armenia, has also been running weekly sessions on humanitarian law for the military.

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The International Committee of the Red Cross recently published a book entitled *Blinding Weapons*, to draw the attention of governments to the appalling implications of the development and proliferation of certain types of laser weapons which cause total and irreversible blindness.

This work contains the reports of four meetings of experts convened by the ICRC between 1989 and 1991. "Experts claim that existing technology is capable of producing portable systems with both anti-sensor and anti-personnel capability. The nature of the beam, the amount of energy and the wavelength are the same whether employed to destroy sensors or to cause eye lesions", explained Louise Doswald-Beck, a legal adviser at the ICRC and the editor of *Blinding Weapons*.

"Current reports indicate that anti-sensor and anti-personnel systems may cause permanent blindness within a radius of one kilometre", Mrs Doswald-Beck went on. "So far there is no effective medical treatment and no protection against laser beams. Laser weapons are silent; their beams are totally invisible and their effects instantaneous, making it impossible for human targets to react or defend themselves."

The book explains that blindness is the most incapacitating and dreaded form of war disability. Furthermore, there is the inevitable risk of proliferation. Laser weapons are easy to transport and stockpile, and are therefore most likely to be used in internal conflicts. Experts anticipate the danger of such weapons becoming as widespread as chemical weapons, had these not been prohibited.

Another major concern is the possibility of such weapons getting into the hands of terrorist groups, organized crime and death squads, which tend to use light, portable weapons.

*Blinding Weapons* stresses that there is no treaty regulating the development, manufacture, use and circulation of laser weapons. Their production could lead to the development of other types of directed-energy weapons, such as those using ultrasound, which are designed to attack vital organs.

All the indications are that the hazards involved in employing laser weapons are out of all proportion to their military usefulness. Besides, inflicting permanent loss of vision on someone is exceptionally cruel.

The Review Conference of the 1980 UN Weapons Convention offers a unique opportunity to try and regulate the use of laser weapons while there is still time. Preparatory meetings for the Conference begin at the end of this month. Louise Doswald-Beck agrees with the experts' view that "it would indeed be a setback for civilization should blinding weapons be tolerated. The international community must take a decision on lasers now".

*The ICRC urges governments to give serious thought to the dangers of blinding weapons during the Review Conference on the 1980 United Nations Convention before it is too late.*

*Blinding Weapons* is available in English from the ICRC Public Information Division. French and Spanish versions will appear shortly.

ZIMBABWE

Prosecuting war crimes

The ICRC and the Henry Dunant Institute last week organized a seminar in Zimbabwe on national measures for the implementation of humanitarian law, as provided for in the Geneva Conventions. The seminar brought together participants from 18 English-speaking African countries and covered a number of major issues. How indeed can one ensure respect for the red cross and red crescent emblems without adopting practical measures at the national level? Similarly, the repression of war crimes calls for an adjustment of penal legislation in all countries, which must adopt suitable punitive measures and make sure that those responsible for such crimes are brought to justice. The participants reaffirmed the need to bring national legislation in line with the obligations laid down in the humanitarian law treaties.

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AFGHANISTAN

Danger: mines!

Afghan families who have fled Kabul to seek refuge in the Samarkhel camp near Jalalabad now face yet another hazard: landmines scattered all over the surrounding countryside. The camp itself has been cleared of mines, but many of its 9,000 inhabitants are having to venture well beyond the immediate vicinity of the camp in search of firewood, into areas where mine-clearing operations have not yet begun. Three people suffered mine-blast injuries last week. To prevent further accidents, the ICRC has decided to provide each family with a kerosene stove, while UNHCR will be supplying them with 20 litres of kerosene per month.

Further information: Jörg Stöcklin, ICRC Geneva
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SRI LANKA

Jaffna Hospital remains protected

An ICRC official from the Asia-Pacific zone, on mission in Sri Lanka, had high-level talks in Colombo and Jaffna last week. He met the Head of State, D.B. Wijetunga, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, representatives of the Ministry of Defence, and a spokesman of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Protection of the civilian population was one of the main topics discussed. The ICRC obtained renewed assurances from the Sri Lankan authorities that they would guarantee respect for the security perimeter set up around Jaffna Teaching Hospital in 1990 at the ICRC's initiative and with the agreement of the forces concerned. In this zone all military activity is banned so as to protect the wounded and sick and hospital staff from the hostilities.

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MEXICO

Restoring health services in Chiapas

ICRC delegates are now working in the conflict zones in the southern state of Chiapas, at the request of both parties, in an effort to help restore health services in San Miguel and Guadalupe de Tepeyac. The ICRC will supervise activities in the local health posts, which are run by Mexican medical staff. The services provided will include out-patient care and transporting patients to hospitals. The ICRC has requested the parties concerned to respect the neutrality of the health posts and to withdraw all armed units surrounding them.

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FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

ICRC maintains its operational structure

The ICRC is maintaining its operational structure in the former Yugoslavia, with 26 sub-delegations and delegations, including the one in Sarajevo, some 250 permanent expatriate staff and 900 local employees. The institution is constantly adapting so as to be prepared for any deterioration in the situation and will continue its humanitarian work for victims on all sides as long as security conditions permit.

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ANTIPERSONNEL MINES

1994 will be a decisive year

Government experts will gather in Geneva from 28 February to 4 March for the first of three meetings organized to prepare the Review Conference of the 1980 United Nations Weapons Convention. Most of the 41 States party to the Convention have agreed to give priority to the problem of mines. The experts will also decide on the necessity of amending the existing text and of adding one or more new protocols governing the use of other arms, such as laser weapons that cause blindness.

Like States that are not party to the 1980 Convention, the ICRC has been invited to attend as an observer. It welcomes this initiative which will facilitate the drawing up of provisions and the taking of preventive measures designed to protect civilians from such weapons.

At a press conference to be held in Geneva on 24 February, the ICRC will explain its position in regard to antipersonnel mines and distribute a report on the subject. The report contains the results and recommendations of two meetings of experts organized by the ICRC in 1993 and 1994 to examine means of mitigating the effects of mine explosions, taking into account current military use of such weapons.

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EMERGENCY AGRICULTURAL REHABILITATION

Survival strategies are the key

The old saying that “it is better to give a hungry man a net than to give him a fish” has guided the ICRC in its field work for the past decade and a half. In line with this conviction, increasing importance is being given to the distribution of seed, farming implements and fishing equipment. Veterinary programmes are also an integral part of the ICRC’s strategy. “Experience has shown that this kind of action cannot wait”, explained François Grunewald, head of agricultural and veterinary programmes at the ICRC’s Relief Division. “Whether you set the stage for recovery or set a time bomb that will sabotage later development depends on what you do from the very outset.”

During its major relief operations on the Cambodian border (1979-81), in Ethiopia (1985-86) and in Sudan (1986-91), in which millions of tonnes of food were distributed to millions of victims, the ICRC had many opportunities to observe the possible counter-productive effects of humanitarian aid. The “dependence syndrome” is one, and the negative impact of free food on local agricultural production - and therefore on recovery - is another. “That doesn’t mean that we should stop distributing food”, said Grunewald. “But we should watch out for the undesirable effects of such programmes”. Thus, in Somalia in
1993, in addition to providing food aid the ICRC encouraged agricultural recovery by distributing 2,250 tonnes of seed and vaccinating and treating over ten million head of livestock.

Why engage in emergency agricultural rehabilitation? Grunewald gives three reasons. First, such assistance enables rural societies not only to maintain their production capacity but also to return more rapidly to normal conditions. Secondly, it helps establish a safety margin by making it easier to build up stocks of food and seed. Last but not least, it restores the farmers’ dignity.

Since the first such operations were launched in 1979, when the ICRC provided logistic support for the UN Food and Agriculture Organization’s programme to ship rice seed to Cambodia, there has been a marked increase in the institution’s agricultural rehabilitation activities. In 1993, 3,250 tonnes of seed were distributed in seven countries. Ever greater human and material resources are being allocated to this area: three veterinarians and five agronomists, all expatriates, are currently working with teams of local technicians in the field.

A mission is currently under way to study possibilities for a seed-distribution programme in the former Yugoslavia. “Applying these new assistance strategies for the first time to a country that had previously reached a very high level of economic development is a real challenge”, said Andreas Lendorff, head of the ICRC’s Relief Division.

A report on emergency agricultural rehabilitation can be obtained in French or English from the ICRC’s press service in Geneva: Tel. + +4122 730 2317

Considerable savings

Agricultural rehabilitation offers enormous economic advantages, as illustrated by this theoretical example:

To feed 500,000 displaced persons or refugees for eight months, 60,000 tonnes of food (i.e. 15 kg per person per month) have to be purchased, shipped and distributed. To assist the same number of people, only this time at home in their villages, providing them with both food aid and seed for a period of three months (i.e. until the resulting harvest) requires only 22,500 tonnes of food and 800 tonnes of seed - a saving of 40% in the tonnage to be transported.

SUDAN

Seed, tools and fishing equipment

The ICRC’s work in southern Sudan is an excellent example of emergency agricultural rehabilitation (see main article). Since it resumed its work there in 1993, the ICRC has distributed more than 200 tonnes of seed and 150,000 farming tools. Over 300,000 people in the Bahr el Ghazal and Upper Nile provinces have benefited from the programme. The next harvest is expected in June. Fishing equipment has also been distributed in areas near rivers. “We hope that this will help the people regain a degree of self-sufficiency”, said Guy Mellet, the delegate at ICRC headquarters with responsibility for Sudan. In addition to its agricultural programme, the ICRC is rehabilitating local medical facilities and distributing medical supplies, evacuating the wounded to its surgical hospital in Lokichokio in northern Kenya, and providing tracing services through a network of 21 outposts throughout southern Sudan.

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INDIA

New Delhi agrees to ICRC survey in Kashmir

The Indian authorities have invited the ICRC to carry out a mission in the near future to Jammu and Kashmir, to assess the humanitarian situation in the state. The offer was made to the ICRC on 9 February during a meeting in New Delhi between Mr. N. N. Vohra, the Indian Home Secretary, and Mr Jean-Michel Monod, ICRC Delegate General for Asia and the Pacific. It was agreed that the ICRC would propose dates for the mission.

The New Delhi meeting followed an ICRC seminar on international humanitarian law for senior officers of Indian police and paramilitary forces, held in Hyderabad from 7 to 9 February.

Further information: Jörg Stöcklin, ICRC Geneva Tel. +4122 730 2906
ICRC: TOTAL BAN ON ANTIPERSONNEL MINES AND BLINDING WEAPONS IS BEST OPTION

The first preparatory meeting for the Review Conference on the 1980 UN Weapons Convention opens in Geneva on 28 February. It will be an important milestone in the long-term effort to control the use of the more destructive modern weapons.

The Convention came into force in 1983 and has been ratified by 41 countries. This is the first opportunity - and the last for at least another 10 years - to review its workings.

It is clear that, for all its good intentions, the Convention has had little impact on restricting the use of the deadly weapons it set out to regulate in 1983, in particular landmines. Mines are now proliferating so fast that there are perhaps as many as 100 million of them in 62 countries. Scattered like deadly seeds, they have turned whole swaths of many countries into deserted, no-go areas.

Moreover, the Convention should take a stand against new, even more terrifying weapons, such as lasers that can destroy the eyesight of their victims. Blindness is considered the most incapacitating and dreaded form of disability. Against lasers there is no defence and there is no cure for the damage they cause.

We believe that the 1980 UN Weapons Convention should impose effective restrictions on the use of certain conventional weapons.

We believe, from the humanitarian point of view, that the only truly effective solution is a worldwide ban on antipersonnel mines, and that blinding as a method of warfare must be outlawed now.

We believe that the Convention should be extended to cover internal armed conflicts and should include practical means of enforcement and wide-ranging control mechanisms.

Most important, we believe that the 1980 UN Weapons Convention must be ratified by every country in the world.

Mines kill 800 people every month

- At least 800 people, mostly women, children and farmers, are killed by mines every month.
- According to the most conservative estimates, at least 85 to 100 million mines are still lying in the fields of 62 countries.
- Mines are cheap - as little as US $3 each - but it costs at least US $1,000 to remove just one of them.
- Under ideal circumstances, where minefields are known and even mapped, it takes 100 times as long to clear mines as to lay them.
- About 35 countries are known to manufacture mines.
- The ICRC has more than 40 expatriate specialists working worldwide to provide amputees with artificial limbs. The ICRC is involved in orthopaedic projects in 13 countries; under these programmes an average of 13,000 prostheses and 4,000 other appliances are produced each year.

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INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS
BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

Relief activities continue

More than 500 ICRC employees, including some 90 expatriates, are currently working throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina, bringing protection and assistance to victims of the conflict.

During the past week the ICRC has dispatched 19 convoys from central warehouses in Zagreb, Split and Belgrade. It has distributed more than 1,000 tonnes of relief supplies to displaced persons as well as medical supplies to hospitals, dispensaries, first-aid centres and front-line medical posts. In Sarajevo, the local Red Cross continues to provide more than 15,000 needy people with one hot meal a day.

Under the relief programme for the Tuzla region, individual food parcels, bulk food and winter items are distributed to more than 55,000 people. Some 8,000 people, including schoolchildren, receive a regular supply of milk and sandwiches as part of an ICRC project which supports a local jam factory and dairy farm (see ICRC News No. 5). In return for its support the ICRC receives jam, peanut butter and 800 litres of milk daily for its aid programme. The children’s sandwiches are made with bread baked from ICRC flour.

The ICRC continues to visit detainees, reunite families and collect and distribute Red Cross messages in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Further information: Jette Soerensen, ICRC Zagreb
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AFGHANISTAN

Exchange of mortal remains in Kabul

For the first time in six weeks of fighting, the ICRC was able to arrange for the belligerents to exchange the mortal remains of victims. Nineteen bodies were evacuated from the combat zones on 16, 17 and 19 February, thanks to a cease-fire agreement reached on 15 February and largely respected during the daytime. The operation should continue over the coming days.

The exchange was organized at the request of President Rabbani’s government troops and General Dostum’s Jumbesh-i-Melli forces. ICRC teams met the two parties’ representatives in charge of identifying and collecting mortal remains and drove them across the front lines. The bodies were then transported on board trucks provided by the Afghan Red Crescent. “It is time that these men were returned to their families”, commented an Afghan commander to one of the ICRC delegates during the exchange.

Further information: Jörg Stocklin, ICRC Geneva
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MEXICO

ICRC facilitates peace negotiations

The ICRC was asked by the Mexican government and the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) to act as a neutral intermediary in bringing the two parties to the negotiating table. On 20 February six ICRC vehicles, each with a delegate on board, drove their respective representatives to San Cristobal de las Casas, where peace negotiations began the following day.

ICRC delegates worked together with Mexican Red Cross personnel to help maintain security around the city cathedral while talks were in progress between the government, the EZLN and the Bishopric. The ICRC had already played the role of neutral intermediary between the government and the guerrilla forces on 16 February when it took part in the release of General Absalon Castellanos Dominguez.

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Head of Press: Paul-Henri Morard (Tel.: 730 24 70) - Editor: Lesley Botez (Tel.: 730 23 93)
1993: RECORD YEAR FOR THE ICRC

In 1993, the ICRC's activities reached a record high. Never before had the ICRC employed so many staff to carry out its humanitarian mission. The majority were local employees working in the field - many of them from National Red Cross or Red Crescent Societies. The ICRC's expenditure also reached a new peak, as did the volume of relief supplies distributed. ICRC delegates visited more detainees than ever before and distributed a record number of Red Cross messages.

1. ICRC presence worldwide
The ICRC maintains a permanent presence in 60 countries, distributed as follows:

- Africa: 23
- Asia: 12
- Europe: 9
- Latin America: 7
- Middle East: 9

It also has a delegation in New York, which handles relations with the United Nations.

2. Personnel
ICRC staff is distributed as follows:

- headquarters 664
- expatriate staff 862
- National Society personnel 175
- local employees 4,800

Total 6,501

3. Finance
The ICRC's overall expenditure in 1993, including assistance in kind and services, for activities carried out at headquarters and in the field amounted to 777 million Swiss francs (US$ 518 million). The institution's budget for 1994 totals 749 million Swiss francs (US$ 500 million).
4. Visits to detainees
   Last year ICRC delegates visited 143,610 detainees in 2,367 places of detention in 47 countries.

5. Central Tracing Agency
   The Central Tracing Agency (CTA) succeeded in establishing the whereabouts of 10,184 people for whom tracing requests had been filed.
   The CTA arranged for the exchange of 4,703,258 messages between members of families split up by conflict, disturbances or tension. It also enabled 2,182 people to rejoin their families.

6. Assistance
   The ICRC distributed more than 300,000 tonnes of relief supplies (food, clothing, blankets, tents, etc.) in 50 countries, for a total value of 268 million Swiss francs (US$ 180 million), including medical assistance worth 22 million Swiss francs (US$ 15 million).

7. Surgical activities
   The ICRC had surgical staff working in six hospitals, which admitted 8,000 patients over the year. Some 16,000 surgical operations were performed and 9,000 people were given outpatient care.

8. Orthopaedic projects
   The ICRC was involved in 28 orthopaedic projects in 14 countries. More than 12,000 amputees were fitted with prostheses and 3,400 people with other orthopaedic appliances.

9. Preventive activities
   The ICRC held several thousand courses on international humanitarian law during the year for both specialized audiences and the general public. Fifty-six courses on humanitarian law and the law of war were given for members of the armed forces at all levels in more than 65 countries.

10. Special events
    The ICRC played an extremely active role as Special Rapporteur to the International Conference for the Protection of War Victims held in Geneva from 30 August to 1 September 1993.
    The ICRC also launched a major campaign to alert public opinion worldwide to the appalling carnage caused by anti-personnel mines.

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Toni Burgener + +4122 730 2317
BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

Tuzla: ICRC bringing aid to 55,000 people

Ever since the ICRC opened its delegation in Tuzla in November 1992, the delegates working there have known no respite. Almost 55,000 particularly needy people (orphans, the elderly and the disabled) receive ICRC food aid every month. The food is distributed either in the form of individual parcels or in bulk (for social welfare institutions and hospitals). Food supplies are also provided under the winter relief programme. In emergencies, for example when there is a sudden influx of displaced persons, the ICRC serves meals and distributes basic necessities. In addition, some 8,000 infants, schoolchildren, orphans and hospital patients regularly receive milk and sandwiches. Twenty-two medical centres, hospitals, dispensaries and field hospitals, including ten facilities with a capacity of 500 beds, are provided with medicines and emergency medical and surgical supplies. The major hospitals, like the Klinicki Centar with its 1,600 beds and the Kreka psychiatric hospital, which has been entirely renovated by the ICRC, receive regular ICRC support. Some 30,000 Red Cross messages are exchanged every week, allowing members of separated families to rejoin or remain in contact with each other. The ICRC has 28 delegates and 36 local employees working in Tuzla. Road convoys from Belgrade bring in supplies for the assistance programme three times a week.

Further information: Jette Soerensen, ICRC Zagreb
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SOUTH AFRICA

Killed while waiting for relief distributions

Four women and a man were killed on Monday 7 March north of Durban while waiting for ICRC relief supplies to be distributed. They were receiving aid because their homes had been burned down. The same afternoon a group of 26 people, also waiting for blankets and family parcels to be distributed in Ndwedwe (Natal province), were attacked, and a woman and a youth were wounded. Vincent Nicod, head of the ICRC delegation in South Africa, condemned these attacks, saying: “All too often women and children are on the receiving end of this violence. Such outrages are a clear reminder that people who are not taking part in the fighting must be respected and protected”.

The Red Cross is continuing its work despite these incidents. For example, the situation is currently being assessed in the Bhambayi squatter camp in Durban, where 11 people were killed on 5 and 6 March. Three hundred others who had to flee the area also received Red Cross aid. Assisting the victims of violence is an integral part of the joint ICRC/South African Red Cross Society programme. In 1993, help was given to more than 40,000 people throughout the country.

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ISRAEL AND THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

ICRC concerned about protection of population of occupied territories

Following last month’s massacre of civilians at the mosque in Hebron, the ICRC delegation in Israel and the occupied territories reminded the Israeli government of its responsibilities in regard to the security of the population of the occupied
territories, pointing out once again that the settlement policy followed by Israel violates the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Immediately after the tragedy, ICRC delegates went to Hebron and were able to facilitate contacts between first-aid workers from the “Palestinian Red Crescent” and the Israeli authorities so as to speed up the evacuation of casualties to hospitals on the West Bank and in Israel.

The many clashes that broke out after the Hebron massacre have already left at least 30 dead on the Palestinian side and dozens seriously wounded. ICRC delegates make regular tours of hospitals in the occupied territories where the wounded are being treated to ensure that hospital staff have what they need to cope with the situation.

In January 1994 the ICRC launched an assistance programme for dispensaries and first-aid centres on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip. The programme covers part of the running costs of over 200 clinics serving almost 800,000 Palestinians. During the coming three months, the ICRC will replace the nine ambulances of the “Palestinian Red Crescent”, supply a further two vehicles and meet the cost of operating the emergency services.

At present there are 32 ICRC expatriates and 102 local employees, together with three members of National Societies, working at the institution’s delegation in Tel Aviv, at the subdelegations in Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, and in 12 offices throughout the occupied territories.

Further information: Rene-Luc Thevoz, ICRC Geneva Tel. ++4122 730 2302

COMOROS

First ICRC visit to security detainees

On 1 and 3 March, a delegate and a doctor from the ICRC visited 16 detainees in the Kandani military camp and 19 detainees in the central prison in the capital Moroni. This is the first time the ICRC has visited security detainees in Comoros.

All the people concerned have been imprisoned for State security offences. Thirty-one of them were arrested in connection with the attempted coup d’état of September 1992 and the military rebellion the following month. The other four were detained following the disturbances that broke out on the island of Anjouan during the December 1993 elections.

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CONFLICT IN NAGORNO-KARABAKH

Civilians used for barter

The ICRC is concerned about the continuing practice of hostage-taking in Azerbaijan and Armenia. Since 1993, ICRC delegates have visited 748 people detained in connection with the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. The ICRC deplores the fact that many of them are civilians, including women, children and elderly people, taken as hostages. Some are detained in groups, while others are held individually in family homes. They are used for bargaining purposes, to “buy” the freedom of detainees in the hands of the enemy. “When I learned that my son, a fighter, had been captured, I set about finding an Armenian in the hope of arranging an exchange”, declared one Azeri father. Like so many others in both Azerbaijan and Armenia, he is contributing to what has become an everyday business. Yet both States are party to the Geneva Conventions, which prohibit the taking of hostages.

Erwin Boehi, head of the ICRC delegation in Yerevan, explained: “The ICRC certainly doesn’t condone such practices, but it’s the only organization that visits these hostages to ensure that they are well treated. They can also write Red Cross messages to their families.”

Marina, an Azeri mother detained in a children's hospital in Stepanakert, had just received a message from her recently released husband. “We are still waiting. The time is long as we have nothing to do, and the children are always crying”, she said. Twenty-one members of this family were attending a wedding when they were caught by an unexpected advance of forces from Nagorno-Karabakh. That was back in July 1993. The men have since been exchanged, but five women and six children remain captive as their “market value” is lower.

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For TV networks: unedited footage on this subject available from the ICRC Press Division

RWANDA

Displaced persons return home

The majority of displaced persons in Rwanda have returned to their homes: some 600,000 have now gone back to the so-called demilitarized zone. Under its emergency rehabilitation programme (see ICRC News No. 7), the ICRC has continued to assist them by providing seed and farming tools. However, 350,000 people who fled in October 1990 from the extreme north of the country under the control of the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) are still in camps near Kigali. Very recently 35,000 of them also went back to the RPF zone. As a result, the ICRC has modified its aid programme and will distribute food rations until the next harvest. In addition, seed, tools, cooking pots, blankets and soap are provided by the Belgian Red Cross.

The ICRC currently has 26 expatriate staff and 133 local employees working in Rwanda. The institution’s 1994 budget for the country amounts to 40 million Swiss francs.

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ANTIPERSONNEL MINES

ICRC to have special status at Review Conference

At the end of the first meeting of the government experts responsible for examining the 1980 United Nations Weapons Convention, the UN asked the ICRC to prepare the official documentation for the Review Conference due to take place next year.

The group of experts decided that the ICRC should submit two reports. The first will deal with the need to improve Protocol II relating to mines and propose methods and means of doing so; it will also consider the humanitarian and military implications of any amendments. The second report, identical in form, will contain specific proposals concerning the Convention in general and existing and future protocols. These ICRC documents will provide the States party attending the Review Conference with a basis for discussion and decision.

During this first preparatory session, the experts also drew up the agenda for the forthcoming series of meetings and settled some procedural matters, such as the participation of non-governmental organizations. The ICRC was the only non­governmental institution present. At the suggestion of China, the UN agreed that, exceptionally, the ICRC should be granted special status at the Review Conference and its preparatory meetings, rather than being invited as an observer.

This first meeting was held in Geneva from 28 February to 4 March and was chaired by Mr Lars Norberg, the Swedish ambassador to the Disarmament Conference. Forty-eight States were represented, 26 of them parties to the 1980 Convention. The other 22 attended as observers. The second meeting of government experts is scheduled for 16-27 May 1994.

Further information: Umesh Palwankar/ Johanne Dorais-Siakmon, ICRC Geneva  Tel. ++4122 730 2669/2319

ETHIOPIA
Reunited after 20 years

“The families of the detainees were often dumbfounded. It took them several minutes to recognize their relatives and to realize that they were still alive”, said Rolf Schaller, an ICRC delegate in Ethiopia. The story is astonishing to say the least. About 100 men, now in a detention centre in Ethiopia, had had no contact with their families for years. Since enlisting in the armed forces between 1974 and 1984, they had been arrested and released several times by various opposition forces and then detained by the present government. Tracing their relatives was a major challenge for Red Cross delegates, who have found 59 families to date. Some of them had even observed the traditional one-year period of mourning. As soon as they heard the news, several families immediately took the opportunity to visit their long-lost relations. “For us, this operation is a great success”, remarked Rolf Schaller.

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FORMER YUGOSLAVIA
Seed for Krajinjas and Bosnia

The ICRC began distributing potato, vegetable, maize and wheat seed and fertilizer this week. This emergency agricultural rehabilitation operation is part of its 1994 aid programme for the former Yugoslavia, and follows a survey carried out over several weeks by a nutritionist and an agronomist from the ICRC. The programme covers the Krajina regions in Croatia, parts of northern and eastern Bosnia, including Banja Luka, and central and southern Bosnia-Herzegovina. By the end of April, 3,200 tonnes of seed and 120 tonnes of fertilizer will have been distributed. The beneficiaries will also receive vinegar, sugar and salt so that they can make preserves for next winter. The impact of the programme will be assessed in August.

Further information: Jette Soerensen, ICRC Zagreb  Tel. ++385 41 612 444
AFGHANISTAN
Food aid for those most in need

On 20 and 22 March the ICRC was able to restore a tenuous food distribution process in Kabul. Tenuous perhaps, but for some it was essential. A total of 42 tonnes of flour from World Food Programme stocks were distributed to 1,117 of the most destitute families in the city (some 7,200 people). Carried out in cooperation with the Afghan Red Crescent and with the consent of the belligerents, the operation took place simultaneously on both sides of the front line and was greeted with relief by the civilian population. It brought vital food supplies to the most vulnerable among the thousands of people displaced within the Afghan capital. After more than two months of violent clashes the inhabitants of Kabul are at the limit of their endurance. Some areas of the city are experiencing severe shortages.

Kabul war-weary
Since January the ICRC delegation has been distributing emergency relief (blankets, cooking utensils and plastic sheeting) to some 50,000 “internally displaced” people living in 80 public places. Very quickly - indeed, just as most humanitarian organizations, apart from Médecins sans frontières, were leaving the city - it became obvious that the displaced people would need food aid. On 3 February and 9 March, the ICRC succeeded in sending two convoys to Kabul, carrying 85 and 100 tonnes of flour respectively. Drawing also on its own emergency reserves and on WFP stocks, since 1 January the ICRC has provided the city’s displaced inhabitants with almost 550 tonnes of wheat and flour.

Over 15,000 wounded
The ICRC’s medical activities continue in and around the capital. Hundreds of casualties have been evacuated, and 45 hospitals, clinics, dispensaries and first-aid posts have received increasing support in the form of medicines and other medical supplies. Since the beginning of the year, 15,200 casualties have been treated in these establishments.

Further information: Jörg Stöcklin, ICRC Geneva Tel. +41 22 730 2906

BURUNDI
Spiral of violence continues
The latest events in Burundi have left many dead and thousands wounded in the capital, Bujumbura. The city’s hospitals are overwhelmed. Since Tuesday, eight ICRC delegates have been working around the clock in quarters where tension is running high and where the situation in terms of food and medical assistance is most critical. The ICRC has evacuated over 50 casualties. The city’s two main medical centres, the Kamenge University Hospital and the Prince Regent Hospital, and several health posts have received a tonne of emergency medical supplies. The head of the ICRC delegation has urged the parties involved to comply with the most basic humanitarian rules. The ICRC is gravely concerned about the new upsurge of violence in Burundi and is maintaining an extensive presence in the country.

Further information: Daniel Augstburger, ICRC Geneva Tel. +41 22 730 2244
ICRC BROADCASTING SERVICE

Swiss Radio International to transmit RGBS programmes

From 27 March the programmes of the Red Cross Broadcasting Service (RGBS) will be transmitted by Swiss Radio International on the last Sunday of each month. This will enable the service to reach an even wider audience. The programmes, sent out in English, French, German, Spanish and Portuguese, comprise reports from the field, interviews with delegates and news about ICRC activities. Programmes in Arabic are also available.

RGBS first appeared on the airwaves just a few days before the end of the Second World War. At the time, the aim was to broadcast the names of thousands of prisoners of war about to be released and of persons separated from their families or reported missing. By the end of 1948, “Radio Inter Croix-Rouge” had sent out over 600,000 names and countless family messages in 17 languages to many countries.

Today, apart from the monthly broadcasts on short wave (see box), RGBS recordings are distributed to several national and regional radio stations. “The transmission of our programmes by Swiss Radio International opens new horizons for RGBS”, remarked Patrick Piper, head of the service.

Further information: Patrick Piper or Jean-Pierre Abel, ICRC Geneva Tel. ++4122 730 2019/2021
To radio stations: cassettes and tapes of RGBS programmes may be ordered from the ICRC Press Division.

New frequency

RCBS is now being transmitted on a new frequency: 6.165 kHz in the 49 metre band (short wave). The programmes are broadcast on the last Sunday of each month at the following times (UTC):

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<tr>
<th>Language</th>
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<tr>
<td>English</td>
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ANGOLA

ICRC extends its emergency operation

The ICRC has extended its operations in Angola. In Huambo, more than 500 tonnes of food are distributed to some 13,000 families every week and meals are served daily to about 10,000 people in 18 community kitchens. The ICRC also runs two feeding centres for severely undernourished children and plans to open two more shortly. Six regional hospitals are receiving assistance in the Huambo area and the ICRC is running nine health posts in the town itself. The extended programme also covers Kuito, where water shortages are a major problem. Together with OXFAM, the ICRC plans to sink a number of boreholes. In nearby Kunje, where the ICRC has carried out a joint evaluation mission with the World Food Programme, the UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs, MSF- Belgium, Concern and Caritas, the lack of fresh water is a very serious problem which the ICRC intends to tackle. In Malanje, the accent is being placed on non-food and medical assistance.

No news for over a year

Tracing activities have also increased considerably. Several hundred messages are regularly exchanged between Luanda and 10 towns in the rest of the country. Over the past week in Huambo more than 600 Red Cross messages were collected and distributed. Some of the people concerned had had no news of their relatives for more than a year. The ICRC currently has 51 expatriates, helped by nearly 800 local employees, working in Angola.

Further information: Arnold Blättler, ICRC Geneva Tel. ++4122 730 2287
ISRAEL/OCCUPIED TERRITORIES
Aid distribution in Hebron’s old town

On Tuesday 29 March, the ICRC distributed 300 family parcels in Hebron’s old quarter; each 32-kg parcel contained staple foods, soap and candles. The operation reached some 3,000 beneficiaries and took place without incident. Its aim was to help the inhabitants of neighbourhoods particularly affected by the curfew in effect since 25 February last. The curfew was officially lifted on 26 March but commercial activity in the town centre remains at a standstill, as the Palestinian population is reluctant to venture out.

This is the first time since the beginning of the intifada that the ICRC has distributed, with the agreement of the Israeli authorities, food aid to the Palestinian civilian population on the West Bank. This form of collective assistance is provided for in Articles 59 and 61 of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Further information: Reto Meister, ICRC Tel Aviv
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LIBERIA
Between peace and disaster

Liberia is at a turning point in its history. If the peace process does not continue, the country will face disastrous consequences, especially in humanitarian terms. In many areas thousands of people are still living in extremely precarious conditions, while the fighting continues. All humanitarian activity in Lofa county has been suspended because of the prevailing insecurity, depriving several hundred thousand refugees and displaced people of vital aid. In rural Liberia, where the ICRC is helping some 100,000 displaced people, the situation remains alarming. “Only real peace can bring a solution to the problem”, pointed out Antoine Koechlin, head of delegation in Monrovia. The ICRC is also continuing to visit hundreds of people detained because of the conflict, both in Monrovia and in the rest of the country.

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For TV networks: unedited footage on this subject available from the ICRC Press Division

CAMEROON/CHAD
Ethnic violence in northern Cameroon

Clashes between the Kokoto and Choa tribes in the northernmost part of Cameroon have forced 450 families to flee their homes and cross into Chad. These 3,000 people are currently in the Mani region, near Lake Chad. According to the Red Cross of Chad, they are completely destitute and in urgent need of aid. The ICRC is planning to assist them without delay. Together with the National Society, it will provide each family with 50 kg of millet, 10 kg of beans and a cooking pot. This should meet their immediate needs while they wait for the situation to return to normal so that they can go back to Cameroon.

Further information: Tony Burgener, ICRC Geneva
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ICRC HOT LINE FOR JOURNALISTS

Emergency telephone line for journalists

Every year dozens of journalists are killed, wounded, arrested or simply disappear while on a professional assignment. The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists reports that last year 56 journalists were killed and 126 imprisoned worldwide. Aware of the dangers they face, as early as 1985 the ICRC set up at its Press Division a round-the-clock hot line for journalists.

Families, employers and the professional associations concerned can contact the ICRC whenever a journalist is in difficulty anywhere in the world. The practical measures that the ICRC can take include enquiring into the whereabouts of missing journalists, recording the information obtained and notifying families and employers, visiting journalists in detention, exchanging family news, and sometimes making repatriation arrangements, depending on the circumstances.

Twenty-four cases in former Yugoslavia alone

Between 1985 and 1990 the ICRC dealt with 26 hot-line cases. Over the following three years the figures soared: four times that many cases required some form of intervention by ICRC headquarters in Geneva and its delegations in the field. This sharp increase can be attributed mainly to the 1991 Gulf war and to the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, where no fewer than 24 cases have been reported to the ICRC.

The emergency number to call is +41 22 734 6001
Fax: +41 22 734 8280 HOT LINE/ICRC Press Division

A leaflet containing practical details is available from the ICRC Press Division in Geneva

MOZAMBIQUE

Laurinda finds her father

Laurinda, a little Mozambican girl, became separated from her parents during an attack on their village three years ago. When the fighting in Mozambique came to an end, there were many children in the same situation. So far, the ICRC has registered over 3,400 unaccompanied children throughout the country.

A month ago ICRC delegates came across Laurinda in a Renamo base. Her only wish was to find her parents again. A volunteer from the Mozambique Red Cross took down all the details about her origin and, miraculously, managed to trace her father shortly after. Laurinda's father could hardly believe that his little girl was still alive, and the day they met again he wept for joy. "They were so overcome by emotion that they couldn't utter a word", said Michel Oberson, ICRC delegate in charge of family reunifications in Mozambique.

Of the thousands of unaccompanied children registered so far, 358 have been taken back to their parents, while 719 other families have been able to trace and recuperate their children thanks to information gathered by ICRC delegates. But many other youngsters are still waiting to be reunited with their parents, especially those depending on the warring forces now being demobilized. There are also the children who were separated from their families at such an early age that they cannot give sufficient information about their origin. The ICRC has stepped up its approaches to the competent authorities in order to expedite the family reunification process.

Further information: Dominique Buff, ICRC Maputo
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SOUTH AFRICA

Red Cross responds to violence in Natal

John Matshali's weary face breaks into a smile as ICRC field delegate Pia Schneider hands him two food parcels, a jerrycan and eight grey woollen blankets. This 68 year-old man is one of thousands of victims of violence who have received help through the countrywide ICRC/South African Red Cross Society (SARCS) relief programme since the beginning of the year. Although he has had more than his share of the troubles that plague South Africa, this is the first time that the rising tide of political violence in the Natal/KwaZulu region has forced him to flee his home in Mpozama.

"The tension can be felt everywhere"

As the election date draws near, the region is turning into a tinderbox. Over the past few weeks there have been many violent deaths and hundreds of homes have been burned down. The declaration of the state of emergency in Natal/KwaZulu is another indication that the spiralling violence is affecting ever greater numbers of innocent civilians in the province. "The tension can be felt everywhere", said Claude Voillat, head of the ICRC Durban delegation that covers Natal. "In the course of our work we've had ample evidence that those worst hit by the violence are innocent women and children. This has to stop."

Assistance for thousands of people

In February the Red Cross provided more than 450 families in Natal province with food parcels, blankets, plastic sheets, jerry cans, primus stoves and kitchen sets; in March even more aid was distributed. Under the joint ICRC/SARCS relief programme, which started in 1988, last year help was given to some 40,000 people throughout the country.

Further information: Nic Sommer, ICRC Pretoria, Tel.+2712 437 335

CAMBODIA

Fourteen soldiers and two civilians freed

Fourteen government soldiers and two civilians, recently captured by the Khmer Rouge forces, were freed under ICRC auspices on 2 April and handed over by the ICRC to the Royal Government of Cambodia in Poipet, in the north-west of the country. The operation was carried out by two delegates and two ICRC doctors, with the assistance of the Royal Thai Government.

The ICRC has been working in Cambodia since 1979, focusing also on protection activities for the civilian population. Its medical activities include support for the surgical unit of Mongkol Borei hospital and running an orthopaedic workshop in Battambang. At present the ICRC has 38 expatriate staff and 180 local employees in the country.

Further information: François Zen Ruffinen, ICRC Bangkok, Tel.+662 251 0424

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS
SUDAN

Seed planted in time for the rains

The first rains are expected in southern Sudan in April or early May. In order to give the population there a chance of becoming self-sufficient again, over the past few weeks the ICRC and other international organizations have been distributing seed and necessary tools. Since the beginning of the year the ICRC has handed out some 230 tonnes of seed and 110,000 farming implements to over 200,000 people in the Kongor, Ganyiel, Mayen Abun, Raga and Pibor areas. Distributions of fishing tackle and mosquito nets to 300,000 beneficiaries are to get under way later this month.

Surgical unit in Juba hospital

The ICRC has completed the rehabilitation of the surgical wing of the regional hospital in Juba. An ICRC team consisting of a surgeon, an anaesthetist, a theatre nurse and a ward nurse has been stationed at the hospital since late March. They will work with local staff and train them in surgical techniques.

Further information: Guy Mellet, ICRC Geneva
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ETHIOPIA

Strengthening ties between OAU and ICRC

Today 7 April, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the ICRC are holding a seminar in Addis Ababa to which all ambassadors accredited to the OAU have been invited. “The aim of the meeting is to strengthen the relationship between the OAU and the ICRC by consolidating political and diplomatic support for our activities throughout Africa”, explained Marguerite Contat, ICRC delegate to the OAU in Ethiopia. For the OAU this seminar is a further step towards closer cooperation in the field. “It is in the interest of both the ICRC and the OAU to work together to prevent the kind of human suffering the world has witnessed in countries like Somalia, Liberia, Rwanda and others, where the effects of war have caused untold misery for the civilian population”, said Dr M.T. Mapuranga, Assistant Secretary-General of the OAU’s Political Department.

Further information: Marguerite Contat, ICRC Addis Ababa, Tel. ++2911 511 083

ICRC IN AFRICA IN 1993

Last year in Africa the ICRC carried out 1,333 visits to a total of 20,722 prisoners in 17 different countries, arranged for the exchange of nearly 300,000 messages between members of families split up by conflict, and established the whereabouts of 5,419 people for whom tracing requests had been filed. Worldwide the ICRC distributed more than 300,000 tonnes of aid (food, clothing, blankets, tents and medical supplies) in 50 countries: four-fifths of this assistance went to the African continent. Officers from 43 African countries were given special courses on international humanitarian law; these included an important workshop held in Nairobi in December.
BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

ICRC seeks urgent access to Gorazde

The ICRC is seeking clearance and security guarantees to enable its delegates to deliver urgently needed relief goods and emergency medical supplies to the Gorazde enclave in eastern Bosnia.

The ICRC has been present in Gorazde since May 1993 and its two delegates there are continuing their protection and assistance work for the civilian population and detainees as best as they can despite the precarious security conditions.

Refugees and wounded have been flooding into the town and all remaining ICRC food stocks and medical supplies have now been distributed. An ICRC convoy is standing by to enter Gorazde, but has not yet been granted permission or received the necessary security guarantees.

On 11 April 1994, ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga called upon all parties to the conflict to exercise restraint in the conduct of hostilities, to abstain from any acts of reprisal and to respect the civilian population, the wounded and the detainees.

Further information: Pierre Gauthier,
ICRC Geneva Tel. ++41 22 730 2839

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

Water: still a daily concern in Mostar

Using battered pram frames, trolleys and even wheelbarrows, men, women and children of all ages trudge through the streets of Mostar with their precious cargo of water.

“This is my third trip today”, a weary 65-year-old man explains to ICRC delegates. “I have 15 people in my home four kilometres up the hill, I must take this to them”, he says, as he slowly climbs the steep, stone steps with a vice-like grip on the heavy container in each hand.

The left bank’s 35,000 residents have been without running water for more than a year. In January, the ICRC supplied pumps, pipes and a generator to install three communal water distribution points in the town.

The next stage of the emergency phase began this week with the delivery of six 2,000-litre tanks and more than one kilometre of pipes, which will serve to double the number of street-level distribution points and will also supply treated water to schoolchildren.

“Before these taps were here, I had to cross the Neretva river and dodge the snipers’ bullets in order to fetch water. It was very dangerous and I could only risk it at night”, says another man who is patiently waiting in the queue, clutching his ICRC jerrycans.

Further information: Pierre Gauthier,
ICRC Geneva Tel. ++41 22 730 2839

EAST TIMOR

Increased ICRC activities

The ICRC has decided to step up its public health work in East Timor. A pilot programme launched in 1988 has largely concentrated on supplying remote villages with drinking water. So far, 32 such projects have been completed on the island. Given the real benefit they have brought to the civilian population, the ICRC has increased the number of sanitation teams working there in 1994 from one to three in order to accelerate the process of tapping springs and sinking wells and maintain the necessary installations.

Together with the local health department, the programme also promotes hygiene and monitors public health. An ICRC sanitary engineer and nurse are responsible for supervising its implementation, in close cooperation with the Indonesian Red Cross.

Further information:
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RWANDA

Humanitarian emergency

The fighting that has raged in central Rwanda since early April has now spread to the entire country, leaving tens of thousands of people dead and as many injured. Hundreds of thousands more have fled their homes to escape the slaughter and are now scattered throughout the country. There is an enormous need for humanitarian assistance.

In Kigali ICRC medical teams are working round the clock at both the central hospital and an ICRC field hospital, where over 600 casualties have already received treatment. The ICRC has also started distributing food aid to several thousand people in various parts of the capital.

Two additional ICRC teams that managed to enter the country from Burundi and Uganda on 16 and 17 April are now conducting a survey of medical and food needs in the north and south of the country. Initial reports indicate that several hundreds of thousands of people have gathered in the north-east and south-east of Rwanda and that some 100,000 more are grouped near Butare in the south. The ICRC will try to get food through to them in an operation organized together with the World Food Programme (WFP), which has made available its food stocks in Burundi.

The ICRC’s work would be impossible without the steadfast support of the Rwandese Red Cross staff and its own local employees who are taking part, often at the risk of their own lives, in medical activities and food distributions in the capital.

In their constant contacts with all the parties involved, ICRC delegates are also calling for the lives of civilians and the wounded to be spared and for aid workers to be allowed to perform their humanitarian tasks.

Further information: René-Luc Thévoz, ICRC Geneva
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FLASHBACK: ICRC in Rwanda

Following the outbreak of the conflict in Rwanda in October 1990 the number of displaced people in the country grew steadily, reaching a total of 900,000 in February 1993. With the aid of over 250 volunteers from the Rwandese Red Cross, the ICRC worked in coordination with other international organizations to help these people, who were living in 15 different camps. Some 13,000 tonnes of food were brought in each month from February 1993 until February 1994, when most of the displaced people were able to return home. In addition to food distributions, measures were taken to ensure that the sick received medical care and that the camp dwellers had access to clean drinking water. Thousands of Red Cross messages were forwarded, restoring contact between the displaced people and their relatives in Rwanda and abroad. More recently the Red Cross distributed seed and agricultural implements to the returnees to help them regain their autonomy.

For TV use: Unedited footage (BETACAM) and a 29-minute film (BETACAM) on the situation in Rwanda in May 1993 may be ordered from the ICRC’s Press Division (Tel. +41 22 730 20 80).
BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA
Humanitarian cease-fire desperately needed in Gorazde

As fighting continues in the eastern Bosnian enclave of Gorazde the situation of the civilian population is becoming more desperate by the hour.

The ICRC strongly urges all the forces concerned to agree on an immediate cease-fire so that humanitarian staff can carry out their mandate and bring assistance to all the victims without any further delay.

ICRC delegates in Gorazde report heavy shelling in and around the town. The hospital has been hit several times and chemical storage facilities have been fired on, causing a dangerous leak of ammonia gas. Some shells have landed close to the ICRC office.

For over two weeks, the ICRC has been in constant contact with all the parties to the conflict, urging them to let it carry out its humanitarian work. The ICRC convoy with vitally needed medical and relief supplies has still not been granted access to Gorazde. Further priorities include the evacuation of casualties requiring treatment no longer available, and additional ICRC staff to back up and relieve those already on the spot.

Further information: Robyn Thompson, ICRC Zagreb
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SOUTHERN LEBANON
Assistance for the civilian population

Southern Lebanon and the "security zone" occupied by Israel continue to be the scene of almost daily clashes between Israeli forces and the "South Lebanon Army (SLA)", on the one hand, and the Lebanese resistance movement, on the other.

On 14 April a powerful explosive device went off in the village of Aramta, situated in the "security zone", killing five "SLA" militiamen and one civilian and wounding more than ten other civilians and militiamen. Since then, the village has been totally sealed off by the "SLA".

At present only the ICRC and the Lebanese Red Cross are allowed to work in Aramta. Together with the National Society, the ICRC has set up a mobile clinic for the inhabitants and recently evacuated two sick people from the village.

The ICRC delegation in Lebanon is keeping a close watch on developments in the southern part of the country and, whenever necessary, reminds the parties to the conflict of their obligation to respect the civilian population.

Further information: Bernard Pfefferlé, ICRC Beirut
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SOUTH AFRICA
Red Cross gears up for elections

With South Africa's non-racial elections only days away, and several regions still racked by violence, teams of the South African Red Cross Society (SARCS) and the ICRC are fine-tuning their plans for emergency first-aid intervention if needed.

In each province, hundreds of Red Cross volunteers, along with SARCS and ICRC staff, will be deployed in some of the most sensitive areas. First-aid posts will be open during voting hours (7 a.m. to 7 p.m.) and - where possible - ambulances are on standby to evacuate the wounded. "The South African Red Cross is making a massive effort to field trained volunteers, and the ICRC has reinforced its own team in areas such as around Johannesburg and in Natal," says Jean-François Sangsue, ICRC head of field operations in South Africa. "In many areas the Red Cross will be the only help available - but it is unfortunately a fact that we cannot be everywhere. We can only hope that all will pass off peacefully".

The situation has been made more difficult by the fact that public services in some areas are curtailed by strikes or other mass action.

Further information: Nicolas Sommer, ICRC Pretoria
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RWANDA
Heart of darkness

The extreme violence that has been tearing Rwanda apart is claiming more victims every day. The refugees streaming across the country's borders give horrific accounts of massacres. ICRC delegates who returned to Geneva on 27 April are badly shocked by the terrible events there. “It was the heart of darkness”, said one.

The conflict in Rwanda, which has caused over 100,000 deaths in two weeks, constitutes one of the gravest crises that the ICRC has ever faced. The hundreds of thousands of people displaced throughout the country now face starvation. There is hardly a family in the country that has not been affected by this tragedy, whether because of the death of loved ones, being forced to flee, or hunger. The entire population is suffering.

The unspeakable violence that continues to prevail throughout the country makes it impossible to consider large-scale food distributions. Any activity by humanitarian organizations is hazardous and uncertain. ICRC delegates who last week went to the Butare area were obliged to leave the town after standing by helplessly as numerous people were slaughtered before their very eyes.

Twenty-nine delegates remain in Rwanda

The ICRC is maintaining its presence in Kigali. Fifteen delegates have stayed on there, mostly medical staff, and some 800 casualties continue to receive treatment in two hospitals in the capital. The ICRC also has 14 delegates in other parts of the country. The activities they undertake in the coming days will depend on the security guarantees they are able to obtain. “Whatever we’re managing to do at the moment is but a drop in an ocean of horror”, commented Daniel Augstburger, the desk officer for Rwanda at ICRC headquarters.

Further information: Tony Burgener, ICRC Geneva Tel. ++41 22 730 2317

ANGOLA
Widespread severe malnutrition among children in Ganda

Ganda is the granary of Benguela province in Angola. Yet one of every two children in the town of the same name shows signs of severe malnutrition, with a loss of over 25% of normal weight. Hundreds of them have swollen legs and feet, sure evidence of their critical condition. “I’ve been observing the situation in Angola for the past 12 years”, says Alain Mourey, an ICRC nutritionist who last week carried out a survey in the town, “but this is the worst I’ve ever seen.” Mourey found that about a hundred children were dying each day. Most of the nearly 40,000 people in the town have been displaced from neighbouring villages. They have nothing to eat but dried banana leaves, unripe papayas and the occasional yam or cob of maize. “Large-scale and long-term humanitarian relief is essential to remedy the situation”, Mourey adds. The constant lack of security is preventing the region’s inhabitants from cultivating their fields.
**Initial distributions**

This week ICRC aircraft began flying in food from Lobito for the starving population of Ganda, and the first distribution of maize took place on 27 April. The ICRC plans to bring in 600 tonnes of food per month. In the next few days it will set up therapeutic feeding centres for severely undernourished children and community kitchens for those requiring more assistance than the general distributions provide. “If we are able to conduct the operation as we see fit”, Mourey predicts, “the situation should be under control within two or three months”. Distributions will then probably be continued until the people can once again till their fields and a good harvest restores their self-sufficiency.

**Huambo: assistance needed until April 1995**

Huambo serves to show that the work of humanitarian organizations is not in vain. Last December, 40% of the inhabitants were suffering from severe malnutrition. Since January, the ICRC has brought in more than 6,000 tonnes of food, which has benefited 250,000 people and put a stop to child deaths directly related to malnutrition. The ICRC’s food aid programme in Huambo will be continued at least until the next main harvest in April 1995. “Because of the drought earlier this year, 70% of the present harvest has been lost”, explains Philippe Lazzarini, head of the ICRC mission in Huambo. “Add to that the total collapse of the economy and you have an unprecedented disaster. The entire population of this town needs help from the international organizations”.

Other towns and regions in Angola, such as Malanje, Kuito and Kunje, are also dependent on international humanitarian aid.

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Black and white photos, as well as slides, are available at the ICRC’s Public Information Service, Tel. +41 22 730 2033

**AFGHANISTAN**

**Financial appeal for assistance for displaced people**

On 27 April the ICRC launched a simultaneous appeal in Islamabad and New York to the international community, highlighting the humanitarian needs in Afghanistan. The appeal, addressed primarily to the principle donor States, called for financial assistance to alleviate the continuing plight of the civilian population there. The request coincided with a similar appeal from UNOCHA (the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance to Afghanistan).

632,000 people displaced

There are estimated to be 632,000 displaced persons in Kabul and the provinces of Nangarhar, Laghman and Parwan. This heavy influx has forced the ICRC to reconsider its initial budget for 1994 of 24,478,414 Swiss francs. An additional 9,946,353 francs is required to bring vitally needed food aid and other relief supplies to the most vulnerable among them. The ICRC plans to carry on for a further six months the aid already being given to 60,000 displaced persons currently living in public places in Kabul. In Jalalabad, the ICRC intends to assume complete responsibility for Samarkhel camp where 22,000 people displaced from Tagab and Sarobi are housed. In addition, food aid will be provided in cooperation with the local branch of the Afghan Red Crescent Society to 42,000 residents of the capital who have found shelter among the population of Laghman.

Medical supplies for 45 hospitals and dispensaries

The ICRC is also giving medical assistance, which has increased considerably since fighting resumed on 1 January this year. In Kabul and the surrounding area, it is currently providing 10 hospitals and 35 dispensaries and clinics with medical and surgical supplies. The ICRC is also supporting the main hospital in Jalalabad as well as three orthopaedic workshops, in Kabul, Herat and Mazar-I-Sharif.

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RWANDA

Unabated suffering

The grim ordeal of the people of Rwanda remains unabated. Fighting and massacres continue in many parts of the country, driving the population into chaotic flight. The threat of famine also looms: because of the conflict, hundreds of thousands of people have little or no access to food. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has started mass distributions of food aid via its delegation in Kigali and its outposts in the north and south of Rwanda.

In the capital Kigali, thousands of terrified people have taken refuge in parish halls, hospitals, embassies and the national stadium. Their very survival depends upon aid from outside. Despite extremely hazardous conditions the ICRC, in cooperation with the Rwandese Red Cross, is managing to get regular supplies of food through to some 25,000 people. Emergency surgical care is also being provided to the victims of the ongoing violence.

45 tonnes of emergency medical aid dispatched

The ICRC hospital set up in Kigali as soon as the crisis began is submerged with work. On 1 May another 56 casualties were taken there after the attack on the Holy Family church, which left 13 dead and more than a hundred injured. A dispensary was also opened with Red Cross help and has provided treatment for all the other casualties. To date a total of 45 tonnes of medicines and other emergency medical supplies have been distributed in Kigali to hospital facilities assisted by the ICRC.

Surgical team for Kabgayi

At the request of the Rwanda government and in response to the huge needs generated by the tragic events, the ICRC opened a sub-delegation today, 5 May, in the religious centre Kabgayi. Five delegates and a surgeon will take over care of the hundreds of casualties in the monastery hospital there.

The ICRC also intends to provide assistance for the tens of thousands of displaced people in the Gitarama region. An additional surgical team of five people seconded by the Finnish and Netherlands Red Cross Societies will be sent out from Geneva to Kabgayi within the next few days.

Initial food distributions to 60,000 people in northern Rwanda

According to ICRC estimates, there are now 170,000 newly displaced people of all ethnic groups housed in makeshift camps in the north of the country. The first food distributions have already taken place to 45,000 people to the east of Ruhengeri and 15,000 others in Byumba. For the time being, this Red Cross operation is being carried out from a logistic base in Kabale, in southern Uganda.

Further Information: Tony Burgener, ICRC Geneva
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First distributions of ICRC emergency aid in Tanzanian refugee camps

The ICRC was the first organization to start work in the refugee camps in Tanzania. It has carried out a first distribution of emergency food aid to 220,000 people: each person received 1 kg of beans. A unique feature of this operation is that the ICRC is being helped simultaneously by volunteers of the Tanzanian and Rwandese Red Cross Societies. Further distributions will be made until organizations specialized on aid to refugees take over.

39 expatriates in action

In all, 39 ICRC delegates have been assigned to the operation in Rwanda: 15 expatriates based in Kigali, six in Kabgayi, four in Ngara (on the Tanzanian border), five in Bukavu and Goma (on the Zairian border) and nine others in charge of assisting displaced people in the north of the country. In all, there are 39 expatriates working in Rwanda.
CHAD

Visits to security detainees

For the first time the ICRC has visited security detainees in Chad. In the capital N'Djamena, two delegates went to five places of detention where there were 706 inmates, including nine security detainees, whom they interviewed without witnesses. The ICRC provided hygiene requisites to all the prisons visited.

In Abéché food aid was provided for the security detainees. In accordance with its customary procedure, the ICRC will visit the security detainees again in the near future.

Further information: Tony Burgener, ICRC Geneva
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BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

Water for Gorazde

In the aftermath of the recent offensive against Gorazde in eastern Bosnia, a priority has been to provide running water for refugee centres and the hospital, where the supply was disrupted by shelling and all water for drinking and washing has had to be fetched from springs or wells.

On 27 April 1994, an ICRC convoy carrying water supply and sanitation equipment left for Gorazde with an ICRC water engineer on board. Immediately upon its arrival there, an emergency supply of drinking water was installed in the hospital by pumping well water into a 5,000-litre bladder tank erected on the roof of the building.

Another bladder tank has been erected in the local Red Cross building to provide water for the Red Cross office and refugee centre, which houses 500 elderly and vulnerable people. With more than 12,000 refugees living in unsanitary conditions in schools and communal buildings, the restoration of running water for toilets, showers and kitchens is crucial.

Surveys have also been made to locate private wells in the town that can be upgraded and used as community distribution points for both local families and displaced persons. Hand pumps have been ordered for wells where water is drawn in buckets, and the ICRC plans to repair numerous existing pumps. This programme will benefit some 4,000 people living on the right bank of the river Drina.

Although the ICRC's emergency work has been effective in restoring water to places where needs were greatest, a longer-term solution depends in part on repairing the water treatment plant on the outskirts of Gorazde, which was damaged and mined.

The ICRC has surveyed the plant, and whilst the work of reconnecting broken pipes and repairing the damaged infrastructure is not difficult, it is complicated by the fact that the plant is close to the front line. The site must also be cleared of mines. Once this has been achieved the repair work will begin, in cooperation with the local water authorities.

Since 27 April the ICRC has had four expatriates and 10 local staff permanently stationed in Gorazde to carry out all traditional ICRC activities, including visits to detainees and distribution of assistance to needy persons.

Further information: Robyn Thompson, ICRC Zagreb
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YEMEN

Two ICRC teams on the spot

On 10 May two ICRC delegates and a doctor arrived in Aden by sea from Djibouti with two tonnes of emergency medical supplies. The team will first make contact with the authorities and then go on to assess the situation in the town's hospitals.

Three other delegates had reached Sana'a by air on 9 May, also bringing with them two tonnes of medical supplies. They planned to begin a tour on 10 May of hospitals in the capital and in other towns in the north to distribute medicines, dressings and analgesics.

Further information: René-Luc Thévoz, ICRC Geneva
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RWANDA

The bloodshed continues

There has been no halt to the massacres in Rwanda. Appalling atrocities are committed every day, in flagrant violation of the most basic principles of humanity, and the number of victims continues to rise. The efforts being made by the ICRC to lessen the suffering of the Rwandan people cannot mask the horror that has the country in its grip.

The ICRC is bringing assistance to about 200,000 people displaced within Rwanda. As soon as the clashes broke out the ICRC distributed food to some 25,000 people seeking refuge in various parts of the capital, Kigali. On 5 May, 60,000 displaced persons in the north of the country were given maize, cooking oil and beans. On 9 May the ICRC began food distributions to 50,000 people gathered in an area between Kigali and Gitarama, and food aid is on its way to 70,000 people in southeastern Rwanda.

In Kigali ICRC medical staff are continuing to treat hundreds of wounded in the temporary hospital set up when the conflict broke out, and the ICRC is regularly providing medical supplies to the capital's main medical facilities, the Central Hospital and the King Faisal Hospital. About 400 casualties are also being treated by an ICRC medical team in Kabgayi, a few kilometres from the town of Gitarama.

Since 7 May two ICRC delegates and a nurse have been able to make daily visits to the stadium in Cyangugu, near the Zaire border, where 5,000 people have taken refuge. A dispensary has been set up inside the stadium and food distributed. Sanitary conditions are deplorable - there is only one tap supplying clean water - and an ICRC sanitary engineer left Geneva for Cyangugu on 10 May to try to remedy the situation.

Further information: René-Luc Thévoz, ICRC Geneva
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AZERBAIJAN/ARMENIA

Conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh: emergency aid

Fighting continues in Nagorno-Karabakh, leaving thousands dead, wounded, or displaced from their homes. Talks held last week in Kyrgyzstan between representatives of the parties to the conflict again ended in failure.

Since 10 April some 10,000 Azeri families have been displaced by the conflict. ICRC delegates have already distributed 2,000 sheets of reinforced plastic, almost 4,000 blankets, 200 tents and 5,300 food parcels to this new wave of displaced people.

“The hardest thing is to persuade farmers to get far enough away from their villages to be safe.
What's more, the 3,000 families camping along the roadsides in the Agdam district have brought 10,000 head of cattle with them”, said Ferry Aalame, head of the ICRC subdelegation in Barda (Azerbaijan) until his recent return to Geneva. “All these people want is to go home as soon as they can.”

The number of casualties has soared in recent weeks. Many civilian and military hospitals on both sides of the front line are receiving regular ICRC assistance.

Further information: Suzanne Berger, ICRC Geneva
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ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES
Second preparatory meeting for Review Conference

The second meeting of the group of government experts charged with preparing for the Review Conference of the 1980 Convention on conventional weapons is due to take place in Geneva from 16 to 27 May 1994. The ICRC is taking part in this process at the invitation of the United Nations Secretary-General. This second meeting will examine the need for and means of improving Protocol II of the Convention, which deals with landmines.

At its first meeting in February, the group of experts asked the ICRC to draw up a report on the subject. This text, which will serve as an official document, has just been submitted to the group's Secretary.

Further information: Umesh Palwankar, Legal Division, ICRC Geneva; Johanne Dorais-Salamon, Press Division, ICRC Geneva; Tel. ++4122 730 2669/2319

ANGOLA
Relief distribution

A consignment of 8,772 tonnes of relief supplies for the victims of the conflict in Angola was unloaded from the Chriso in the port of Lobito last weekend.

The cargo comprised 5,300 tonnes of maize flour, 1,800 tonnes of beans, 950 tonnes of cooking oil, 25 tonnes of high-energy milk for therapeutic feeding centres, 55 tonnes of soap, 6,000 blankets, 425 hospital beds and 16 tonnes of medical supplies, all donated by the European Union and several National Red Cross Societies.

The ICRC will distribute the aid to the needy in Kuito and Kunje (Bié province), in the town of Huambo and various municipios in Huambo province, and in Ganda (Benguela province).

Another ship carrying further relief supplies is expected to arrive in Lobito within the next two to four months. This will enable the ICRC to continue its humanitarian work for victims of the Angolan conflict.

Further information: A. Beteta, ICRC Luanda
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RWANDA

A new threat: shortage of drinking water

Continued fighting between government troops and forces of the Rwanda Patriotic Front has caused more population movements towards the centre of the country. Several hundred thousand people are now massed near the town of Gitarama, swelling the ranks of all the other displaced people throughout Rwanda.

The ICRC is facing a host of urgent needs: its first priority is to try to protect the lives of those who have fled to escape the carnage, but it must also care for the wounded and sick and organize food distributions. To make matters worse, there is now a critical shortage of drinking water. Two ICRC sanitary engineers are trying to put the water treatment plants in Kigali and Kabgayi back into service, and two more will go next week to Butare, Gisenyi and Cyangugu. Ten tonnes of aluminium sulfate, a vital water treatment chemical, have been flown to Kigali from Kenya and another five tonnes to Burundi for use in Kabgayi, south of Gitarama. A reserve stock of 50 tonnes is being kept in Kenya.

On 16 May a food convoy of cereals sent by the ICRC delegation in Kigali arrived at the stadium in Gitarama, where several thousand people have taken refuge. A large-scale food distribution is due to begin in the centre and east of the country in the next few days.

An ICRC surgical team is continuing to treat hundreds of wounded people at the Kabgayi complex. The ICRC is planning to transfer to Kabgayi some of the overflow from the central hospital in Kigali, which has a capacity of 400 patients and has now admitted 1,500.

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CAMBODIA

ICRC response to renewed fighting

The fighting that has flared up again in north-western Cambodia is causing further suffering, primarily among civilians.

The ICRC, with its 39 expatriates and 279 local employees on the spot, is responding to the worsening situation mainly by expanding its medical activities. There is a constant influx of wounded into the hospital in Mongkol Borei, where the ICRC surgical team treated 277 casualties in April. The orthopaedic centre continues to function despite the clashes.

The ICRC is providing the various health facilities in the region with medical supplies, and its delegates are keeping a close watch on the situation of displaced people.

In this highly volatile context the ICRC maintains contacts with all the parties to the conflict so as to obtain the necessary guarantees of access to the victims; at the same time it reminds them of the basic rules of international humanitarian law.

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INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS
YEMEN

Somali refugees caught in the crossfire
The camp in Al Kud, about 50 km east of Aden and home to several thousand Somali refugees, came under fire last week. On 14 May, an ICRC delegate and a representative of the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) were able to enter the camp. Representatives of the refugees claimed that several hundred people had been killed or wounded as a result of these attacks. The ICRC and UNHCR are currently in contact with the Yemeni authorities to arrange for the evacuation of the refugees to a safer area.

Since the fighting began, teams from the ICRC and the National Red Crescent Society have been visiting civilian and military hospitals in Sana’a, Ta’iz, Dhamar, Ibb, Al Baida, Aden and Lahaj, distributing four tonnes of emergency medical supplies. A stock of medicines and dressings is in Djibouti, ready to be sent to Yemen. In the Lahaj and Aden regions the ICRC is providing aid to some of the 10,000 displaced people who have fled the combat zones. They have found refuge with local families or in public places made available by the Aden authorities.

The ICRC has also begun visiting people interned because of the conflict. Soldiers and civilians arrested or captured by the Sana’a and Aden authorities have been seen and registered by ICRC delegates, who assessed their conditions of detention.

Further information: René-Luc Thévoz, ICRC Geneva
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ANGOLA

Family messages exchanged
ICRC Tracing Agency activities in Angola, mainly involving the exchange of news between members of families split up by the conflict, have risen sharply in recent weeks.

During the month of April alone, 9,597 Red Cross messages were received in Agency offices and 4,868 forwarded to their addressees. These figures are higher than those recorded for the first three months of the year, during which a total of 8,559 messages were received.

This increase has prompted the ICRC to extend its tracing services in Angola. At the moment it has eight Tracing Agency offices, in Luanda, Lobito, Lubango, Kuito, Huambo, Malange, Menongue and Uige. Tracing activities are shortly to begin in Ganda, where the ICRC only recently established a presence.

Branch offices will be set up to strengthen the network in various parts of the country. There are already six of these covering eight districts of Luanda, and two more have been opened in Kunje (Bié province) and Caala (Huambo province).

Further information: A. Beteta, ICRC Luanda
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ECUADOR

ICRC visits security detainees
Between 10 and 12 May an ICRC team comprising two delegates and a doctor visited 13 security detainees in four detention centres in the cities of Quito and Guayaquil. The detainees had the opportunity to speak to the delegates without witnesses, in accordance with the ICRC’s customary procedure.

Further Information: Cristina Fedele, ICRC Geneva
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RWANDA

Violent clashes in Kigali

Fighting between government troops and forces of the Rwanda Patriotic Front has reached a new peak of violence in and around Kigali and at several points along the front line that divides the country. The streets of the capital are so dangerous that the ICRC team on the spot can no longer move around freely.

There have been exchanges of artillery fire in the city centre, near the hospitals. The central hospital, which is treating thousands of wounded, once again came under fire on 23 May. Mortar bombs had already hit the hospital on 19 May, killing 30 patients. The number of victims claimed by the latest onslaught is not known, as delegates have been unable to reach the building. According to hospital staff, the medical facilities are unusable. Some 40 wounded have been taken to the ICRC hospital in Kigali, and on 24 May about a hundred more reached Kabgayi, where another ICRC surgical team is working. During a further attack, the compound of the ICRC delegation in the capital was hit by a rocket on 25 May. Two Rwandan employees were killed and five other people were wounded. The delegation contacted the parties to the conflict, urging them to respect civilians, the wounded and the members of humanitarian organizations still present in Rwanda.

The ICRC delegation in Kigali has had to suspend its food distributions in and around the capital for lack of the necessary security guarantees. The volatile military situation and the incessant movements of hundreds of thousands of fleeing civilians have made it impossible for the ICRC to launch a large-scale food distribution programme. Yet food convoys are regularly arriving in Rwanda from Uganda, and others are shortly to be dispatched from Burundi. Convoys coming in from Tanzania are still held up at the border. The ICRC had built up vast stocks of food in these neighbouring countries with a view to setting up distributions for 700,000 displaced persons.

The needs for medical, nutritional and sanitation assistance are incalculable, but the top priority is to ensure the survival of those who have so far escaped the slaughter. Providing a measure of security for these people will be the task of the new contingents of UN troops.

Further information: René-Luc Thévoz, ICRC Geneva
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YEMEN

Evacuation of Somali refugees

Following numerous ICRC representations to the authorities in Sana’a and Aden, 800 Somali refugees still living in the Al Kud camp were evacuated on 24 May. An ICRC doctor took part in the operation. The camp, located near the front line, has come under fire several times and hundreds of refugees have been killed or wounded. The refugees have been transferred to a new location outside the combat zone, east of the town of Zinjibar.

Meanwhile, ICRC delegates have been continuing their protection activities in behalf of hundreds of people, mainly members of the armed forces, detained by both sides.

Two ICRC doctors are making regular visits to hospitals in Sana’a, Aden and Taiz, providing support to local medical teams and supplying them with medicines and dressings. Hundreds of war wounded have already received treatment.

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ANGOLA

ICRC response to food crisis

In response to the catastrophic nutritional situation in the city of Huambo at the end of 1993, humanitarian agencies, including the ICRC, launched a major food-aid operation early this year in behalf of the population there. This food aid, complementing a small early harvest of beans in January, brought about real nutritional improvements. But these improvements are very fragile and the population is still heavily reliant on food aid.

From mid-March to the end of May, ICRC teams of agronomists and nutritionists carried out surveys in the remote rural parts of Huambo, Bié and Huila, as well as the enclave of Ganda, in Benguela province. "In the countryside, up to 70% of the main maize crop has been destroyed by a severe two-month drought. Although in most places people will probably survive by tapping other resources for a few more months, such as sweet potatoes or sorghum, food availability is extremely limited. Only a small amount will be traded with the towns and the hunger period will start in the villages some time between July and September", stated ICRC agronomist François Grunewald, just back from Angola.

In the Ganda enclave, the nutritional situation is still very bad. "People were chewing unripe sorghum to allay their hunger", he said. The ICRC launched a kitchen programme there for children at the beginning of May. On 20 May, the first general food distribution was completed, bringing food to 14,000 families.

"Food aid to the cities of Huambo and Caala and to the Ganda enclave must continue", Grunewald stressed. But blankets, salt and soap will be distributed as well. An emergency agricultural rehabilitation programme is also being set up. It will both support production in the countryside and the enclaves and improve food supplies to the urban centres. "This is the only way to make real progress", added Grunewald.

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FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

Promoting knowledge of international humanitarian law

This month, the ICRC held dissemination seminars for the first time for army officers of the Bosnian Croat and Bosnian government forces in Central Bosnia. Over 100 officers attended the courses on the law of armed conflict and Red Cross activities, which took place in Tesanj and Zepce.

For the first time also, a representative from the Croatian army is currently following an international military course on the law of armed conflict at the International Institute of Humanitarian Law in San Remo, Italy.

Over 2,200 army officers have hitherto attended dissemination seminars organized by the ICRC since September 1992.

Further information: Robyn Thompson, ICRC Zagreb
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RWANDA

Hundreds of thousands displaced

The magnitude of the tragedy unfolding in Rwanda is immeasurable. A vast number of people have been displaced: estimates vary between one and two million. These people have lost everything. Many of them are wandering around the countryside completely bereft of shelter, food and medicines.

"Wave upon wave of displaced people"

During the past week alone, tens, even hundreds of thousands of people have fled the capital, Kigali. This is how the delegate in charge of the ICRC sub-delegation in Kabgayi, Aalame Fereydoun, described the scene on the road between Kigali and Gitarama: "Wave upon wave of displaced people are moving towards Gitarama. They can't stop along the way because every possible space is already crammed with displaced persons. These people are city-dwellers; they have no cattle with them, so no reserves of food. It is hard to see how they are going to survive the trip. Many of them won't make it." Some of those who have reached Gitarama are now setting off towards Kibuye. Numerous other towns in Rwanda are completely overwhelmed by this human tide. Several hundred thousand totally destitute people have also gathered in the north and the west, in zones controlled by the Rwanda Patriotic Front (FPR).

A crisis beyond the capacity of the ICRC

The scale of the tragedy in Rwanda is well beyond the capacity of the ICRC. The Red Cross has been present since the start of the conflict and is currently assisting over 200,000 people in both government and FPR-controlled zones. During the last few days food distributions have been carried out in Gitarama, Kabgayi, Nyanza, Cyangugu and Byumba, and in the Ruhengeri area. A thousand casualties are being treated by Red Cross surgical teams in hospitals in Kigali and Kabgayi, and other hospitals have received medicines and medical supplies.

Aid programme for 750,000 people

In the coming days the ICRC will be setting up the necessary logistic structure to bring aid to 750,000 people in Rwanda. This is as much as it can do. "Other humanitarian organizations must step in quickly", said Daniel Augstburger, the delegate at ICRC headquarters in charge of operations in Rwanda.

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FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

ICRC needs another 56 million Swiss francs

The ICRC has just reminded donor countries that it needs a further 56 million Swiss francs to cover estimated expenditure for all its emergency operations in the former Yugoslavia up to the end of 1994.

Improving respect for civilians and detainees

The ICRC's humanitarian activities in the former Yugoslavia have been stepped up in recent months, with the aim of improving respect for the civilian population during hostilities and preventing the harassment of minority groups behind the battle lines. The ICRC has taken action in Gorazde and Prijedor in particular, to ensure better respect for civilians and detainees.

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS
ICRC delegates have also continued their efforts to gain access to all detainees and to arrange for their release, in accordance with the commitments made by the parties to the conflict. Some 4,800 have been released under ICRC auspices in central Bosnia during the last few months. In addition, the volume of Red Cross messages exchanged to maintain contact between members of dispersed families is constantly on the rise (currently 200,000 per week).

**Aid to hospitals still a priority**

Providing assistance to hospitals remains a priority for the ICRC, together with the many sanitation programmes which have been set up throughout Bosnia–Herzegovina, sometimes in cooperation with National Red Cross Societies.

**Food aid**

The ICRC is scaling down its food aid, a decision prompted by the combined effects of the major distributions carried out in recent months, the opening of certain roads to commercial traffic, the implementation of agricultural programmes and the presence of numerous other organizations which are providing food in some areas. The situation in this respect will be followed closely in the coming months.

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**ANGOLA**

**Renewed fighting claims civilian lives**

The latest upsurge in fighting in Angola is causing great suffering among the country’s civilian population. In Kuito, Huambo and other towns, shelling and artillery fire have caused heavy civilian casualties. In Huambo’s central hospital 17 wounded have been treated by the ICRC’s medical team and a surgeon from CISP, an Italian aid agency. Relief flights to Huambo, Kuito and other destinations have been suspended, preventing humanitarian organizations from bringing in much-needed help. In many parts of the country the food and medical situation remains critical, and a prolonged interruption of humanitarian activities would have extremely serious consequences. In the words of Christophe Harnisch, head of the ICRC delegation in Luanda: “Humanitarian flights must be resumed at once”.

Further information: Christophe Harnisch, ICRC Luanda
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**AFGHANISTAN**

**Mine incident**

Last Wednesday, 25 May, a tragic accident happened at a school near Mir Bachakot, north of Kabul. While turning in the yard, a school bus carrying 51 children and four adults hit an anti-tank mine. Four people were killed in the blast and 49 others wounded. After receiving treatment at the ICRC’s first-aid post in Mir Bachakot the wounded were taken by ICRC ambulances to Kabul’s Karte Seh hospital. Nineteen of them were admitted to hospital and four had to undergo amputations. No fewer than 43 of the casualties were under 14 years of age.

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ANGOLA

SITUATION DETERIORATES AFTER FIGHTING RESUMES

Renewed fighting in Angola is severely hampering humanitarian activities there. Aid flights to Kuito, Huambo and other towns have been interrupted and stocks of food and medicines are dwindling fast.

Huambo: only community kitchens and feeding centres still open

In Huambo the ICRC has had to stop general distributions of food to about 250,000 people, although the community kitchens and feeding centres are still open in the mornings. "Unless we receive supplies quickly, the situation will get very bad", warned Philippe Lazzarini, head of the ICRC mission in Huambo.

ICRC alone is working in Kuito

In Kuito, where the ICRC is still the only international organization working on the spot and numerous casualties await treatment, a partial distribution of food was organized on 4 June. "The situation is alarming, and even disastrous", said Dominique Henry, ICRC delegate in Kuito.

Ganda: flights continue

Ganda, where dozens of children are dying each day of starvation, is the only town which can still be supplied with food. Its 40,000 inhabitants "vitaly need daily large-scale assistance", said Christophe Harnisch, head of the ICRC delegation in Luanda, stressing that "humanitarian work and aid flights must continue despite the escalation of hostilities".

Further information:

Christophe Harnisch, ICRC Luanda, tel. ++244 393 382 and
Tony Burgener, ICRC Geneva, tel. ++41 22 730 2317

For TV networks

Footage:
Unedited footage filmed in late April/early May in Huambo, Kuito, Ganda and Luanda is available from the ICRC Press Division in Geneva, tel: ++41 22 730 2909.

Special brochure on Angola
A special brochure on the situation in Angola may also be ordered from the Press Division, tel: ++41 22 730 2317.
YEMEN

FIGHTING AROUND ADEN

Fierce fighting between the Sana'a and Aden armed forces is gradually closing in on the densely populated city of Aden and its suburbs.

In the hospitals, where thousands of casualties – mainly soldiers – are streaming in, ICRC doctors are assisting the local medical staff. Since the beginning of the conflict the ICRC has managed to distribute 12 tonnes of emergency medical supplies (sutures, analgesics, antibiotics, anaesthetics, bandages) to hospitals in Sana'a, Taiz, Lahej, Aden, Abyane and Shabwa. But additional medical supplies are urgently needed and will be dispatched shortly.

Water treatment plants and water mains have also been damaged by the fighting, disrupting Aden's drinking water supply. The ICRC is sending a sanitary engineer to the city to examine means of providing the population with water.

Further information: René-Luc Thévoz, ICRC Geneva
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MOROCCO

VISIT TO 72 SAHRAWI PRISONERS

From 30 May to 2 June three ICRC delegates and an ICRC doctor visited 72 Sahrawi prisoners held in Agadir, many of whom had been captured between 1978 and 1985 during the conflict between the Kingdom of Morocco and the Polisario Front. Following the visit, the delegates reported their findings to the prison authorities and to representatives of the Moroccan Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The visit took place in accordance with the ICRC's customary procedures.

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BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

ICRC WORKS TO RESTOREGORAZDE WATER SUPPLY

An ICRC sanitation team is engaged in the first phase of a project to rehabilitate a water treatment plant which was severely damaged during fighting around the eastern Bosnian town of Gorazde in April.

"The plan is to get the plant back into working order by repairing pipes and fittings and then to tackle the larger problems associated with malfunctioning equipment", explained Hans Ulen, the ICRC engineer assigned to Gorazde.

The first phase now under way should be completed within one month.

"The second, more complicated phase will involve considerable technical difficulties because we must replace the filtration system", Hans pointed out.

The sanitary engineer said that the Gorazde project is a priority because as summer approaches, the present flow of water will not be enough to meet the town's needs and any prolonged blockage of the sewage system could lead to an outbreak of disease.

Further information: Robyn Thompson, ICRC Zagreb
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AFGHANISTAN

COMBATING INDIFFERENCE

As many as 4,000 dead, 21,000 wounded and half a million people displaced in the Afghan conflict since January, and there still seems to be no end in sight. Few people are aware that there have been as many victims in the first half of 1994 as in the months preceding the departure of Soviet troops in February 1989.

The ICRC has been in Afghanistan since 1987. It is one of the few humanitarian organizations still working in Kabul, providing emergency medical care and assistance to thousands of displaced people.

Left to their fate?

Have the Afghan people been left to their fate? Not quite. Every day, volunteers of the Afghan Red Crescent do their best to help. The Society's makeshift bakeries make bread for the poor. Staff from six other National Societies are working alongside ICRC delegates, mainly in Kabul and Jalalabad. In an effort to improve public health, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies provides funds for dispensaries and mobile clinics.

For the rest of the international community, however, Afghanistan seems to have disappeared off the face of the earth. Avoiding oblivion is yet another challenge — and by no means a negligible one — for the people of Afghanistan.

Further information: Jörg Stöcklin, ICRC Geneva
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At the end of June the ICRC will be publishing an illustrated brochure on the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan. This "special" is intended for the media and for major donors interested in humanitarian operations in the country.

RWANDA

ICRC HOSPITALS OVERWHELMED

The ICRC hospitals in Rwanda are overwhelmed. In Kigali and Nyanza ICRC medical and surgical teams are treating hundreds of people, most of them seriously wounded. The main problem facing the two hospitals is obtaining supplies of medicines, food and drinking water.

Over 800 operations in Kigali hospital

Since the beginning of the crisis 712 people have been admitted to the hospital in Kigali, most of them suffering from bullet or shrapnel wounds. The surgical team has performed over 800 operations since mid-April, and hundreds of other casualties have received outpatient treatment. A nearby house has been converted for use by convalescing patients, even though the security conditions are extremely precarious. The hospital has been hit by shells several times.

But there is new life too in Kigali: recently there have been eight births at the hospital.

Medical supplies reach Nyanza

The ICRC hospital in Kabgayi was transferred to Nyanza last week. At present 270 wounded are being treated there, in extremely difficult conditions. The main problem, lack of water, has just been solved: an ICRC sanitary engineer has succeeded in tapping springs which provide some 5,000 litres per hour. On 10 June a truck carrying medicines and medical supplies arrived in Nyanza, just as the hospital's stocks were running out. In the next few days an ICRC builder will be carrying out structural repairs to the premises.

The ICRC is also providing medicines to dozens of health facilities elsewhere in Rwanda.

Further information: Tony Burgener, ICRC Geneva
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CAUCASUS

ICRC HELP FOR THE ELDERLY IN ABKHAZIA

There has been a general improvement in the situation in Abkhazia in recent months, but medical services, which were hard hit by the conflict, are taking a long time to recover. Following a recent medical survey the ICRC, in cooperation with the local Red Cross, decided to set up a medical and social welfare programme for elderly people who are ill or living alone. A team made up of a nurse, a social worker and a cleaner makes regular visits to persons who cannot get about. The programme should reach more than 1,000 people. In the majority of cases, they belong to communities most of whose members left Abkhazia at the time of the fall of Sukhumi in September 1993. Some of them could not survive without outside help.

As it is still difficult to deliver medicines to medical facilities, the ICRC is giving assistance to two polyclinics in Sukhumi, which provide outpatient services for the 40,000 inhabitants of the town and the surrounding area. The buildings housing the polyclinics were destroyed during the fighting but medical activities resumed in January this year. As well as basic drugs (antibiotics, analgesics, etc.), the ICRC supplies medicines for chronic ailments such as diabetes and cardiovascular diseases.

At present, Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) and the ICRC are the only organizations working in the medical field in Abkhazia. Since the fighting broke out the ICRC has been assisting the surgical units of hospitals treating war casualties, while MSF has been delivering medicines and medical supplies to non-surgical units and dispensaries.

Further information: Suzanne Berger, ICRC Geneva
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"HELP" COURSE

GLOBAL APPROACH TO HEALTH IN CRISIS SITUATIONS

The HELP (Health Emergencies in Large Populations) course for 1994 opened at the Geneva University Medical Centre on 6 June. This year's course, run by the ICRC together with WHO and the Community Health Unit of the Geneva University Faculty of Medicine, counts 25 health professionals (doctors, nursing staff and nutritionists) from 15 countries among its participants. Since this annual event was introduced in 1986, some 350 members of the medical and paramedical professions from 87 countries have taken part.

Increased professionalism

Over the last 20 years humanitarian aid activities have been carried out according to increasingly professional standards. Better analysis reveals all the complex aspects of crisis situations and highlights the risks inherent in ill-prepared and poorly managed operations. Epidemiological analysis has become more systematic, and a global approach to the health problems of displaced persons and refugees has been adopted, taking into account medical problems, nutritional aspects and environmental factors.

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RWANDA

VIOLENT CLASHES IN KIGALI

Hundreds of people have been killed or injured in Kigali in clashes during the past few days. The ICRC has not been spared, either: one employee lost her life and three other employees were wounded when three shells hit the ICRC hospital compound last Sunday morning, 19 June.

Dozens of wounded every day

Dozens of casualties are treated at the ICRC hospital each day, many of them as out-patients. In this 200-bed facility last weekend there were over 600 patients. Since mid-April ICRC surgical teams have carried out more than 1,000 operations there.

Second medical facility in use

In the RPF-controlled area of the city the ICRC has just moved into the King Faisal hospital, where a surgical team from Médecins sans Frontières is stationed. An ICRC sanitary engineer has started repairs to ensure that the hospital has an independent and sufficient supply of drinking water.

Since the ICRC hospital in the other part of Kigali is seriously overcrowded, 107 patients, mainly women and children, were transferred to the King Faisal hospital on 20 June.

4,000 tonnes of food distributed

Over the past two months the ICRC has distributed 4,000 tonnes of food to some 350,000 displaced people. It has set up several logistic bases in the countries bordering on Rwanda, with the aim of getting aid through to as many as 750,000 beneficiaries.

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ICRC MISSION TO BHUTAN

An ICRC team has concluded its visit to detainees in the Kingdom of Bhutan. This mission, which began on 19 May, is the fourth of its kind since the Bhutanese government threw open its doors to the ICRC in January last year.

The team reported that the visits to Thimphu Central Jail and the new Chamgang Prison in the nearby hills were carried out in accordance with the ICRC's customary procedure. The ICRC delegates had free access to all detainees, including 165 so-called "anti-nationals".

A regular system of correspondence between detainees and their families living in refugee camps in Nepal, which was organized by the ICRC during its previous visits, was working smoothly.

Further information: Jörg Stöcklin, ICRC Geneva,
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OAS

RESPECT FOR HUMANITARIAN LAW ENCOURAGED

On 10 June the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS), meeting in Belém (Brazil), adopted a resolution advocating respect for international humanitarian law. The text, sponsored by the representatives of seven Latin American States, emphasizes the universal nature of the humanitarian principles. Another key element of the resolution is the call to OAS member States to sign the Protocols additional to the Geneva Conventions.

Arms proliferation opposed

In its first plenary session, on 6 June, the Assembly had adopted the so-called "Belém do Pará" declaration voicing the readiness of OAS member States to contribute to international efforts to combat any proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

The meeting was attended by an ICRC delegation led by the Delegate General for Latin America.

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YEMEN

FIGHTING CLAIMS MORE CIVILIAN VICTIMS

Since early June, attacks on Aden and its suburbs have left several dozen civilians dead and hundreds wounded. The ICRC is concerned about the turn events have been taking, since artillery fire and air raids have been causing more and more civilian casualties. It has once again contacted the two parties to the conflict to remind them of their responsibilities in the conduct of hostilities, one of which is to ensure that civilians, the wounded, and detained persons are respected in all circumstances.

On 18 June, an ICRC ship managed to reach Aden from Djibouti with emergency medical supplies and 38 tonnes of food (flour, cooking oil, lentils and sugar) for several thousand displaced people in and around the Yemeni capital. Some of them have found shelter in public buildings and abandoned homes.

An aircraft also carrying medical supplies landed in Sana'a on 20 June. ICRC distributions of medical requisites to hospitals in Sana'a, Taiz, Lahej and Aden are helping Yemeni medical staff to care for people wounded in the fighting. Two ICRC surgeons are on the spot providing technical assistance to local doctors.

An ICRC delegate and doctor are currently making their way towards the coastal town of Al Mukallah, in the south-east of the country, where clashes are currently taking place. Their first task will be to assess medical needs in the area.

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FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

"RADIO LINK" A JOINT BBC/ICRC HUMANITARIAN OPERATION

On Sunday 3 July, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) will broadcast a radio programme aimed at restoring links between people separated by the conflict in the former Yugoslavia and who could not be reached through the worldwide Red Cross message (RCM) network. The BBC’s World Service will give listeners throughout Europe an additional possibility of getting in touch again with lost relatives or friends.

This new programme – which can be received throughout Europe – will be broadcast every Sunday on short and medium wave. RADIO LINK will be broadcast in local languages of the former Yugoslavia. People living in the former Yugoslavia will be able to receive it there.

Nine million Red Cross messages

In the former Yugoslavia, millions of people (detainees, displaced persons, refugees and others) have been able to resume or maintain contact with their families through RCMs. In all, nearly 9 million RCMs have been exchanged since the beginning of the war. Thanks to active tracing methods, more than 95 per cent of all RCMs reach the addressee. RADIO LINK, a joint BBC/ICRC programme, has been set up to increase the success rate of the RCM service.

Day of broadcast: Every Sunday
Time: from 19:30 to 20:00 GMT, i.e. between 21:30 and 22:00 local time in the former Yugoslavia

Short-wave:
Southern Europe: 11 680 kHz (25 m) – 9 825 kHz (31 m)
Central Europe & Scandinavia: 5 875 kHz (49 m)
South-East Europe, including the former Yugoslavia: 9 915 kHz (31 m) – 6 125 kHz (49 m)

Medium-wave:
Benelux, Central Europe & Scandinavia: 1 296 kHz (231 m)

Further information: Pierre Gauthier, ICRC Geneva
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INDONESIA

FAMILY VISITS TO DETAINEES

In late June the ICRC regional delegation in Jakarta organized the first of two series of family visits scheduled for 1994. This has enabled families from East Timor and Irian Jaya to see their relatives detained thousands of kilometres away in Jakarta, Semarang, Surabaya and Pamekasan, on the island of Java. With the ICRC’s help, 74 people from Irian Jaya and 22 from East Timor made this long journey – some of them leaving their home villages for the very first time. Among the visitors were the wife and the two children of Alexandre Xanana Gusmão, the FRETILIN (Frente Revolucionário de Este Timor Independente) leader held in Cipinang Prison. The four were reunited on 30 June after being separated for more than 20 years. The Gusmão family had come from Melbourne and their visit was arranged by the ICRC in cooperation with the authorities and the Indonesian Red Cross on the one hand, and the Australian Red Cross on the other.

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RWANDA

OVER 1,200 OPERATIONS AT ICRC HOSPITAL IN KIGALI

Since mid-April surgical teams at the ICRC hospital in Kigali have performed over 1,200 operations and treated several thousand outpatients in hazardous conditions. Following the city’s take-over by the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF), the number of new patients has dropped, and only 10 casualties were admitted on 4 July. Since the 200-bed hospital currently has more than 300 patients, an extra floor has just been equipped to alleviate the overcrowding.

Nyanza hospital moved

The ICRC’s hospital in Nyanza has been moved to Rilima and the transfer was completed on 5 July. Patients there will continue to be cared for by two surgical teams from Médecins sans frontières who are already on the spot. ICRC medical activities in the region will focus on the camps for the displaced, where a dysentery epidemic is threatening over 100,000 people.

Orphans in Nyamata

About one thousand orphans whom the ICRC had been assisting for the past few weeks in Nyanza have now almost all made their way to Nyamata. Other unaccompanied children from Ruhango, who had been abandoned near the Busoro bridge, are also being moved to Nyamata as a matter of urgency owing to the threat of epidemics and malnutrition.

Nyarushishi camp: therapeutic feeding centre for 930 children

The lives of many children are also at risk in the camp for displaced persons at Nyarushishi near Cyangugu. Some 930 of them – many suffering from a severe lack of protein – are being cared for at the camp’s therapeutic feeding centre. Another 1,430 unaccompanied children in Nyarushishi will be registered by the ICRC in the coming days in order to facilitate efforts to reunite them with their families at a later stage.
Over 6,500 tonnes of food distributed

Since mid-April the ICRC has distributed over 6,500 tonnes of food and medical supplies worth over 2 million Swiss francs. Further distributions are planned in the near future. The ICRC recently provided food aid for the first time to 15,000 displaced persons in the Giseny area and to 6,500 people in Sanza. In the medium term it expects to assist some 750,000 people in need.

10,000 people receive food aid in Kigali

In the first distribution of food aid since the RPF gained control of Kigali, 10,000 displaced people in the St. Michel and St. Famille churches were given food by the ICRC on 5 July. This assistance was possible thanks to the ICRC's stocks in Kigali.

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CAUCASUS

ICRC SUPPORTS THREE ORTHOPAEDIC WORKSHOPS

Following a survey by ICRC orthopaedic technicians in the Caucasus, the ICRC is about to launch a rehabilitation and assistance project for three orthopaedic workshops in Azerbaijan and Georgia – at Baku, Tbilisi and Gagra (Abkhazia). The disastrous economic situation in the region since 1992 has brought local orthopaedic services to a standstill: most of the centres visited have received no supplies for over two years, and waiting lists for prostheses are endless. In Armenia, needs are partly covered since some orthopaedic centres are still in operation.

Five-year project

The project will be carried out in three stages extending over a period of five years. The workshops will first be restored and materials supplied for manufacturing prostheses. The ICRC will then train local employees to fit artificial limbs, and will ultimately turn the project over to the local authorities. The 1994 budget for the operation has been set at over 1.5 million Swiss francs.

Over 20,000 war amputees

In the Caucasus, there are more than 20,000 amputees as a result of the fighting. The figure includes victims of earlier conflicts who need their artificial limbs repaired or replaced and those wounded more recently in Abkhazia and Nagorno-Karabakh.

The use of anti-personnel mines has dramatically increased the number of casualties. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has claimed several thousand victims, including a large number of amputees. In Abkhazia too, displaced persons who are beginning to return home to the Gali area following the deployment of the CIS peace-keeping force are at risk from the many mines scattered throughout the region.

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RWANDA

THOUSANDS OF CHILDREN TO BE REGISTERED

In Rwanda, the problem of thousands of unaccompanied children is as crucial as ever. The humanitarian organizations present there and in Zaire, Burundi and Tanzania are doing everything they possibly can to give these children the protection and assistance to which they are entitled. An essential part of caring for them is to identify every child, keep track of each one at all times and trace their families.

Registration of unaccompanied children has begun

For this purpose large-scale registration is under way. Several thousand children, for instance, have been evacuated to the neighbouring countries of Rwanda and to Europe, where National Red Cross Society tracing services are busy registering them. UNHCR has identified some 3,000 children in the Benaco refugee camp in Tanzania. In Zaire, several hundred children are being identified in the Bukavu area and in Goma by various organizations and institutions. In Rwanda, over 1,400 children are currently being registered by ICRC delegates in the Nyarushishi camps near Cyangugu and at an orphanage in Gisenyi. "Cooperation with all these organizations and institutions is going very well", said Alfredo Mallet, the ICRC's Central Tracing Agency coordinator for Rwanda.

Thousands of parents without news of their children

Meanwhile hundreds of parents have already contacted the ICRC and the tracing services of National Red Cross Societies or other organizations in an attempt to find their children or those of relatives who have lost their lives.

Pooling of information indispensable

To find and reunite children, parents or relatives wherever they may be, the ICRC has offered its services to centralize all information in a single data bank. "This pooling of information is indispensable to give the parents the best possible chance of finding their children again", explained Coraline de Wurstemberger, a delegate of the ICRC's Central Tracing Agency in Geneva. "It also requires good coordination by all concerned", she goes on, "since every child's file has to be kept up to date".

The data base thus created already contains the names of almost 900 registered children. It is now being installed in all the ICRC's offices in Rwanda, the neighbouring countries and Geneva. The information will be widely publicized by every means available so that as many children as possible can be restored to their families.

ICRC staff increased

To ensure that the necessary data is collected, centralized and redistributed, the ICRC has increased its expatriate staff in Rwanda: eight delegates have already been assigned to this priority task.

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INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS
TRACING AGENCY

ELOQUENT SIX-MONTH STATISTICS

The ICRC’s Central Tracing Agency accomplished an impressive amount of work during the first half of 1994, as shown by the following figures:

► over 27,500 captives were visited and followed up individually by ICRC delegates in nearly 1,500 places of detention in more than 70 ICRC theatres of operation;
► over 4.5 million Red Cross messages were exchanged between members of families separated by conflict;
► over 1,600 people were reunited with relatives;
► over 4,700 people were repatriated or transferred;
► over 1,000 ICRC travel documents were issued for people without identity papers.

All these activities were made possible by the international network of tracing services of the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and the work of thousands of expatriate and local ICRC staff in the field.

Information on hundreds of thousands of people, which is regularly updated, is contained in some fifty data bases set up in the ICRC delegations and at ICRC headquarters in Geneva. A standard computer application has been specially designed for them. This data, collected by the ICRC, helps to provide more effective protection for the victims of conflict.

YEMEN

ADEN’S POPULATION STILL SUFFERING FROM WATER SHORTAGE

Even though the fighting has ended in Aden, it is as problematic as ever to keep the population supplied with drinking water. The poorest quarters and hospitals are most severely affected by the water shortage, which also increases the danger of epidemics.

Bir Nasser, Aden’s main waterworks, was damaged during the fighting and has been out of order for the past two weeks. ICRC engineers, who managed to reach it once hostilities had ceased, estimate that repairs will take several weeks. At present, a little water can be obtained solely from the wells in the city’s mosques.

The only short-term solution to alleviate the water shortage to some extent is to have water brought by tanker trucks from Lahej to Aden. The ICRC delegates are endeavouring to do so. However, the quantities currently being transported are far from enough, as at least two million litres of water are needed daily. This would require much greater logistic resources than those now available.

ICRC representatives in Aden and Sana’a are in contact with the Yemeni authorities, requesting them to take charge as soon as possible of transporting and distributing water by tanker trucks and having the Bir Nasser waterworks repaired.

Further information: René-Thévoz, ICRC Geneva
RWANDA/ZAIRE
MAJOR ICRC AIRLIFT

The ICRC is setting up a major airlift to bring in the relief supplies and logistic resources needed for its operation to assist the vast numbers of Rwandan refugees arriving in Zaire. During the last few days ICRC delegates on the spot have distributed 300 tonnes of rice, beans and oil to some 300,000 people in refugee camps in the Goma area, and the ICRC has set up tents in the grounds of the town's hospital to provide treatment for several hundred war wounded. About 200 unaccompanied children and orphans have been transferred from Goma to locations outside the town and have been given food and blankets.

An aircraft made available to the ICRC by the LWF (Lutheran World Federation) is already making two or three round trips daily from Nairobi, bringing in 15 tonnes of supplies each time. During the coming days 350 tonnes of food, two trucks and five cross-country vehicles will be flown in aboard this plane.

A cargo aircraft chartered by the ICRC will make eight round trips a day, each incoming flight carrying 16 tonnes of supplies (1,000 rolls of plastic sheeting, 4.6 tonnes of medical supplies and 25 tonnes of soap).

An aircraft provided by the US State Department will make two to four flights a day, transporting 1,443 tonnes of food. Next week, six flights from Europe financed by the British government and the US Defense Department will take 35 trucks and other vehicles, four trailers and 17 tonnes of emergency medical supplies to Goma.

There is also growing concern about the situation in the Zairian town of Bukavu, where over 200,000 refugees have arrived so far. The ICRC will be increasing its road convoys from Bujumbura, Burundi, in order to come to their aid.

The ICRC is planning to conduct an emergency relief operation for the refugees in Zaire until the specialized agencies are able to step in.

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ANGOLA
ICRC OPERATIONS CONTINUE
DESPITE SUSPENSION OF RELIEF FLIGHTS

The ICRC is carrying on with its work in the Angolan towns of Huambo and Ganda although relief flights (heavy transport aircraft) have been suspended for lack of the necessary authorization. The last flights into Huambo (taking in 111 tonnes of food in two days) and Ganda (124 tonnes in a week) were made in early July. "If we are to prevent a further deterioration in the situation, flights must resume without delay", said a worried Christophe Hamisch, head of the ICRC delegation in Luanda.

ICRC operations are continuing despite this major setback. In Huambo food is being distributed from a large number of community kitchens, and five therapeutic feeding centres are providing meals for several thousand children and particularly vulnerable adults. The ICRC's general food distributions, which require 3,000 tonnes of supplies a month, have been brought to a halt. The ICRC medical team in Huambo is giving over 10,000 consultations in eight centres every month.

Last week, 74,600 packets of vegetable seed were distributed on the Planalto under an agricultural programme.
In Ganda, the ICRC is running 12 community kitchens and a therapeutic feeding centre which together provide some 6,000 children with regular hot meals. If the ban on flights continues, it will not be possible to resume general food distributions to the population (40,000 people) and more kitchens will have to be opened.

Meanwhile, the ICRC tracing agency in Angola is delivering over 5,000 family messages per week throughout the country.

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TAJIKISTAN
STILL RACKED BY VIOLENCE

Following a medical survey that it recently carried out in Dushanbe, the ICRC distributed medicines and other emergency medical supplies last week to hospitals in the city, which have seen a marked rise in the number of war casualties. The supplies distributed were mainly antibiotics, anaesthetics, intravenous equipment, dressings and surgical gloves - enough to cover the needs of several hundred patients.

The wave of assassinations in recent weeks has been accompanied by many armed clashes, particularly in the Garm valley where the government is carrying out a demilitarization campaign.

Torn apart by a civil war a year and a half ago, Tajikistan has yet to solve its problems. Hopes were raised when negotiations began recently between opposition representatives and the Dushanbe government. However, the latest talks in Tehran yielded no results.

In early 1993 the ICRC launched an emergency assistance programme for displaced persons. Today, tens of thousands of these people have returned to their homes in the south of the country and the ICRC has shifted the emphasis of its work to help with their resettlement. Between April and June 1994, almost 4,000 food parcels and 2,000 blankets were distributed in the area.

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BURUNDI
DECLARATION FOR THE PROMOTION OF HUMANITARIAN CONDUCT
"UWANKA AGAKURA ABAGA AMUTAVU"

Some 20 Burundi intellectuals, artists, teachers, jurists and politicians have drawn up a "Burundi Declaration for the Promotion of Humanitarian Conduct". Taking a stand against fatalism, they have revived local customs in order to contain violence in internal conflicts. The tenor of the Declaration is illustrated by the Burundi saying "He who does not want a life to grow leads the calf to slaughter" ("Uwanka agakura abaga amutavu"), which is paraphrased as follows in the text: "Let us never allow children or adolescents to take part in violent clashes, let us not arm them and let us not use them in any act that could turn into violence, since this would jeopardize the future of the whole nation". About 20 other proverbs are used to highlight the humanitarian values that are inherent in local traditions.

Campaign to start on 25 July

The Burundi Declaration for the Promotion of Humanitarian Conduct will be published in pocket-size format in Kirundi and French. It will be presented to the public between 25 and 30 July through various events - a forum illustrated by videos, debates, an exhibition, songs, radio spots and a televised round-table discussion. Finally, a caravan in which several organizations will be represented will tour the whole country for some weeks, presenting among other things a play on the theme of the declaration.

These media events are being organized against the ominous background of the Rwandan tragedy and its repercussions on the situation in Burundi, already weakened by the massacres of 1993. According to Edith Baeriswyl, an ICRC delegate in Bujumbura and coordinator of the project, it is urgent to make the humanitarian rules known to the entire population, especially the authorities and the armed forces, and to ensure that these rules are respected, in order to avoid further suffering.

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RWANDA

HALF A MILLION PEOPLE NEED AID IN SOUTH-WEST

Recent surveys carried out in the Gikongoro and Cyangugu areas show that living conditions for some 500,000 people are deteriorating rapidly and that a massive effort is needed to avert a further catastrophe. The ICRC is increasing its staff in the region in preparation for the distribution of 8,000 tonnes of food per month.

The ICRC will provide not only food aid but also clean water, medical supplies and materials for building shelters.

The programme will cover about 30,000 people in the Cyangugu, 120,000 in the Kibuye and 350,000 in the Gikongoro areas.

Aircraft to make four round trips daily

From Friday 29 July, a Hercules C-130 will make four round trips daily between the Burundi capital Bujumbura and Cyangugu, where the ICRC will have about 50 trucks ready to take the supplies on to other destinations. ICRC expatriate staff in the area will be increased fourfold to 38, plus 38 expatriate truck-drivers assigned to the programme.

450,000 litres of water per hour

The ICRC is still working in other parts of Rwanda. The institution’s sanitary engineers have taken steps to supply three districts of the capital, Kigali, with 450,000 litres of drinking water per hour. The water will also go to the ICRC hospital, where about 200 casualties are being treated, the King Faisal hospital, and five reception centres for children who have become separated from their parents.

New prisoners registered

The ICRC has registered 65 new prisoners in Kigali, bringing the total number of prisoners visited in the capital and in Rilima to 182.

1,700 children identified

Registration of Rwandan children separated from their parents continues in refugee camps in Burundi, Tanzania, Uganda and Zaire. Details concerning the identity of 1,700 children have already been sent to the ICRC Tracing Agency in Nairobi, where all such information collected by the humanitarian organizations is being centralized.

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INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS
YEMEN

CHOLERA BREAKS OUT IN ADEN

According to information gathered by ICRC doctors in Aden, between 23 and 25 July a dozen people in the city died of dehydration caused by acute diarrhoea, and a further 80 with the same symptoms were admitted to the city's Al Jumhuria hospital. Initial laboratory tests show that several of the latter are suffering from cholera. The patients concerned have been placed in isolation and are being treated with antibiotics and rehydrated intravenously.

Doctors from the ICRC and Médecins sans Frontières have done a round of Aden's clinics and hospitals in order to identify any further cases of cholera and to have the patients transferred to the Al Jumhuria hospital. For the time being, the disease does not appear to be spreading.

The recent outbreak of cholera is due to the appalling sanitary conditions in the city. Although the Lahaj and Bir Nasser pumping stations are once again operating at limited capacity and are capable of supplying enough water to meet the population's needs, the piping system between the pumping stations and the city itself has been damaged. Accumulated rubbish in the streets and blocked sewers are also major factors conducive to the appearance of epidemics. The humanitarian organizations alone cannot restore Aden's sanitary facilities; it is up to the Yemeni authorities to take the necessary action. In the meantime, the ICRC is continuing to supply drinking water to the hospitals and the poorest quarters of the city. The water is brought in by tanker trucks transporting 300,000 litres of chlorinated water per day.

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FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

URGENT NEED FOR MEDICAL SUPPLIES IN BIHAC

The medical situation in Bihac is critical. Hundreds of patients are waiting for treatment in the hospitals, which are running out of drugs and medical materials. The last time the ICRC managed to bring in such supplies was on 29 June. In addition, there are seriously wounded patients who require immediate evacuation. The ICRC is continuing its attempts to gain permission for its convoys to enter the area.

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PHILIPPINES

ASSISTANCE TO DISPLACED PERSONS

During the month of June there were clashes between an armed Muslim opposition group and government troops on the islands of Basilan and Jolo (Sulu), south-west of Mindanao, causing part of the civilian population to seek refuge in the interior.

The ICRC carried out a survey of needs on the spot with the active cooperation of local branches of the Philippine National Red Cross. In recent weeks the ICRC and the National Society have distributed supplementary food aid, mainly rice and sardines, to more than 12,000 temporarily displaced persons.

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RWANDA

FOOD AND MEDICAL AID

Hospitals and waterworks are being repaired

Every day, several hundred of the Rwandans who fled to Zaire are now heading home across the border. Whilst the return of these refugees is the only long-term solution, it should take place gradually. Another mass migration, this time back into Rwanda, could spell new disaster.

It is vital that the Rwandans currently returning to their country find adequate food, medical care, hygiene and safety conditions when they arrive. The ICRC has repaired the pumping stations providing drinking water to Gisenye and Ruhengeri, the two main towns in north-western Rwanda. The hospitals there will also be restored to working order. Médecins sans Frontières and Médecins du Monde have set up dispensaries along the routes taken by the refugees on their way home, so that people suffering from dysentery or cholera can be given proper medical care. Every effort must be made to prevent the epidemics which are killing large numbers of refugees in Zaire from spreading into Rwanda.

In addition, the ICRC distributed 50 tonnes of food at the end of July to some 50,000 Rwandans who had returned to the Ruhengeri region.

Soon one million displaced people in Rwanda will be receiving ICRC aid

The ICRC is continuing to step up its food aid distributions for the estimated one to two million displaced people in Rwanda. At present, almost 800,000 of them are receiving food rations in various parts of Rwanda: 370,000 people in the north (Mulindi, Byumba, Rutare), 280,000 in the south-west (Nyarushishi, Gikongoro, Kibuye, Cyangugu), 60,000 in the east (Kibungu, Rusumo), 40,000 in the south (Rilima) and 40,000 in Kigali. In the next few days, food will be distributed to half a million people in the Gikongoro and Kibuye regions alone, bringing the total number of displaced people being helped by the ICRC up to one million. Food is being flown in daily from Nairobi to the airports in Bujumbura, Goma and Cyangugu and then transported up-country by lorry.
Protection of detainees

The ICRC is currently visiting 217 people detained in Kigali and Rilima by the new Rwandan government for reasons connected with the political situation.

Unaccompanied children

In coordination with UNHCR, UNICEF and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the ICRC has set up a programme to register all unaccompanied children now scattered throughout Rwanda and the neighbouring countries, so that attempts can be made to trace their parents or close relatives and thus reunite the children with their families. This programme, which will probably involve several tens of thousands of children and represents a formidable task, has only just begun. To date, 1,800 unaccompanied children have been registered in Rwanda, Zaire, Burundi and Tanzania.

Surgical unit in Goma

At the end of July the ICRC established a field hospital in Goma (Zaire), where a surgical team is now caring for some 500 war casualties. The ICRC is furthermore continuing to distribute about 100 tonnes of food a day to Rwandan refugees in Zaire to supplement the relief operations conducted in the Goma region by the various humanitarian organizations on the spot.

ICRC staff deployment

There are now 145 expatriates working in Rwanda and the neighbouring countries, including 42 members of various European and North American National Societies and the Australian Red Cross, and several hundred local staff.

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RWANDA
DANGER OF NEW MASS EXODUS TO ZAIRE

A further wave of refugees may be driven by hunger and fear into Zaire from south-western Rwanda, where the security situation is deteriorating daily. Vandalism and looting are rife, making it increasingly difficult to bring in humanitarian relief supplies. Cereal crops have been destroyed and all the people still in the area - estimated at half a million - are entirely dependent on food aid from outside.

The humanitarian organizations are doing their best to cope with the situation. The ICRC has already provided enough food for some 270,000 people who have gathered in the south of Gikongoro prefecture, and is about to begin distributions to another 200,000 in the north of the prefecture. Although the organizations can go some way towards solving the problem of hunger, they are in no position to guarantee the safety of the population.

Everything possible must be done to avert a further large-scale exodus into Zaire, this time south of Lake Kivu. In view of the current lack of security, such an eventuality cannot be ruled out.

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BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA
ICRC STILL FACING EMERGENCIES

Fall of Pecigrad

The town of Pecigrad in the Bihac area of western Bosnia fell on 4 August, after six days of siege. During the battle for the town the ICRC maintained contacts with the Bosnian government forces and those of Fikret Abdic to urge them to spare civilians, and provided hospitals with emergency surgical supplies and medicines. As soon as the fighting stopped, delegates evacuated 70 of the most seriously wounded to the nearest hospitals. So far the ICRC has visited 390 civilian and military detainees out of an estimated total of over 1,000, and is seeking to gain access to all the other persons held in connection with the conflict in the Bihac region.

Despite all obstacles, the ICRC has regularly organized relief convoys to Bihac and Velika Kladusa over the past few weeks. Its six delegates based in the area have thus been able to continue supplying community kitchens which feed 3,000 people a day.

Minorities at risk in Bijeljina

Since mid-July the ICRC has once again witnessed the practice of ethnic cleansing in the Bijeljina area of eastern Bosnia, where civilians belonging to minority groups are being subjected to brutal treatment. Almost 300 women, children and elderly people have been driven from their homes, stripped of all their belongings and forced to make their way across the front lines towards Tuzla.

More than one hundred people are being held in places to which the ICRC has not yet succeeded in gaining access. Delegates have made repeated approaches to the authorities in Bijeljina and in Pale urging them to abide by their commitment to respect the civilian population, but to no avail.
Detainees still not released

The ICRC is continuing its negotiations with a view to securing the release of all persons detained in connection with the conflict by the Bosnian government and Bosnian Serb authorities, pursuant to the agreement reached on 8 June 1994 under the auspices of the United Nations. Despite numerous meetings between the parties organized in Sarajevo by the ICRC and the UN, they have still not honoured their commitments and about 1,000 detainees are still being held, some of them since 1991.

The ICRC's humanitarian operation in the former Yugoslavia is one of the largest currently under way, with some 160 delegates and 900 local employees working out of 30 delegations, sub­delegations and offices throughout the territory.

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EXPERT GROUP ON 1980 UN WEAPONS CONVENTION BEGINS THIRD SESSION IN GENEVA

Government experts drafting proposed amendments to the 1980 UN Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons began their third two-week session in Geneva on 8 August. Among the issues under discussion are a ban or additional restrictions on the use of anti-personnel landmines, prohibition of blinding weapons and implementation mechanisms for the Convention.

Responding to public pressure and a recent parliamentary resolution, on 9 August Sweden announced its support for a total ban on anti-personnel landmines, thus joining Mexico, the ICRC, several UN agencies (UNHCR, UNICEF), the UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs, and scores of non-governmental organizations in advocating this course of action.

During their third meeting the experts intend to produce a complete set of proposals for amendments to be submitted to the Review Conference of the 1980 Convention, scheduled for mid-1995. However a fourth session, possibly in January 1995, may be required.

The ICRC, at the request of the group of experts, submitted to the current meeting a report on weapons other than landmines, such as blinding lasers, small-calibre weapons and naval mines, and on implementation mechanisms that the Review Conference may wish to consider.

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WESTERN SAHARA/MOROCCO

VISIT TO MOROCCAN PRISONERS HELD BY POLISARIO FRONT

During the first two weeks of August an ICRC team consisting of five delegates and two doctors went to Tindouf, in southern Algeria, to visit Moroccan prisoners held by the Polisario Front. The team saw 951 prisoners – 692 of them for the first time. This brings to 1,800 the number of Moroccan prisoners registered by the ICRC since 1975. Most of them were captured between 1978 and 1982.

The prisoners were able to write Red Cross messages to their families, from whom they have been separated for so many years. The 2,500 messages gathered by the delegates during their visit will be handed over to the Moroccan Red Crescent Society, which will make sure that they reach their destination.

Visits to the other Moroccan prisoners are due to take place in mid-September, which will enable the delegates to register those who have not yet been visited by the ICRC.

In early June, ICRC delegates saw 72 Sahrawi prisoners held by the Moroccan authorities in Agadir.

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BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

FIRST DETAINEES RELEASED IN THE BIHAC ENCLAVE

The ICRC delegates based in the Bihac enclave continue to provide protection for some 1,500 detainees. As a result of their representations, 176 detainees held by the forces of Fikret Abdic were released on 15 August under the auspices of the ICRC. On the following day, 43 of them were transported by the ICRC across the front line, in accordance with their wishes. In the southern part of the enclave, the delegates’ efforts also led to the release of 102 people held by the government forces of Bosnia–Herzegovina.

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INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS
IRAQ

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE TO HOSPITALS

The international embargo imposed on Iraq over four years ago is causing increasing hardship among the Iraqi population. To help replenish medical supplies in government hospitals, in July the ICRC organized a country-wide distribution of medicines, materials for minor surgery and radiological items (film and chemicals), in cooperation with the British Red Cross. This is the final stage of a vast twelve-month aid programme for the Iraqi population that also included the provision of blood transfusion, orthopaedic and sanitation requisites.

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AZERBAIJAN

ICRC EXPLAINS HUMANITARIAN LAW TO SOLDIERS ON FRONT LINE

Over one thousand Azerbaijani officers and soldiers attended a series of courses on the Geneva Conventions organized by the ICRC from 27 July to 8 August in six areas near the front line - Fizuli, Béilagan, Agdam, Agdabedi, Barda and Terter. The purpose of these courses was to make combatants aware of the need to respect the civilian population, the wounded and prisoners of war.

"It is extremely important to give this type of instruction, as most of the armed forces deployed there have never even heard of the Geneva Conventions", said ICRC delegate Robin de Baere, who went from barracks to barracks with a projector, brochures and films in Azeri to explain the basic principles of international humanitarian law and discuss with the soldiers how the law actually applies in practice. "Many of them see the similarities between the rules of humanitarian law and their own customs, so we talk about that too. But what they are really concerned about is whether these courses are also given to soldiers on the other side", emphasized Robin de Baere, adding that his colleague based in Armenia regularly provided the same instruction to Armenian soldiers and to combatants in Nagorno-Karabakh.

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BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA / BIHAC AREA

THOUSANDS OF CIVILIANS FLEE FIGHTING IN VELIKA KLADUSA

Thousands of civilians have fled northwards through the UN protected area following the fall of the town of Velika Kladusa, the last stronghold of Fikret Abdic's forces, to Bosnian government troops on 21 August. Some 3,500 people are now stranded at the Turanj checkpoint south of Karlovac. A further 15,000 are scattered along the road between Velika Kladusa and Vojnic. Ten thousand of them have taken shelter in some farm buildings in the village of Batnoga.

In the morning of 21 August the ICRC sent two relief convoys to the area. The eight trucks were carrying 15,000 emergency food rations, surgical and medical supplies, blankets, and sanitation and water distribution equipment.

As fighting raged in the city, 140 casualties were evacuated on 21 August to hospitals in Velika Kladusa, Vojnic, Cazin and Bihac. To help the Vojnic hospital cope with 50 wounded arriving from Velika Kladusa, the ICRC set up four temporary wards in tents and provided dressing materials, antibiotics and perfusions, while its sanitary engineer made sure that there was a sufficient supply of water. As soon as the fighting stopped in Velika Kladusa, an ICRC nurse replenished emergency medical stocks and organized help for the wounded.

In Turanj and Batnoga, the ICRC is supplying thousands of displaced people with food and water, and an ICRC nurse is travelling along the road between Velika Kladusa and Vojnic dispensing first aid.

In Velika Kladusa, ICRC delegates supervised the release of 74 civilians and 125 combatants held by the forces of Fikret Abdic. They have also requested access to combatants captured by the Bosnian government forces. In Bihac the ICRC is continuing to ensure the protection of nearly one thousand people still held by government forces.

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RWANDA

TENS OF THOUSANDS OF DISPLACED PEOPLE LEAVING GIKONGORO AREA

Following the withdrawal of French troops from the safe zone, ICRC delegates have reported tens of thousands of displaced people on the move from the area north of Gikongoro towards the Zaire border. As yet, no mass exodus of the 250,000 displaced people in nine camps south of Gikongoro seems imminent. The ICRC is distributing about 2,000 tonnes of food monthly in these camps.

The ICRC has also provided medicines, medical supplies, food and a generator to the 150–bed Kigeme hospital, six kilometres from Gikongoro, where local staff are doing remarkable work. The hospital is overwhelmed with patients and the ICRC is considering how best to cope with the serious medical situation, including the possibility of opening another medical facility. Priority is being given to patients suffering from malaria, severe dysentery, acute respiratory infections, meningitis and other conditions prevalent in the camps. The ICRC is already providing assistance to seven dispensaries in the area.
Extra staff

The ICRC has already strengthened its teams in the south-western zone during recent weeks and is sending in ten more doctors and nurses to set up the new medical programme. Some of these staff have been working up to now in Goma, where on 20 August the ICRC closed the field hospital it had installed in the sports centre. The last remaining patients will continue to receive treatment from other humanitarian organizations.

"Since there are so many organizations working with refugees in the Goma area, the ICRC will concentrate its efforts on the population inside Rwanda", explained Johanna Grombach, head of the ICRC's new Ruhengeri subdelegation. "Here in Ruhengeri we are ready to assist up to 350,000 refugees returning from Zaire", she added.

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RWANDA

NYESHA SAVED BY A PHOTOGRAPHER

Four-year-old Nyesha has not seen his parents for four months, and has had to fend for himself. Last Monday he almost lost his life trying to get on the last truck of the day taking displaced people across the Ruzizi II bridge to refugee camps in Zaire. When about a hundred people surged forward to try to board the truck, Nyesha was trampled underfoot. Luckily a photographer saw what was happening and managed to extricate him. An ICRC delegate who was at the scene immediately took the little boy to a hospital in Bukavu, where he is on the way to recovery.

The Ruzizi II incident was filmed by ITN television. As soon as British viewers saw the pictures, hundreds of people phoned ITN offering donations to the Red Cross.

Nyesha is only one of tens of thousands of Rwandan children who have become separated from their parents. More than 5,000 of them have already been registered by the ICRC and other humanitarian organizations in the hope that they can be reunited with their families.
SAN REMO
ICRC PRESIDENT APPEALS FOR BETTER CONFLICT PREVENTION

In his opening address to the 19th Round Table of the International Institute of Humanitarian Law, in San Remo, Italy, ICRC President Comelio Sommaruga made a fervent plea for more to be done to avert conflict. Mr Sommaruga stressed the extremely important role that the entire International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement must play in this endeavour. He also called on the States of the world to pay more attention to the appeals made to them by humanitarian organizations. In connection with Somalia, Bosnia and, more recently, Rwanda, the ICRC had informed the international community in detail about the catastrophic situation unfolding in those countries. "For me, these were historic cries of alarm", said Mr Sommaruga. He deplored the fact that the States did not take adequate steps to prevent violations of humanitarian law and human rights law.

Information is part of ICRC's mandate

The ICRC President spoke at length about the role that the media can play in averting conflict. "Providing objective information - without exaggeration, extrapolation or accusation - must also be part of the prevention work of an organization such as the ICRC". The ICRC's 60 delegations throughout the world were very well informed and were thus, he said, extremely reliable sources for factual details which can help, via the media, to avert conflict. Unfortunately, however, journalists sent to cover armed conflicts were often subjected to immense pressure by the fierce competition within the media and it was, he concluded, not always possible to present a complete, balanced and well-verified picture of crises requiring humanitarian action.

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RWANDA
THOUSANDS OF DISPLACED PEOPLE RETURN HOME TO SOW THE FIELDS

In northern Rwanda, the camps for the displaced are emptying. Families are returning to their villages to begin planting a new crop. The ICRC has launched a vast agricultural aid programme: 1,800 tonnes of maize and bean seed, as well as 58,000 hoes, will be distributed in September to 136,000 families. The first distributions took place this week in the far north of the country, "For the last three years farmers here have been prevented by the war from tilling their land", explained Jürg Eglin, an ICRC agronomist. "The first rains have now fallen in the past few days and if there's a good harvest in December or January, this part of the country could quickly become self-sufficient again". In eastern Rwanda the situation is different; the harvest began in June and is just ending, and the population have managed to lay in some food stocks. In the safe zone, other organizations are planning to distribute seed.

Seed programme could yield 15,000 tonnes of food

If the weather is favourable, the seed distributions should have a marked effect: 2 kg of maize seed produces up to 30 kg of maize while 2 kg of bean seed yields between 20 and 30 kg of produce at harvest time. Thus, the beneficiaries of the ICRC's agricultural programme may expect to harvest 15,000 tonnes of food by the beginning of next year. Farmers out sowing their fields will be facing a terrible risk: mines. Two or three victims are already being brought to hospital in Kigali each day.

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INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS
**RWANDA: 1,097 PRISONERS REGISTERED BY ICRC**

As part of its mandate in Rwanda, the ICRC has so far registered 1,097 prisoners being held by the new government now set up in Kigali. They were visited in their places of detention in Kibungo, Rilima, Kigali and Butare. Another visit is also now under way in Gitarama. Some detainees have meanwhile been transferred to the central prison in the Rwandan capital. Delegates distributed relief items (mostly blankets) during the visits. The ICRC plans to make regular visits to places of detention in Rwanda in accordance with its own customary procedures. Delegates will register all prisoners to whom they are given access. A further four delegates are being sent to Rwanda for this purpose in the next few days.

**GENEVA**

**ICRC URGES NEGOTIATORS TO BAN LAND-MINES AND BLINDING WEAPONS**

ICRC representatives attended a United Nations meeting held from 8 to 19 August to prepare amendments to the 1980 UN Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. They called on negotiators to end the scourge of anti-personnel land-mines by banning them completely. They also warned that a proliferation of blinding laser weapons was imminent if blinding was not soon proscribed as a method of warfare.

When this third round of negotiations ended, ICRC legal adviser Louise Doswald-Beck expressed "concern that the Group of Experts might not even achieve agreement on the modest requirement that land-mines contain self-destruct and self-deactivating features to reduce death and injuries among civilians who come upon these weapons after military forces have moved on". However, she welcomed the "broad support for a prohibition on blinding as a method of warfare which has been expressed by a diverse group of thirteen politically important States from north and south".

*The ICRC's position*

The ICRC is committed to a long-term campaign to bring about the total prohibition of anti-personnel mines and blinding weapons, which it believes to be the only effective method of protecting civilians from the cruel and irreversible effects of these devices.

The ICRC believes that the 1995 Review Conference should at the very least take the following steps:

- stipulate that all anti-personnel mines must contain effective self-destruct mechanisms;
- prohibit all mines that are not easily detectable and recommend specific technical characteristics that would render them so;
- extend the 1980 Convention’s applicability to all internal conflicts;
- incorporate effective mechanisms into the Convention to ensure its implementation by means of independent international supervision;
- find ways to encourage all States to become party to the Convention;
- adopt a further protocol prohibiting blinding weapons.

A report on the final round of negotiations is available from the ICRC.

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RWANDA
10,000 UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN REGISTERED SO FAR

Details of the identity of nearly 10,000 children separated from their parents have been registered to date in Rwanda and in refugee camps in Zaire, Tanzania and Burundi.

The ICRC is giving top priority to this task. "We are only at the initial stages", said Alfredo Mallet of the ICRC’s Central Tracing Agency. "This operation will certainly keep us busy for years to come."

Efficient cooperation

The ICRC on its own could not collect and process all the details gleaned from the children. It is therefore working in cooperation with other relief agencies, religious institutions and centres for unaccompanied children. Registrations are coordinated by eleven ICRC delegates. The information is then fed into a centralized data bank which can be consulted in all ICRC offices in the region: Kigali, Ruhengeri, Gikongoro and Butare (Rwanda), Kabale (Uganda), Goma and Bukavu (Zaire), Ngara (Tanzania) and Bujumbura (Burundi). This makes it possible to reply to the queries of Rwandans who turn to the ICRC in the hope of finding their children. So far there have been about a hundred such enquiries, and a dozen cases have been solved.

"Many families don’t seem to know that the service exists. It was set up by the ICRC and other organizations - UNHCR, UNICEF, the Save the Children Fund, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies - which are all anxious to assist these children. Several radio stations have now started broadcasting information about the tracing service in the local language, Kinyarwanda, so as to make it better known. This is a great help", said Alfredo Mallet.

5,000 Red Cross messages

Another service seeing a rapid expansion in the region is the Red Cross message network. In recent weeks more than 5,000 messages have been forwarded. At first messages could be exchanged only between refugee camps in Zaire, Tanzania and Burundi or with other countries, but a few days ago they began to be distributed within Rwanda as well. Messages for Kigali are now accepted if the sender is sure that the addressee is in the capital.

Prisoners too can contact relatives

The refugees are not the only ones using the Red Cross message service. The 2,000 prisoners registered by the ICRC in six places of detention in Rwanda are also given the opportunity to write to their families.

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TAJIKISTAN
LEARNING ABOUT THE GENEVA CONVENTIONS IN THE MIDST OF WAR

Over the past few weeks the security situation in Tajikistan has worsened considerably. Armed clashes are continuing both on the Afghan border (between opposition forces and Russian border guards) and in the east of the country, between Tajik opposition forces and government troops. The ICRC has therefore stepped up its efforts to increase awareness of the rules of the Geneva Conventions among those concerned.

On 1 September an ICRC photo exhibition devoted to international humanitarian law, "Humanity in action", was officially inaugurated in the north-western town of Khojent. A seminar on the ICRC and international humanitarian law was held a few days earlier, on 26 August, for 67 members of the Tajik Red Crescent and representatives of a number of ministries. Earlier in August the photo exhibition was shown in Dushanbe and two seminars were organized for high-ranking officers of the armed forces of the CIS, which are currently in charge of guarding the border with Afghanistan.

Meanwhile the ICRC is pursuing its assistance programmes for people displaced by the fighting. In Tavildara and Kalaikhum, near the conflict zone, 117 food parcels and 600 blankets were distributed last week to about 700 beneficiaries, over half of whom were displaced following the most recent clashes. ICRC delegates also provided emergency medical supplies for the regional hospital in Kafarnikhon which is treating people wounded in the fighting.

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JORDAN
PEACE-KEEPERS LEAVING FOR FORMER YUGOSLAVIA BRIEFED ON INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

On 5 September the ICRC delegation in Jordan took part in a briefing for a group of future Jordanian peace-keepers heading for the former Yugoslavia. The delegates gave a talk on international humanitarian law and the work of the ICRC. These briefings, organized by the Jordanian armed forces at the Zarka military academy, have been taking place every month since January 1994 and are attended by groups of 300 to 600 peace-keeping troops.

Marco Sassoli, head of the ICRC delegation in Jordan, commented: "Especially in the former Yugoslavia, peace-keepers will be faced with systematic violations of international humanitarian law by the parties to the conflict. It is therefore essential that they know these rules and apply them whenever they have to use force in fulfilling their mandate, even if it is a humanitarian one. The very practical discussions we had in Zarka also show the need for better mutual understanding between peace-keepers and humanitarian organizations working in conflict situations."

With only some four million inhabitants, Jordan is the fifth largest contributor to UN peace-keeping forces operating worldwide.

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CONFLICTS IN THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA:
VICTIMS' NEED FOR PROTECTION MORE URGENT THAN EVER

"The victims of the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia will need protection and assistance for a long
time to come", predicted ICRC Deputy Director of Operations Paul Grossrieder. "And we need almost
49 million Swiss francs if we are to carry on our humanitarian work up to the end of this year", he
warned on 9 September in an urgent appeal to donor countries to continue providing support for the
ICRC's activities in this war-stricken region.
The humanitarian situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina has improved on the whole since early 1994 but
remains extremely unstable. At a time when discussions have opened on a possible return of refugees,
the expulsion of minorities, far from easing off, has escalated sharply. The fighting continues unabated
and is still driving thousands of civilians from their homes - as amply illustrated by the recent exodus
of some 25,000 people from the Bihac area.
After several years of war in the former Yugoslavia the international community's attention remains
focused on the conflict, and it would be inconceivable for the ICRC to lack the support it needs to
conduct its emergency humanitarian operations.

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RWANDA: WATER IS A PRIORITY!

In order to prevent the outbreak of diseases and help the country's recovery, since April 1994 the
ICRC has intensified its water and sanitation activities to supply fresh water to people in need. Nine
engineers are currently working all over the country. "We are cooperating as closely as possible with
the national water and electricity company Electrogaz to ensure that our efforts will have a long-
lasting effect", explained Yves Étienne, a sanitation engineer at the ICRC in Geneva.

Situation in Kigali still critical

The water supply situation in Kigali has definitely improved but remains critical, estimated ICRC
water and sanitation engineer Sylvie Loth. Production at the Kimisagara main waterworks is now
more than 970 cu.m per hour. The main problem is the power supply and the fuel. Some 30,000 litres
of diesel have so far been supplied by the ICRC, but solutions have to be found to fill the gap. Until
the lines between Kigali and the main power station at Mukungwa have been reestablished, 6,000
litres of fuel are needed per day to keep the water in Kigali running. With the help of ten tankers the
ICRC is also distributing 60 cu.m of water daily to ten different places (hospitals, dispensaries,
orphanages) in the Rwandan capital.

Nine waterworks have resumed production

Besides the capital Kigali, waterworks in eight other towns - Gisenye, Ruhengeri, Cyangugu, Kibuye,
Gikongoro, Kabgayi, Gitarama and Butare - have resumed production thanks to the ICRC's
assistance. ICRC engineers have carried out surveys and given the necessary support to the employees
of Electrogaz. In all, 150 tonnes of aluminium sulphate, 12 tonnes of chlorine and 62 tonnes of lime
have been distributed to date, as well as spare parts, fuel and generators. Another major achievement
was the restoration of the electricity lines between Ruhengeri and Gisenye. As a result electricity is
now being supplied to the Gihira water treatment plant near Gisenye, which started working again
after some repairs at the beginning of August. This is extremely important for the return of the
refugees from the neighbouring camps in Zaire.

Water supply in the camps and prisons

Throughout the crisis the ICRC supplied water to five camps inside Rwanda. Whereas the situation
has been stabilized in most of the camps, the need for fresh water is currently very high in the camps
south of Gikongoro. Five sanitation engineers are working there at present to ensure that 65,000
People have an adequate supply of water. The construction of latrines in all these camps was essential to prevent the outbreak of diseases. Surveys of the water supply systems in the prisons are also under way. The knowledge acquired during regular visits by the ICRC to the Rwandan prisons since the early 1980s will certainly help its engineers to remedy any water shortage there in the very near future. In the last few weeks more than 2,000 prisoners have been registered by the ICRC in seven prisons in various parts of the country: Kibungo, Rilima, Butare, Gitarama, Kigali (prison and police station) and Ruhengeri.

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BLINDING WEAPONS
BLINDING AS A METHOD OF WARFARE HAS TO BE PROHIBITED

There are now clear indications that blinding laser weapons could be used on the battlefield within the next two to five years. One western army has already tested two hand-held laser weapons that could be used to blind enemy troops. More than a thousand of these laser rifles have been handed out and put into field tests. "The 1995 Review Conference to amend the 1980 UN Weapons Convention provides a unique and unrepeatable opportunity to stigmatize blinding as a method of warfare and to prevent such lasers from being manufactured before it is too late", urges Louise Doswald Beck, legal adviser at the ICRC. This Review Conference will be held from 25 September to 13 October 1995 in Geneva.

The ICRC and the Swedish government have proposed amendments to the 1980 UN Weapons Convention which would prohibit blinding as a method of warfare. So far thirteen countries have expressed support for these proposals. The ICRC strongly urges other states to support this initiative. The ICRC and Swedish proposals aim to establish a rule against blinding which would be contained in a new Protocol to the 1980 UN Weapons Convention. Both focus on the use of blinding weapons but this rule would also discourage the development, production and transfer of weapons designed for the purpose of blinding.

50 per cent of casualties?

The number of eye injuries in warfare has steadily risen, from 0.5 per cent in the last century to between 5 and 9 per cent in the Vietnam War. This increase was largely due to the increased use of weapons which explode and scatter small fragments. It has been estimated that if lasers are used intentionally to inflict blindness, so that blinding as a method of warfare becomes common practice, serious eye damage might account for between 25 and 50 per cent of all casualties. Almost all of the victims would be totally and permanently blind.

A terrorist's tool

"If these blinding weapons proliferate, they are bound to get into the wrong hands", warns Mrs Doswald-Beck. The fact that they are small, light and require no ammunition will make low-energy laser weapons attractive to insurgency movements, terrorists and criminal organizations. In addition lasers are silent, invisible and leave no ballistic evidence. "If we wait until these dangerous devices are widespread, it will be too late", says the ICRC expert. Public shock and outrage at the sight of poison-gas victims 80 years ago, in particular the sight of soldiers blinded by phosgene gas, led to the 1925 Geneva Protocol prohibiting the use of chemical weapons in warfare. The ICRC now appeals to the conscience of humanity to ensure that a large number of blinded soldiers or civilians will not be needed before intentional blinding is also outlawed.

Further information: Louise Doswald-Beck, ICRC legal adviser, Tel: ++41 22 730 2664 and Peter Herby, disarmament expert, ICRC Geneva, Tel: ++41 22 730 2519

A brochure on blinding weapons (Gas 1918 ... Lasers 1990s?) is now available at the ICRC's Press Division, Tel: ++41 22 730 2907
ICRC PREPARATIONS IN HAITI

Since the UN Security Council's adoption of a resolution authorizing international intervention in Haiti, the ICRC has carried out a number of surveys and drawn up a plan enabling it to take rapid action in the country.

The number of delegates on the spot has been increased to seven, including a doctor and a nurse. In cooperation with the Haitian Red Cross, the team has looked into various medical emergencies that might arise.

Over the past few weeks a full survey of medical establishments has been carried out in Port-au-Prince and elsewhere to see whether they could cope in an emergency. The facilities which met those requirements were given Red Cross identification materials so that they could be marked with the emblem if necessary.

The ICRC and the Haitian Red Cross have produced a number of radio spots explaining the role of the Red Cross in times of unrest. These have been broadcast by local radio stations.

Last April the ICRC approached Haiti's military leaders with a proposal for the continuation and possible expansion of its humanitarian activities: visits to detainees, protection of the civilian population, tracing the missing, providing ad hoc relief and strengthening the National Society's operational capacity.

On 4 August last the ICRC submitted a memorandum to the various parties concerned to remind them of the basic rules of international humanitarian law.

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CAMBODIA: YEURNG AND THE NIGHTMARE OF LANDMINES

Nhia Yeurng was sleeping in his front yard when he was awakened by a sudden explosion. Then he heard the voice of his son, shrieking for help. Yeurng and his family live in an area infested with landmines, in the Rattanak Mondul district of Cambodia near the Thai border.

Yeurng ran towards the sound, only 200 metres away. His two sons had been out tending the family’s cattle. In his 65 years, Yeurng has had more than his share of anguish: his wife died from disease and his eldest son and his daughter-in-law were killed by landmines, three years apart. But he could hardly believe what now lay before his eyes. Twelve-year-old Yeurng Cheurn was sprawled on the path, his left leg mangled by shrapnel from an anti-personnel mine. His other son, Yeurng Chan, whose own legs are maimed by polio, had run on his crutches to seek help at a military camp nearby. Yeurng scooped the thrashing child into his weathered arms. But as he stood and tried to regain his balance, his right foot hit another mine.

"If I can't help myself any more, then I want to kill myself"

"If I can't help myself any more, then I want to kill myself", he said two months later, sitting in the doorway of his bamboo house built on piles and overlooking deadly fields. "I don't want to see the
suffering of my children and grandchildren. I can’t feed them any more; I feel very ashamed.” Yeurng’s right leg was amputated about midthigh. His son’s left leg was cut off just a little higher. After three months for the stumps to heal both will be fitted with artificial legs. During his lifetime Yeurng Cheurn will have to replace his new leg 25 times. The family is fortunate in that the ICRC has an orthopaedic centre in Battambang town, only 33 kilometres away. But Yeurng Cheurn is not happy: he is worried about continued Khmer Rouge attacks and is afraid he won’t be able to run away. “I’m different from other people. I’m an amputee,” he said.

600 mines in 500 square metres

Rattanak Mondul is not only affected by a high incidence of malaria and tuberculosis, but is also strewn with landmines. It is believed to be the most heavily mined region in the country. Mine clearance teams recently removed about 600 mines from an area of only 500 square metres. Of the patients who have been fitted with artificial limbs at the ICRC clinic, 200 come from this district. Most are young men, but 15 are women and six are under 20. It is believed that for every person injured by a mine, one or two others are killed. Cambodia is said to have more landmines than its nine million population, scattered over populated areas covering more than half the country.

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BURUNDI: DECLARATION FOR THE PROMOTION OF HUMANITARIAN CONDUCT

A group of prominent Burundians has laid down a set of rules to encourage humanitarian conduct in the event of unrest in their country. The declaration, drawn up on the initiative of the ICRC, has been well received throughout Burundi with thousands of people attending meetings and taking part in lively discussions. A song composed for the campaign is regularly broadcast on national radio. “The text of the Declaration is at once forceful and simple”, said ICRC delegate Edith Baeriswyl, the campaign coordinator, ”and that is its strength”. But she has no illusions. “Things are taking shape but significant results can’t be expected for two or three years.”

Acting out the message

The campaign will be stepped up in the coming months. A troupe of actors is rehearsing a play and, security conditions permitting, will travel all over the country with it from late October. “It’s the story of a village where violent clashes seem imminent”, says Edith Baeriswyl. “A wise man counsels the villagers as to how they should behave.”

Losing the humanitarian reflex

The delegate believes that the violence which swept Burundi last October with such tragic results was largely due to “the loss of the humanitarian reflex”, something the ICRC has observed in many other countries as well. It is hoped that tolerance and respect can be revived through the promotion of traditional values as expressed in proverbs, for example. This approach will characterize the ICRC’s activities over the next few years to promote compliance with humanitarian law. Delegates engaged in this work will try to convey a clear and practical message that can be readily appreciated by the general public.

Regular visits to 400 prisoners

Meanwhile, ICRC delegates have been busy visiting prisoners. Over 400 are seen regularly in accordance with the organization’s standard procedures.

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LIBERIA

CONCERN FOR CIVILIAN POPULATION
AFTER RENEWED FIGHTING

The survival of thousands of people is at stake after the total breakdown of law and order in northern Liberia. The situation resulting from renewed factional fighting around the town of Gbarnga is so bad that the ICRC was obliged to put its humanitarian activities in the region on hold. "We were assisting some 120,000 people until then", said Brigitte Troyon, the ICRC's head of sub-delegation in the region, "but now they are left with nothing and are in great danger..."

The level of violence was such that not only all humanitarian agencies operating in the area, including the ICRC, but also the United Nations observers deployed there and the Tanzanian contingent of the ECOMOG peace-keeping force had to leave.

Brigitte and her four ICRC companions (as well as a member of Britain's Save the Children Fund), who had stayed in Gbarnga until the very last moment, lived through harrowing hours as their convoy crept towards Liberia's capital, Monrovia. Their predicament was all the more difficult since the city was in the throes of an attempted coup. At one point, the convoy was caught up in a battle in and around the town of Kakata. After six days of tension and slow progress the ICRC delegates finally reached Monrovia on Saturday 17 September.

Brigitte's thoughts, however, are also with the approximately 150 local Red Cross staff still in Liberia: "These people worked hard for their fellow Liberians, they had to flee with only the clothes on their backs". The ICRC has set up a programme in the town of Man to provide shelter and assistance for those Red Cross employees who are able to cross the border from the war zone into Côte d'Ivoire. The ICRC is maintaining its presence in Monrovia.

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RWANDA

GOOD DONOR RESPONSE

The ICRC is so far satisfied with the donors' response to its 104 million Swiss francs appeal. By the end of the year the expenses of the largest ICRC operation in 1994 should be covered. With 47 million Swiss francs, the European Union is currently the largest donor to this operation, followed by individual States and, with around 8 million Swiss francs, the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Over a million displaced persons assisted

The ICRC operation is still growing. Some 12,000 tonnes of food have been distributed to one million beneficiaries this September, and the ICRC intends to distribute another 14,000 tonnes to 1.1 million people in October. The total distributed during the last four months of the year should thus come to more than 50,000 tonnes. "This operation is reaching the scale of the Somalia operation, which was the largest in any single country in the ICRC's history", comments Daniel Augsburger, head of the Rwanda task force at ICRC headquarters in Geneva. A second seed distribution is also planned for early next year so that the population's self-sufficiency can be largely restored by the main harvest in June 1995.
More than 3,000 prisoners visited

The ICRC has another very important task in Rwanda, namely visits to prisons and police stations. The government in Kigali has agreed to the conditions set by the ICRC for them and more than 3,000 prisoners have meanwhile been visited. ICRC delegates assess the conditions in the prisons and provide the prisoners with desperately needed supplies. Reports on the conditions found in all places visited are regularly submitted to the Ministries of Justice and Defence.

Other ICRC activities include the registration of thousands of unaccompanied children and the installation of a message service for adults in and outside Rwanda.

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GENEVA

RED CROSS, RED CRESCENT MAGAZINE
NEW LOOK AND CONTENT

A recent joint communication venture by the ICRC and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies has resulted in the complete overhaul of the Movement's Red Cross, Red Crescent magazine. In addition to a new design, the magazine's contents have been improved to make them more topical and relevant.

"It's time to start shouting about the darkness"

"We no longer want to portray only the light in the darkness, but feel it is time to start shouting about the darkness itself", write the co-editors of the magazine, Barbara Geary of the Federation and Christina Grisewood of the ICRC, in their first editorial. This new editorial line is borne out in the article entitled "The Bosnian Quagmire" by the ICRC's former head of delegation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Urs Boegli, and an outspoken interview with Dr Robin Coupland on the landmines plague. "The articles in the magazine are signed and therefore do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement", underline the two co-editors. "In this way we hope to encourage more openness and debate about the concerns and activities of our diverse Movement."

"A wide range of topics with real news value"

The magazine is also a valuable source of information on the activities of individual National Societies. For example, this issue describes how the Thai Red Cross in cooperation with the World Health Organization is testing a new AIDS vaccine on human beings. "We aim to offer a wide range of subjects that must also have a real news value", the co-editors comment.

Available in 175 countries

The magazine will appear four times a year as of 1995 and already has a circulation of over 80,000. It is published in English, French and Spanish and is available in 175 countries.

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Red Cross, Red Crescent magazine is available from the ICRC's Publications Division and from the Federation. See phone numbers above.
ICRC ACTIVE IN HAITI

As soon as US troops landed in Haiti on 19 September, teams from the ICRC and the Haitian Red Cross went into action.

Their work has consisted largely of collecting people injured in clashes and taking them by ambulance to the main hospital in Port-au-Prince. So far 125 casualties have been treated. The operations are carried out swiftly and efficiently thanks to smooth cooperation between the two organizations and efforts to promote respect for the red cross emblem.

In the last few days the ICRC has also visited 10 people being held on an American military base. Delegates are seeking access to others who have been arrested.

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NAGORNO-KARABAKH: POVERTY AND ISOLATION

The upsurge of fighting along the front lines in Nagorno–Karabakh earlier this year has seriously affected the delivery of vital supplies to the region. After almost six years of war, the population is destitute and sanitary conditions have seriously deteriorated.

The ICRC is the only organization apart from Médecins sans Frontières to maintain an uninterrupted presence in Nagorno–Karabakh. One of its programmes is a relief operation to help the inhabitants, who are cut off from the outside world. In the past two months, delegates have distributed nearly 100 tonnes of vegetable oil, 80 tonnes of sugar and 84,000 bars of soap to over 39,000 families (about 120,000 individuals). The ICRC has also launched a project to assist war widows, under which 2,500 families have received food parcels and blankets.

The ICRC is also working elsewhere in the Caucasus, running similar assistance programmes for victims of the various conflicts in the region.

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First success for "Radio Link"

Little over a year ago Azra was living with her family in Mostar, on the right bank of the river. When fighting broke out between Croats and Muslims in June 1993, she disappeared.

Her friend Sanja explained: "Her parents were desperately trying to find a trace of her, any sign at all. I helped them in their search. We went to every police station, enquired at army units, asked friends... The Red Cross message addressed to her was returned. All contact was lost."

Sanja and many others like her found new hope when the joint ICRC/BBC "Radio Link" programme was launched on 3 July 1994. This programme aims at restoring contact between people who have been separated by the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and could not be reached through the worldwide Red Cross message network.

So far, over 600 names and addresses have been broadcast.

"As soon as I heard about 'Radio Link' I felt there was chance of finding Azra", said Sanja. "I couldn't believe it when she telephoned me at the beginning of August after hearing my name on the radio. Ironically, we were both in Zagreb at the time."

Azra also managed to find her lost brother through "Radio Link". He had left for Denmark and had been without news of his family for a long time. Azra too is now in Denmark, where she was overjoyed to be reunited with her brother.

Radio Link, every Sunday on the BBC from 19:30 to 20:00 GMT on the following frequencies:

5875 kHz, 6125 kHz, 7210 kHz, 9915 kHz and 11680 kHz

Number of names broadcast since 3 July 1994:

over 600

Number of Red Cross messages exchanged since 1991:

around 10 million

Number of persons reunited with their families:

around 4,000

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HAITI

ICRC AUTHORIZED TO VISIT ALL DETAINEES

After repeated and prolonged requests, the ICRC has obtained permission to visit all places of detention in the country in accordance with its customary procedures.

Since 6 October, over 500 detainees have been visited in several places of detention, including the national penitentiary in Port-au-Prince. The ICRC has decided to provide ad hoc assistance to all people held in custody.

Meanwhile, visits are continuing to persons held by the US armed forces. The ICRC is kept regularly informed of the arrests made. The Haitian Red Cross ambulance service is continuing to collect the injured and take them to hospital.

The ICRC delegation in Haiti has a staff of eight, including one doctor and a nurse.

Further information: Cristina Fedele, ICRC Geneva
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BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

SARAJEVO AIRLIFT INTENSIFIED

For two months starting on 13 October, an additional ICRC transport aircraft, an Ilyushin 76, will be making daily relief flights from Zagreb to Sarajevo. It will take in some 1,500 tonnes of food in each day for approximately 54,000 people – children, the elderly and the particularly vulnerable – on both sides of the front dividing the city.

Thanks to the ICRC airlift, 44,000 schoolchildren (33,000 at 43 schools on the Bosnian government side of the front and 11,000 at 30 schools on the Bosnian Serb side) will be able to receive a picnic lunch throughout the winter. For the same period about 10,000 other mostly elderly or particularly vulnerable people will also receive one hot meal a day, to be prepared by local Red Cross volunteers in 12 community kitchens on the government side (for 7,000 people) and in five kitchens on the Serb side (for 3,000 people).

This project is being entirely financed by the German Red Cross and run by it in close cooperation with the ICRC.

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**MOZAMBIQUE**

**ALL CHILD SOLDIERS ARE BACK WITH THEIR FAMILIES**

The 850 child soldiers who served with RENAMO during the conflict in Mozambique have all been reunited with their families over the past three months. "This was accomplished in record time thanks to excellent coordination between the humanitarian organizations involved", reports Dominique Buff, head of the ICRC delegation in Maputo.

To begin with, the children were transported out of the military zones by the International Organization for Migration and housed in transit camps until the ICRC, the Mozambique Red Cross, UNICEF and Save the Children Fund had traced their relatives. To help with their reintegration, psychological and social guidance will be provided under the supervision of UNICEF and other organizations.

In addition to the child soldiers, two thirds of the approximately 3,500 other children separated from their families in the course of the conflict have already been reunited with their loved ones. Most of the remaining children are expected to have rejoined their families by the end of the year, when the ICRC operation in Mozambique is due to end. Those then still in the reception centres will largely be children too young when their lives were disrupted to remember where they came from. They will be cared for by a number of non–governmental organizations staying on in Mozambique.

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**RED CROSS GEARS UP FOR ELECTIONS**

The Mozambique Red Cross will go into action for the nationwide elections in Mozambique on 27 and 28 October, deploying first–aid teams at the main polling stations to tend to people who fall ill while waiting to vote. In so doing, it will be providing the same service to the population as the National Societies in South Africa and Malawi last spring. The Mozambican first–aid workers will also distribute leaflets in front of the polling stations, explaining the important work done by the Red Cross in peacetime. "The ICRC is helping the Mozambique Red Cross mainly by giving logistic support", says Dominique Buff, head of the ICRC delegation in Maputo.

**Hospital opened**

At a simple but cordial ceremony on 2 October, the ICRC handed over the Inhaminga regional hospital in Sofala province to the local authorities. The hospital has been restored to working order thanks to financial aid provided by the European Union and is already caring for over 40 patients.

The ICRC will continue to assist four orthopaedic centres in Mozambique.
TAJIKISTAN

ICRC ASSISTANCE IN CONFLICT AREA

Last month's violent clashes between Tajik government and opposition forces have brought still more suffering and destruction in their wake. On 6 October a team of ICRC delegates managed for the first time to reach the strategic area of Tavildara, in the Pamir mountains, where the fighting took place.

According to official sources, about a hundred people from each side were killed, including at least 35 civilians. A new wave of displaced people has swelled the ranks of those who fled their homes in early 1993. In the villages of Nipshon and Argankul and those in the Mionadu valley, ICRC delegates saw considerable damage, including gutted houses, broken windows and collapsed roofs.

In this poverty-stricken area where the winters are extremely harsh, the ICRC has hastened to set up an emergency relief programme before access is cut off by snow. Nearly 2,000 people have already received food parcels, blankets and reinforced plastic sheeting to repair their houses. The ICRC has also provided emergency medical assistance to the hospital in Mionadu and will be delivering additional supplies to medical facilities next week.

On the eve of peace negotiations, due to resume in Islamabad this week under the auspices of the United Nations, fighting was continuing despite the ceasefire provided for in the agreement the parties to the conflict signed in Tehran on 17 September.

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SRI LANKA

ICRC ACTS AS NEUTRAL INTERMEDIARY IN JAFFNA NEGOTIATIONS

Negotiations took place in Jaffna on 13 and 14 October between representatives of the Sri Lanka government and the opposition Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

The ICRC was instrumental in an exchange of correspondence between the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka and the leader of the LTTE and enabled them to communicate via its radio network. Acting as a neutral intermediary, the ICRC provided the two parties with the technical and logistic means to discuss the very principle of negotiations and then to decide upon an agenda and make travel arrangements for the government delegation.

Following the talks, the Sri Lanka government released 18 prisoners who were immediately handed over to ICRC delegates so that they could be returned to their homes.

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TRANS-DNIESTRIA
VISITS DEADLOCKED

On 3 and 4 October ICRC representatives went to Tiraspol, in the self-proclaimed Moldovan republic of Trans-Dniestria, to discuss with the authorities a resumption of visits to five detainees from the "Ilascu" group. Visits were suspended in December 1993 after one of the detainees was sentenced to death.

Despite this initiative and many previous approaches to the highest authorities, including the President, the government of Trans-Dniestria continues to reject the ICRC's customary procedures for such visits. The ICRC regrets that this latest refusal again prevents its delegates from carrying out their mission.

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SOMALIA
"AKARA": THEATRE ILLUSTRATES HUMANITARIAN VALUES

"In every culture and every tradition you will find some elements that reflect the rules of behaviour during conflict", remarked André Picot, the ICRC official responsible for spreading knowledge of humanitarian law on the African continent. This is especially true in Somalia, which has a long tradition of theatre. The ICRC took the initiative of approaching the Somali playwright and educator, Said Saleh, asking him to write a play which shows how civil war can be avoided by following local tradition and illustrates the rules that have to be respected should war break out. On Monday 17 October the first of 15 episodes of the resulting drama, "Akara", was broadcast by the BBC Somali Service.

The action takes place in the mythical village of Akara, where long-established patterns of law and order prevail and where village elders, religious leaders and poets still wield their traditional authority. War has broken out in the country, but the village of Akara has been spared. Questions are asked as to why this is the case and how the peaceful situation can be maintained.

All the actors taking part in the series were located in refugee camps in Kenya and belong to the Waberi Group, which is well known in Somalia. The drama is enlivened by the use of poetry and music.

Produced by Abdullah Haji, "Akara" can be heard on the BBC Somali Service arts and literature programme on Mondays at 18:00 GMT, on short-wave frequencies 6005, 9630 and 15360 kHz in the 49, 31 and 19 metre bands.

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GENEVA
SPECIAL APPEAL FOR UNDERFINANCED ICRC ACTIVITIES

The ICRC has launched a special appeal for its underfinanced operations. There is a shortfall of more than 100 million Swiss francs for its activities in the former Yugoslavia, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, the Caucasus, Peru, Colombia and Israel, the occupied territories and the autonomous territories. ICRC President Cornélia Sommaruga appealed on 14 October to the members of the Geneva-based permanent missions to make an additional effort to finance them. Funding is inadequate primarily for low-profile operations focusing on protection activities (protection of the civilian population and visits to prisoners).

132 expatriates and 747 local employees for the former Yugoslavia

The operation in the former Yugoslavia is one of the ICRC’s largest at the moment. It also shows the biggest deficit: the cash needs for 1994 currently stand at 36.8 million Swiss francs. With a staff of 132 expatriates and 747 local employees and activities ranging from visits to detainees, protection for the civilian population and a huge number of family messages exchanged weekly, substantial medical assistance and extensive water, sanitation and agricultural programmes, it remains the third largest operation of the ICRC after Rwanda and Angola.

Assistance to the civilian population in Kabul needs funding

Afghanistan is another example of a forgotten conflict. Funds for humanitarian activities there are very difficult to obtain: 13.3 million Swiss francs are needed to cover all expenses. A total of 44 expatriates are distributing food to thousands of people in war-torn Kabul, visiting prisoners, restoring contact between members of families separated by the conflict and assisting 65 medical facilities which provide treatment for war casualties. They are also running three orthopaedic centres.

Cambodia

After 25 years of war Cambodia is in ruins. Tens of thousands of victims still need continued assistance. A team of 25 expatriates are implementing ICRC programmes to set up blood banks and a prosthetic centre, providing medical aid and carrying out visits to prisoners and tracing activities. In all, 5.5 million Swiss francs are still required to cover these programmes.

Sri Lanka: more than 2,000 prisoners

In Sri Lanka the ICRC’s main activities are visits to prisoners (to more than 2,000 prisoners in 340 detention centres in 1994), the protection of Jaffna hospital and of government convoys transporting food and medical supplies to the Jaffna Peninsula and the dissemination of knowledge of humanitarian law. In order to cover all anticipated costs, the ICRC still needs 6 million Swiss francs.

Funds needed for winter aid programme in the Caucasus

Preparations for a winter aid programme in the Caucasus, where the ICRC has been present since spring 1992 and has offices in Erevan, Baku, Barda, Stepanakert, Tbilisi, Zugdidi and Sukhumi, are well under way. The sum of 14.6 million Swiss francs is still required to cover this programme.

Israel: protection and assistance for the civilian population

The activities of the ICRC in Israel, the occupied territories and the autonomous territories are centred on protecting and assisting the civilian population, particularly through its visits to detainees held by Israel or the Palestinian Authority. Furthermore, in co-operation with National Societies, the ICRC
is supporting all non-governmental health providers (primary health care clinics, private hospitals, ambulances run by the Palestinian Red Crescent). The outstanding cash needs for 1994 are 12.4 million Swiss francs.

Major programmes in Latin America

In Latin America the ICRC's operations in Peru and Colombia are severely underfinanced. In Peru assistance to conflict victims (food, kitchen sets, blankets, clothing) and visits to prisoners are its main activities. The outstanding needs amount to 6 million Swiss francs. For Colombia, where 525 prisoners have been registered this year and victims of violence are being assisted, 4.4 million Swiss francs are still required to avoid a deficit for 1994.

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RWANDA

25,000 CHILDREN REGISTERED IN ROUND-THE-CLOCK OPERATION

ICRC tracing teams, working in cooperation with other organizations, have so far registered 25,000 children separated from their parents in the Rwandan conflict. At the same time, more that a thousand parents have filed tracing requests with the ICRC in an attempt to find their children.

Fourteen ICRC delegates (in Rwanda, in neighbouring countries and in Nairobi) and over 400 local staff are working hard to process all the registration forms. In Nairobi, where the information is centralized, three teams take turns entering all the details in the database. "It is literally a round-the-clock operation", explained Olga Villarrubia, ICRC regional tracing coordinator in Nairobi, "the three shifts are working day and night". For each registered child at least two or three identities have to be taken into account, usually the names of the mother, the father and another close relative so as to increase the child's chances of being reunited with his or her family. "Since the Cambodian tragedy this is the largest programme for unaccompanied children undertaken by the ICRC", said Catherine Gendre, tracing coordinator for Rwanda.

All the information registered in Nairobi is made available to the ICRC's field offices in Rwanda and elsewhere in the region: Goma and Bukavu (Zaire), Ngara (Tanzania), Bujumbura (Burundi) and Kabale (Uganda). Families contact these offices to find out whether their children are among those registered. "We are also eager to exchange information with other organizations, such as UNHCR, UNICEF and Save the Children Fund, for this facilitates tracing activities", stressed Coraline de Wurstemberger, deputy head of the Africa Sector at the ICRC's Tracing Agency in Geneva.

Over 100 children reunited with their parents

Thanks to the ICRC' efforts, after four months' work the results are very encouraging: over 100 children have been reunited with their parents. For others contact has already been restored through the message system established by the ICRC, in cooperation with National Red Cross Societies, for the victims of the Rwandan conflict (more than 20,000 such messages have been collected and delivered since the beginning of April). The success of this operation, even though only a small part of the problems have as yet been solved, is also due to the efforts of the BBC and Radio Agatashya set up by "Reporters sans frontières", which make daily broadcasts announcing the names of the parents sought.

8,000 prisoners visited

To date the ICRC has registered 8,000 prisoners throughout Rwanda. They are regularly visited by ICRC delegates in accordance with customary ICRC criteria. Between July and October the main detention centres have been given medical and other assistance (4,410 blankets, 5,448 bars of soap and 3,045 plates). All prisoners registered so far also have the possibility to send Red Cross messages to their relatives.

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CHECHNYA

AID TO HOSPITALS IN THE WAKE OF FIGHTING

Clashes broke out between the government troops of President Dzhokhar Dudayev and opposition forces in Grozny on 15 and 16 October and again in Urus Martan on 19 October. From 18 to 23 October, following the fighting, the ICRC distributed medical supplies – mostly basic surgical material such as anaesthetics, surgical gloves, bandages and X-ray supplies – to six hospitals in Chechnya (No. 1 Hospital and the Republican Hospital in Grozny, the Republican Hospital in Naterechny, and the hospitals in Argun, Tolstoy Yurt and Urus Martan). In August and September the ICRC had already distributed surgical supplies and medicines enabling some 500 major operations to be performed. This followed a survey of medical establishments throughout Chechnya carried out by delegates and the ICRC nurse responsible for covering the northern Caucasus, during which they found shortages of medicines and other supplies and observed that the families of the wounded were often obliged to procure the items needed to treat their relatives. The ICRC will therefore continue to provide the necessary assistance. Meanwhile, the ICRC is contacting the various parties to the Chechen conflict, drawing their attention to the principle that the victims of conflict must be respected. Television clips urging all combatants to spare the civilian population, treat prisoners humanely and respect the red cross and red crescent emblems have been distributed to government and opposition television stations.

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CHILD SOLDIERS: ICRC CALLS FOR MINIMUM RECRUITMENT AGE TO BE RAISED

At the first session of the UN working group that began discussions in Geneva on 31 October on an optional Protocol additional to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the ICRC, together with other humanitarian organizations, urged the 166 States that have ratified this Convention to raise the minimum age for recruitment and participation in hostilities from 15 to 18 years.

"To see children aged eight or nine in uniform and using weapons is one of the most incongruous things a Red Cross delegate can witness in war zones", explained Toni Pfanner, head of the ICRC's Legal Division. "It's even worse to see these children become targets, to have to treat them when they are wounded or to visit them in prison camps", he added. There is another reason why the ICRC attaches so much importance to the issue of child soldiers: the younger the soldiers, the less protection there is for civilian children. "Children become very vulnerable if they are considered as potential combatants and enemies", he stressed.

"The best means of persuasion is information"

The initial discussions in Geneva made it clear that many States in the industrialized as well as the developing world are against raising the minimum age of recruitment. "The best means of persuasion we have is information. We must tell the public about what is happening to children on the battlefield", explained Professor G.S. Goodwin-Gill, co-author of a pioneer study entitled "Child Soldiers", which gives a detailed analysis of the plight of these youngsters.

Eighteen: "a long-term goal"

According to Toni Pfanner, the age limit of 18 has to be a long-term goal. In the meantime everything possible must be done to ensure that existing law is respected. Indeed, even the minimum rules contained in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and in international humanitarian law are too often disregarded, and children well below the age of 15 are recruited into armed forces or groups and actually take part in hostilities. Structural and social reforms, measures to discourage children from volunteering, efforts to spread knowledge of the law and pressure on the parties to conflict are necessary to bring about better respect for the legal standards in force.

Further information: Toni Pfanner, ICRC Geneva
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The study "Child Soldiers" is available from the Henry Dunant Institute, Geneva. Tel. +41 22 731 5310

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

ASSISTANCE TO 13,000 CIVILIANS FLEEING THE FIGHTING

Thousands of civilians have fled the fighting between government troops and Bosnian Serb forces south of Bihac, in the Grabez, Ripac, Bosanska Krupa and Kulen Vakuf areas. Around 8,000 displaced Bosnian Serbs, most of them from Ripac, have arrived in Bosanski Petrovac and a further 3,000 in Titov Drvar. Another 1,250 civilians have made their way to Donji Lapac and 750 to Nebljusi, both situated in the southern United Nations Protected Area.
The ICRC immediately responded to the most urgent requirements by delivering surgical and medical supplies needed for the war wounded being treated in hospitals in Bihac, Bosanski Petrovac, Jasenica, Sanski Most and Donji Lapac. Providing the population with drinking water is also one of the ICRC’s topmost priorities. Its sanitary engineers have set up four large storage tanks in the town of Donji Lapac, where water supplies have been cut off as a result of the fighting.

The ICRC is also planning to distribute essential relief items, such as soap and blankets, to all the displaced civilians. It has given similar assistance to the 2,000 displaced Bosnian Serbs who have fled the fighting further south, in the Kupres region of Central Bosnia, and sought refuge around the town of Sipovo.

The ICRC has sent 15 expatriates to the area. Working out of Bihac, Knin and Banja Luka, they are doing their utmost to bring the necessary assistance to all the victims of the fighting and at the same time urging all parties to the conflict to comply with international humanitarian law.

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RWANDA
A SONG FOR INGABELE

We first met Ingabele in the Ndosho orphanage in Goma (Zaire), just across the border from Rwanda. The six-year-old was crying silently, tears rolling down her cheeks. Not surprisingly, what she had been through in the previous six months had made a terrible and lasting impression on her.

"Soldiers were everywhere, everyone was screaming. It was dark...". Last May, together with hundreds of other Rwandans, both soldiers and civilians, Ingabele had fled her village before the advance of the Rwandan Patriotic Front, clutching her mother’s skirts. In the general panic the little girl lost her grip and her mother was swept away with the crowd. That terrible moment turned Ingabele, like tens of thousands of other little Rwandans, into an unaccompanied child.

An adult noticed that Ingabele was alone and took her to the Ndosho orphanage. There she was given a plastic bracelet on which her name and a number were scrawled. There were no fewer than 1,458 others in Ndosho alone. The child was registered by the ICRC and later her parents, who had been looking for her, contacted an ICRC office in Rwanda. When a delegate went to the family to tell them that their little girl had been located, the mother clapped her hands in delight.

Registering the child’s identity and contacting the parents in a remote Rwandan valley were only one aspect of the work of the ICRC’s Tracing Agency. When an ICRC car came to the orphanage and the driver went up to Ingabele, the other children knew straight away what was happening. Envious of Ingabele’s good fortune, some tried to frighten her. "The whites will eat you", they chanted, and Ingabele got scared. It took a lot of patience and persuasion on the part of the delegates to calm her down. Ever so softly they sang her a little song, made up on the spot just for her.

Ingabele was driven by the ICRC to the border and then to Ruhengeri, sixty kilometres into Rwanda, where her parents were waiting. It was two o’clock in the afternoon and they were all there, from the family’s youngest baby to Ingabele’s grandmother. They had been looking down the road anxiously since early morning. Clutching her mother’s skirts once again, Ingabele said nothing. She just cried.

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PHILIPPINES

10,000 PEOPLE DISPLACED ON MINDANAO

In early November the Philippine National Red Cross and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) came to the assistance of thousands of people displaced on the Philippine island of Mindanao after two weeks of clashes between government troops and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front in the North Cotabato province.

Severe effects of fighting

In this latest bout of intercommunal violence 53 people were killed, 10,000 were forced to flee and more than 100 buildings were burnt down. The Philippine National Red Cross had already distributed food and blankets in October in evacuation centres where displaced Christians had taken refuge. As its emergency stocks had run out and it lacked funds to replenish them, the ICRC decided to finance a further distribution of food aid. It is being carried out by the National Society and began on 3 November in the Pikit evacuation centre, in the Carmen area, which is housing displaced Muslim families.

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BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

MORE THAN 18,000 NEWLY DISPLACED PERSONS TO BE ASSISTED

Several hundred thousand civilians have had to leave their homes since the beginning of the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina. As the third winter of war draws near, another 18,000 have been displaced by the recent fighting in the south of the Bihac enclave (Ripac, Grabez and Krupa) and near Kupres.

They have reached Petrovac (8,000), Drvar (3,000), Dojni Lapac (1,250), Trebuljši (750) and Sipovo (5,000), where they have received ICRC emergency aid (blankets, soap, candles, stoves, etc). Recent surveys show that surgical aid is one of the most urgent requirements, as well as better heating for many women, children and elderly people who have had to flee their homes.

During the past week ICRC delegates based in Banja Luka have delivered first-aid and surgical material for the treatment of war wounded in Kluj, Sanski Most and Dojni Vakuf, as well as to the hospitals in Prijedor and Petrovac. Items for emergency surgery such as IV fluids, disinfectants and dressings have also been supplied and health centres in the region continue to receive essential drugs needed for the treatment of chronic diseases. On 7 November, the ICRC also provided the Doboj hospital with 2.5 tonnes of medical supplies sufficient for the treatment of some 200 war wounded.

After tension increased in Velika Kladusa, ICRC delegates within the Bihac enclave had to gather in Bihac city. At present three ICRC expatriates, assisted by seventeen local staff, are stationed there. Besides giving the necessary medical supplies to the hospital, which has already admitted some 160 patients, they have continued to monitor the situation of the civilian population and tried to get access to all persons recently captured.

The last ICRC convoy able to enter the Bihac enclave went in at the end of October 1994. Since then all access by road has been closed as a result of the fighting between government troops and Bosnian Serb forces. Negotiations are under way with all authorities concerned, including those in Knin, to obtain guarantees of free passage for the humanitarian assistance needed in Bihac.

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BURUNDI
A PLAY TO ENCOURAGE HUMANE CONDUCT

"Violence breeds violence and no good can come of it" is the title of a play being performed from 4 to 23 November in several neighbourhoods of the Burundian capital Bujumbura.

Vicious circle

Working together with the ICRC, the Geza Aho theatre troupe portrays how a Burundian family breaks out of the vicious circle of violence threatening their village and country. Called upon to take up arms and wreak vengeance, the characters find ingenious ways of continuing to behave humanely.

A filmed version of the play will also be shown on wide-screen video in the Burundian provinces, starting in late November.

Humanitarian values in local customs and traditions

The play was inspired by the Declaration for the Promotion of Humanitarian Conduct, drawn up earlier this year by a group of Burundians in cooperation with the ICRC. In it Burundian proverbs are used to show the humanitarian values inherent in the local traditions and customs. Thus, the proverb "He who does not want life to grow leads the calf to slaughter" illustrates the rule "Let us never allow children or adolescents to take part in violent clashes, let us not arm them, and let us not use them in any act that could lead to violence, since this would jeopardize the nation's future".

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For TV services: 8-minute rushes on the play will be available from the ICRC's Press Division as of 21 November.
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SYMPOSIUM "WATER IN ARMED CONFLICTS"
MONTREUX, 21-23 NOVEMBER 1994

ICRC STEPS IN TO COMBAT WATER-BORNE DISEASE
IN WAR ZONES

The conflicts fought in the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Zaire, Yemen, Afghanistan and quite a few other parts of the world in 1994 have one point in common: thousands of civilians are suffering from a lack of drinking water and often dying from its consequences - cholera, typhoid, hepatitis and dysentery. "Improving the water supply and public health in general in conflict zones must become a top priority if we are to save the lives of innocent civilians. The suffering and deaths caused by the disruption of water supplies in times of armed conflict have reached a critical level. This problem requires urgent attention", said Giorgio Nembrini, ICRC water and sanitary engineer.

Today the ICRC is trying in fifteen conflicts to restore water supplies. But the effects of hostilities on the supply and quality of water are immense and the means of solving the problem are clearly still far too small.

Much time is lost before drinking water can be provided

In times of conflict not only are water installations and piping often attacked, but damage to power stations also can disrupt water distribution. Spare parts are looted, fuel becomes scarce and supplies of disinfecting chemicals run out. Skilled personnel to operate and maintain the water installations disappear. "In many such situations we have to start from scratch and provide all the necessary material and know-how ourselves. Therefore much time is lost before drinking water can be provided in sufficient quantity for the civilian population", Nembrini pointed out.

Camps for displaced people affected today - perhaps cities tomorrow?

Today the problem occurs mainly in camps for displaced people and refugees: up to 50 per cent of deaths among people there can be caused by water-borne disease. The construction of latrines and the installation of water purification systems often take too long. Tomorrow the problem may arise just as dramatically in cities that come under fire, where water supplies are particularly vulnerable.

Improve matters - but how?

To address the practical and legal problems and draw attention to this crucial issue, the ICRC is holding a symposium on "Water in Armed Conflicts" in Montreux, Switzerland, from 21 to 23 November. Nembrini hopes that it will provide some answers: "Experts in all humanitarian organizations want to improve the situation for civilians suffering from water deprivation in times of conflict, and to do so better and more efficiently", he acknowledged, "but the question is how?".
Raise awareness among the public and combatants

Scientists, sanitary engineers, representatives of water companies and experts in international law will try to find answers in Montreux to many unresolved questions. "The first step will certainly be to encourage greater respect for water installations, to improve coordination and the exchange of information and to increase general awareness of the problem", concluded the ICRC water engineer.

Please note: On Thursday, 24 November 1994, Dr Giorgio Nembrini, ICRC water engineer, and Dr Ameur Zemmali of the ICRC’s Legal Division will inform journalists about the results of the Symposium. Press briefing at ICRC headquarters in Geneva, Building III, Room 1, at 2.30 p.m.

BOSNIA HERZEGOVINA

ICRC SURGICAL ASSISTANCE KEEPS HOSPITAL DOORS OPEN

Since the fighting between Bosnian government and Bosnian Serb forces intensified in late October, the ICRC estimates that the average monthly number of war wounded, usually 4,000 in Bosnia-Herzegovina, has already been exceeded in the first two weeks of November. The ICRC field nurses based throughout the region have been delivering surgical assistance on an almost daily basis to hospitals on both sides of the frontlines.

The ICRC nurse based in Bihac reports that the hospital has increased its capacity by a further 200 beds, bringing the total number of patients admitted to 900. An additional operating theatre has been opened and all elective surgical and medical cases have been discharged. Medical assistance is being provided to the hospital on a regular basis and delegates are currently assessing the needs of several thousand displaced people who have fled fighting in the surrounding villages.

The ICRC is also regularly distributing medical supplies to some 50 hospitals, health centres and rehabilitation centres in the Banja Luka region. "The medical staff everywhere are extremely appreciative and I do believe many health structures would just have to close their doors if we did not supply these essential materials", said ICRC field nurse Kaisa Ronkainen, who earlier this week brought an additional consignment of surgical assistance to the battle-scarred field hospital in Teslic.

"Many of the injured have extensive internal injuries, and without the surgical assistance from the ICRC it would be impossible to work in the operating theatre", explained the Teslic hospital’s director.

The ICRC has also continued its efforts, both in the town of Bihac itself and in representations to all authorities concerned, to ensure that the civilian population is respected, to obtain access to all persons detained on both sides and to guarantee the safety of the 20 ICRC staff in the town.

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ANGOLA

HUMANITARIAN AID STILL A PRIORITY IN HUAMBO

As soon as conditions allowed following the fighting that raged in Huambo in recent weeks, ICRC delegates immediately resumed their work in the town. On 14 and 15 November they conducted their first visits to prisoners taken by government troops a few days before. The ICRC team registered 44 prisoners, most of whom wrote Red Cross messages that will soon be forwarded to their families.

The delegates have also succeeded in bringing eight health posts back into operation. Huambo’s hospitals are functioning at reduced capacity but are still managing to cope with emergencies.

The population’s nutritional status remains a cause for concern. The ICRC’s warehouses and those of various non-governmental organizations, which contained about 2,000 tonnes of food, were looted during the events. This caused a sharp fall in market prices lasting several days. General food distributions should nevertheless resume shortly, to help the area’s inhabitants survive the critical months until the next main harvest in April next year.

As soon as the Huambo airstrip has been repaired so that heavy transport planes can land, the ICRC hopes to fly in enough food supplies to resume these general distributions. In the meantime delegates will carry out a survey in the area, especially around Caala, where there have been reports of malnutrition among the thousands of displaced persons gathered there. These people will be the first to receive aid when the ICRC launches its new assistance operation on the Planalto.

The ICRC currently has a team of four in Huambo, and additional staff will soon be sent in. The initial stage of the operation in the town and its surroundings will be conducted by about 20 expatriates, working with hundreds of local staff. Following the recent events, on 11 November the ICRC evacuated 52 expatriates, including 21 United Nations staff and members of non-governmental organizations. Only the ICRC and Médecins sans Frontières remained on the spot.

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REMINDER

PRESS BRIEFING ON WATER IN ARMED CONFLICTS

The symposium "Water in armed conflicts", held by the ICRC in Montreux, Switzerland, is closing today. For the last three days, scientists, water engineers, representatives of water companies and experts on international humanitarian law have discussed a wide range of issues. Working groups were set up to study current problems and make proposals for appropriate action to improve water supplies and sanitation in conflict areas.

At a press briefing on Thursday, 24 November 1994, ICRC water and sanitation engineer Giorgio Nembrini and Ameur Zemmali of the ICRC's Legal Division will brief journalists on the conclusions of the symposium. The briefing will take place at ICRC headquarters at 2.30 p.m.

For further information call the ICRC symposium in Montreux
(Tel. ++4122 963 5181) or ICRC Geneva (Tel. ++4122 730 2317)

GAZA

TWO HOSPITALS RECEIVE EMERGENCY MEDICAL SUPPLIES

Following the tragic events in Gaza last Friday, 18 November, about 130 people were admitted to the town's two main hospitals, Al Shifa and Al Ahli. Some of the wounded were evacuated in Palestinian Red Crescent ambulances.

With this sudden influx of patients, the two hospitals found themselves short of emergency supplies. The ICRC carried out an assessment of needs with the hospitals' senior physicians and rapidly provided the dressing materials and perfusion equipment required.

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BIHAC: NEW EMERGENCY

The situation in the Bihac enclave is deteriorating fast, leading to ever-increasing pressure on the civilian population. The fate of the 170,000 civilians living in the enclave depends on the decisions to be taken by the parties to the conflict. With the arrival of civilians fleeing the conflict zones, the total number of displaced persons in the town of Bihac has now risen to over 15,000.

In the town itself, the ICRC has a team of 20 expatriates and locally employed staff which has remained operational. In response to the recent developments, the ICRC’s three priorities are:

- to protect the civilian population and the hospitals;
- to open roads to let humanitarian assistance through;
- to reinforce the ICRC’s presence.

On 26 November, after ultimatums were issued by the parties to the conflict, the ICRC in Geneva formally called on them to respect international humanitarian law. It particularly stressed the need to respect all people who surrender, the wounded, prisoners and the civilian population. Emphasis was also placed on the need to guarantee the safety of Bihac Hospital, where some 1,000 patients are being treated and where the ICRC has been distributing daily medical and surgical emergency assistance. Food supplies available in the ICRC delegation have already been distributed.

Serious risk of water shortage

Three systems normally provide drinking water for the Bihac area; the two main pumping stations of Klokot and Privilica and the Zegar waterworks.

Today, only one pump is in working condition: Klokot is managing on a irregular basis to supply the town, especially the lower-lying areas, whereas in the higher areas, where the hospital is situated, only cistern trucks can provide the necessary water. The other two waterworks have had to close down.

So far the ICRC has managed to provide a 5,000-litre emergency storage tank to the hospital; it had already installed such a tank there in February 1994. Regular supplies of disinfectants and calcium hypochlorite to purify the water can be maintained for a few more weeks.

The ICRC has drawn up a plan of action to take in emergency assistance to all the victims of the Bihac region. Water supply equipment, food, medical and other urgently needed supplies are already on board the three trucks of a planned ICRC road convoy.

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CHECHNYA

ICRC PROVIDES EMERGENCY AID

The past few days have seen a marked upsurge in the fighting in Chechnya between troops loyal to the authorities and the opposition forces. According to the ICRC team on the spot, local hospitals are having difficulty coping with the influx of wounded and are running short of medicines and emergency medical equipment.

The ICRC team is continuing its rounds of the region’s hospitals and distributing medical supplies as needed. Three hospitals in the town of Grozny and another in Urus Martan received emergency aid on 27 November. Surgical requisites sufficient for up to 500 operations are currently on their way to Chechnya and will be distributed in early December.

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WESTERN SAHARA/MOROCCO

ICRC VISITS MOROCCAN PRISONERS HELD BY POLISARIO FRONT

Four ICRC delegates and a doctor were in Tindouf, in southern Algeria, from 18 to 22 November to visit a group of Moroccan prisoners held by the Polisario Front. The team saw 307 prisoners, 298 for the first time. This brings to 2,162 the number of Moroccan prisoners registered by the ICRC since the beginning of the conflict in 1975. Many of them have been held captive for more than 15 years.

Last June the ICRC visited 72 Sahrawi prisoners in the hands of the Moroccan authorities in Agadir, and in August its delegates saw some 900 Moroccans held by the Polisario Front in Tindouf.

The ICRC visit gave the prisoners an opportunity to write Red Cross messages to their families. The Moroccan Red Crescent will distribute these messages, 1,480 in all, to the men’s relatives.

The ICRC remains at the two parties’ disposal to supervise the repatriation of all prisoners taken during the Western Sahara conflict.

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COTE D’IVOIRE

MEETING TO IMPROVE PRISON CONDITIONS IN AFRICA

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has for the first time held a meeting of representatives of Ministries of Justice and prison directors of seventeen French-speaking African States, which took place in Abidjan (Côte d’Ivoire) from 28 November to 2 December.

According to Dr Jacques Stroun, head of the ICRC’s Detention-Related Activities Division in Geneva and one of the meeting’s chief organizers, "the terrible conditions of detention prevailing in a great many African prisons must be improved". Prisons there are in fact often very short of funds and faced with dreadful overcrowding problems. Dr Stroun went on to say that it is important to upgrade the work, in terms of its value to society, of prison directors in Africa: "Throughout the continent, the penal system is often seen as a legacy of the colonial period, and as such not always adapted to African needs". One of the subjects discussed in Abidjan concerned the search for "alternative penalties", instead of detention, for prisoners not presenting a danger to society.

The meeting not only gave rise to a dialogue – so far practically non-existent – between public prosecutors and prison directors, but also addressed problems of prison management, particularly in connection with the health of detainees. Dr Stroun considers that the success of the Abidjan meeting is illustrated by the fact that the ICRC very soon stopped participating in the debate, since a dialogue had been established between the Africans themselves. "These high officials emphasized the need to find lasting solutions for their respective countries, and to do so very quickly ..."

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RWANDA

FOOD SITUATION CRITICAL

The health of hundreds of thousands of people in southern Rwanda is currently threatened by an acute food shortage, according to an ICRC agro–nutritional report. A month’s field survey by agronomist François Grunewald has shown that in four districts traditional planting has been severely disrupted by the massacres and conflict which have ravaged the country.
Thousands of families scattered in the hills or gathered in refugee camps are afraid to return to their homes and continue to survive from day to day thanks to food aid from humanitarian organizations. The ICRC itself is still feeding a million people in various camps, mostly in the south-western part of the country. As things stand, no economic recovery is possible, and in the long run food aid is likely to breed dependence. The ICRC therefore completed a programme in October for the distribution of seed (beans and maize) and hoes to some 200,000 families which still have access to their land.

Although the threat of a serious famine seems to have been averted for the time being, the fact remains that the population will have no food available locally until the next harvest, in early 1995. The ICRC has therefore begun distributing food to bridge the gap. The situation meanwhile remains alarming in the districts of Kibuye, Gitarama, Gokingoro and Bugesera.

François Grunewald also reports that the tea and coffee plantations that were formerly key features of the national economy are completely ruined; this will have disastrous effects on the Rwandan economy already weakened by the conflict.

Further information: François Grunewald, agronomist, ICRC Geneva, Tel. +41 22 730 2163
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GAMBIA

VISITS TO DETAINEES

After long negotiations, the ICRC has at last been able to visit security detainees imprisoned in Gambia. According to the ICRC regional delegation in Dakar, 32 detainees in two places of detention were visited in accordance with the ICRC’s customary procedure. The ICRC team which carried out the visit on 29 November included a doctor.

Most of the detainees are soldiers and police arrested immediately after the coup of 22 July 1994. Another category consists of members of the military seized after the abortive putsch of 11 November.

The regional delegation in Dakar will continue these visits in Gambia in the near future.

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GENEVA

ICRC PRESIDENT ANNOUNCES OBJECTIVES FOR 1995

During a meeting on 14 December with the heads of permanent missions accredited to the UN in Geneva, ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga announced the institution’s objectives for 1995. He explained that these objectives will focus on the protection of vulnerable individuals in conflict situations and prevention of violations of international humanitarian law. "Conflict victims have the same rights everywhere in the world and it is up to the signatories to the Geneva Conventions to respect those rights and ensure that they are respected", he reminded the diplomats present at the meeting.

Mr Sommaruga also announced that the ICRC’s headquarters budget for 1995 will amount to 138 million Swiss francs. This represents a very modest increase of Sfr 6 million for a budget about 50% of which is assigned directly to the management and support of field operations.

The field budget for 1995, which will be presented to the governments this coming January, amounts to over Sfr 560 million. Mr Sommaruga stressed that events in 1995 might make ad hoc budgetary extensions necessary, as had been the case in previous years. As for ICRC personnel, numbers will remain stable at headquarters with less that 700 staff. The number of expatriates working in the field, some 930 at present, will also remain the same next year unless exceptional circumstances call for an increase.

APPEAL FOR RWANDA AND THE GREAT LAKES REGION

At the same meeting the ICRC President called on the international community to assume its responsibilities in relation to the crisis affecting Rwanda and the entire Great Lakes region. "Your sense of responsibility should measure up to the scale of the tragedy that has befallen this region", he declared.

A communication to the press on this subject was issued on 14 December together with the full text of the memorandum submitted to all governments.

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CHECHNYA

ICRC STANDS READY

Concerned about the recent dramatic developments in Chechnya, the ICRC has made preparations to take action should the situation deteriorate. Enough medical supplies for 2,500 emergency surgical operations are being dispatched to Nalchik, in southern Russia, so that they can be distributed to hospitals in Chechnya as needed. This medical assistance can be increased if necessary.

The ICRC already dispatched supplies to a number of Chechen hospitals following the clashes on 26 November, to help them cope with a new influx of casualties.

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SOMALILAND

ICRC DISTRIBUTES RELIEF SUPPLIES

Civil strife erupted in the Somaliland capital, Hargeisa, on 15 November between forces loyal to the authorities and the Idegale opposition.

The fighting led to the displacement from Hargeisa of up to 150,000 people. Most of them sought refuge in eight locations within 70 km of the capital, and about 15,000 fled to Ethiopia.

As sporadic fighting continued, ICRC staff immediately delivered medical supplies (antibiotics, dressings, sutures, etc.) to the main hospital in Hargeisa and to two hospitals in areas under opposition control south of the city.

In addition, on 14 December an ICRC field team began distributing relief supplies including 10,000 blankets and 500 rolls of plastic sheeting to displaced people. "This distribution will cover the needs of 40,000 of the most vulnerable people to the north, south and west of Hargeisa", said Fred Grimm, head of the ICRC's Somalia delegation in Nairobi.

In the meantime, an ICRC nurse is carrying out a follow-up assessment to plan future medical assistance in the area.

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AFGHANISTAN
KABUL: CONVOYS FOR WINTER

The arrival in Kabul on 14 December of 10 trucks carrying 120 tonnes of flour and vegetable oil gave new momentum to the assistance programme launched by the ICRC in early April for displaced people in the Afghan capital. Last week distributions were resumed in southern areas of the city, including Gulbagh and Khairabad.

The ICRC plans to organize another food convoy to Kabul before the end of the year so as to cover the needs of 25,000 especially vulnerable people who have taken shelter in public buildings in and around the city. These needs are becoming urgent because of the severity of the Afghan winter: a recent nutritional survey of 377 families in the northern part of Kabul showed a 35 to 40% incidence of moderate malnutrition. A similar survey is now being conducted in the city's southern districts.

Two United Nations convoys also reached Kabul between 5 and 8 December, to supplement the 110 truckloads of food and other supplies that the ICRC succeeded in getting through in 15 convoys from its logistics base in Peshawar, Pakistan, between April and December. Since the beginning of the year, more than 180,000 displaced people have received aid in the Afghan capital and surrounding areas. The hijacking and looting of a convoy in June led to the temporary suspension of overland relief deliveries, and negotiations were then stepped up with all the parties concerned to ensure the safety of the stretch of road between Jalalabad and Kabul. Meanwhile, the ICRC was running out of medicines and medical supplies and organized an airlift for three consecutive days in mid-November to replenish stocks in the Afghan capital's hospitals.

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CHECHNYA
ICRC ASSISTANCE IN CONFLICT AREAS

Since Russian troops entered Chechnya, ICRC delegates have been keeping a close watch on the situation of civilians fleeing combat areas. Many displaced people have sought refuge in Ingushetia to the west and Dagestan to the east of the republic.

In Dagestan, a consignment of 4,000 blankets and 1,500 food parcels is on its way to Khasav Yurth, on the Chechen border, where about 8,000 displaced people have gathered.
In Ingushetia, the ICRC has handed over 300 family parcels to the local Red Crescent for distribution to displaced Chechens.

There is a strong feeling of solidarity among the peoples of the northern Caucasus, and many of the displaced have been taken in by local inhabitants. Their numbers are likely to rise sharply over the next few days.

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BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA
ICRC EMERGENCY AID FOR CIVILIANS FLEEING THE FIGHTING

As fighting continued in south-western Bosnia, an ICRC team from Banja Luka managed to deliver some 24 tonnes of urgently needed relief supplies this week to civilians fleeing from Glamoc (35 km west of Kupres).

On Saturday 17 December an ICRC field nurse and a delegate visited the region and reported that about 3,000 women, children and elderly people had left their homes near the front line and were being accommodated in villages north of Glamoc.

Emergency relief supplies including 4,000 blankets, 2,000 individual food parcels, flour and plastic sheeting were delivered to the local health centre, which is receiving increasing numbers of war wounded. Essential drugs for the treatment of chronic diseases were also provided.

Bihac area

The ICRC recently conducted a field survey in the town of Ripac (10 km south-east of Bihac), from where several thousand civilians had fled during fighting between Bosnian government and Bosnian Serb forces in November. Many of the displaced people have now returned to their homes, but their needs are still considerable and the ICRC is ready to distribute more aid.

In the Bihac pocket, ICRC delegates continue to supply the town's hospital and several first-aid posts with surgical materials. Stocks of some items, however, are running extremely low, and repeated attempts to replenish the ICRC's emergency reserves inside Bihac have so far been unsuccessful.

ICRC extends assistance to local Red Cross organizations

In line with its commitment to help with the development of local Red Cross organizations in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the United Nations Protected Areas, the ICRC brought together more than 60 representatives of such organizations in the central Bosnian town of Zenica this week to discuss dissemination, tracing and the development of programmes for the future.

The ICRC is providing office equipment and other supplies to over 120 Red Cross branches throughout the region to help them with their tracing and relief activities.

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MEXICO
ICRC PREPARED TO MEET HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

The inauguration of Mr Eduardo Robledo as the new Governor of the State of Chiapas on 8 December aroused some sharp reactions from the opposition and from the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN). The Zapatistas had previously announced that this nomination would mean an end to the cease-fire, so the danger of a military confrontation has increased.

The ICRC, which has been present in the conflict area since last January, has received renewed guarantees from both parties concerning the safety of its staff. It is now stepping up its medical assistance activities and new teams, including staff of the Mexican Red Cross, have been set up and are ready to deal with any emergency.

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LAW OF WAR: 35 ASIAN COUNTRIES ADDRESS THE ISSUES

The Second Regional Conference on International Humanitarian Law was held in the Australian capital Canberra from 12 to 14 December 1994.

The conference was hosted by the Australian Red Cross, with substantial support from the Australian government. Some 160 participants from 35 countries throughout the Asia-Pacific region were present, representing governments, Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and military and academic circles. A large ICRC delegation also attended.

The aim of the conference was to stimulate debate on international humanitarian law in preparation for two meetings due to be held in Geneva in 1995: the Review Conference of the 1980 UN Weapons Convention and the 26th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

The conference in Canberra was told that the Asia-Pacific region had the lowest rate of ratification of the Protocols additional to the Geneva Conventions, with only 37% of regional governments bound by Protocol II. Participants were urged to encourage their governments to ratify these instruments.

The discussions covered a wide range of topics, including landmines, refugees and displaced persons, war crimes tribunals, protection for women in wartime and priorities for the dissemination of international humanitarian law.

The 1980 UN Convention and its Protocol limiting the use of landmines was a key issue in the debate. The participants expressed concern about the devastating effects of landmines on the civilian population and the failure of existing international law to remedy the situation. The conference discussed proposals to extend to internal conflicts the restrictions on the use of landmines that are applicable to international conflicts, and there was an exchange of views on whether to launch a campaign for a total ban on landmines.

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TAJIKISTAN

ICRC ASSISTANCE IN THE CONFLICT AREAS

The ICRC has distributed food aid in the Mionadu valley of Tajikistan. Last week 345 sacks each containing 50 kg of flour were delivered to the population, whose supply routes were cut off in September by the fighting between government and opposition forces. This completes a round begun there in mid-December during which the ICRC distributed 400 sacks of flour supplied by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

In addition, ICRC delegates have distributed more than 1,300 pairs of winter shoes to children between five and 14 years of age.

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RWANDA

A FURTHER ORDEAL: MINES

Since the end of July, the two hospitals in Kigali have admitted 112 people injured by mines, and every week brings another series of casualties whose injuries often necessitate amputation. According to doctors there, those who reach the hospitals account for only some of the victims, many of whom, including a large number of children, die on the spot and do not appear in the statistics.

The whole of Rwanda, particularly the north, is afflicted by the scourge of mines. Although the exact number laid on the paths leading to the fields is unknown, it can be estimated at several tens of thousands.

Mines are obviously very easy to obtain. According to an UNMAR (United Nations Mission for Assistance to Rwanda) mine-disposal expert, so many have been strewn throughout the country that "in July, you simply had to bend down and pick them up. Seven hundred were found in one go in Nyamirambo, a workers' district of Kigali". The clearance of mines is particularly difficult, since there are practically no records showing their position and they are buried or otherwise concealed in the most seemingly innocuous places.

The ICRC is doing its best to alert the international community to the immense danger they present, especially those still lying in wait from wars that have now ended. Mines are very often used beyond the bounds of military necessity to serve as a means of terrorizing the civilian population. The ICRC therefore urges all States to support the amendments that will have to be introduced in 1995 into the 1980 United Nations Weapons Convention with the intention, among other things, of banning or at least strictly limiting the use of these deadly devices. The Fourth Session of the Group of Governmental Experts to prepare the Review Conference on this Convention will be held in Geneva from 9 to 20 January 1995. At the request of the United Nations Secretary-General, the ICRC will take part as an observer.

Further information:
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Louise Doswald-Beck, Peter Herby, ICRC Geneva, Tel. +41 22 730 2519 (legal information)
and Johanne Dorais-Slakmon, ICRC Geneva, Tel. +41 22 730 2319
ETHIOPIA

ICRC ATTENDS TRIAL OF MEMBERS OF THE FORMER REGIME

By virtue of its specific mandate as trustee of international humanitarian law, the ICRC has been assigned the status of "special observer" at the first trial on African soil of persons accused of serious human rights violations. An ICRC legal expert thus attended the initial hearing of a first group of 46 members of the former regime of Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam, which took place in Addis Ababa from 13 to 16 December.

The reason for the special position assigned to the ICRC at this trial is that for nearly three years its delegates have been visiting some 1,700 people held in custody by the new authorities. The crimes of homicide, aggravated homicide, forced displacement of the population and unlawful arrest and detention are among the 269 charges brought by the Special Prosecutor against 1,200 of these detainees. The ICRC delegation in Addis Ababa specified that its role would be confined to "ensuring that the minimum legal guarantees provided for in Protocol II additional to the Geneva Conventions are respected". The ICRC also monitors the material and psychological conditions of detention, which must in all circumstances be compatible with respect for human dignity.

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AFGHANISTAN

OVER 700 DETAINEES VISITED IN THREE MONTHS

Over the past three months, the ICRC has been able to resume and develop its protection activities in Afghanistan on a regular basis. Since September, 732 detainees, mostly former combatants, have thus been visited and registered. The ICRC has so far obtained access to 16 places of detention situated in the cities and towns of Kabul, Herat, Jalalabad, Mazar-i-Sharif and Shibergan and in the Panshir valley, the Kunduz region and Takhar province. These places of detention are under the authority of the main protagonists in the Afghan conflict, including the Jamiat-i-Islami on the government side and the opposition Hezb-i-Islami and Jumbesh-i-Melli.

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